



By
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Hot Tips for the Best Event Ever

The difference between **hero** and **zero** is planning

Event. Occurrence. Happening. Whatever we call it, for some of us creating an event brings to mind words like *headache*, *frantic* and *analgesic*, while others think *excellent*, *sold out* and *raving success*. The difference can be very slight between an event that is a fabulous success and one that leaves you wondering where everybody went that day. All great events have this in common: they are well planned and thoroughly promoted. Internationally renowned event-promotion guru Johanna Roach (www.knowledgebridge.ca) offers five hot tips for promoting a successful event.

Hot Tip #1: Get to know your audience

Your marketing plan (notice the word plan; this is not a marketing leave-it-to-chance) must be built around the needs and wants of your target audience. Whether the audience is the general public or the people in a company or an association, the event and its marketing should be shaped to their interests.

Surveys are a great way to discover these needs. Pre-event surveys can ask the target audience what they want to learn, who they want to hear from and whether they really want that gala dinner. This information can help create an event that is truly innovative. Post-event surveys are terrific tools for learning from the last event and planning for the next one. For example, you could ask people how they found out about it, which will reveal whether your best return came from print, word of mouth or electronic marketing. And the real litmus test: ask if the program met their needs and wants.

Hot Tip #2: Bow to your partner

Like dancing and tennis, events are better with a partner. Reach out to a wider audience by banding (and branding) together with groups that share an interest in your event's subject area. Co-sponsored shows provide greater value with cross-pollination among program participants, exhibitors and sponsors. You benefit by building your attendance list and your contact database at the same time.

Hot Tip #3: Testify

The value of personal testimonials can never be overstated. They can be print pieces, online text, or video or podcasts of attendees describing the terrific value they have gained, why this was the greatest thing they did last year and why everyone should attend this year. If it is appropriate to your audience (which you will know from Hot Tip #1) and your event,

you can take advantage of virtual communities through networking sites like Facebook or LinkedIn to create an interest group or invite people to your event. But show restraint and target your efforts accurately.

Hot Tip #4: So it is written

Direct marketing mail is making a comeback as an alternative to the email overload we all face these days. Faxing is also seeing a resurgence, and both formats are now unusual enough to garner attention.

Electronic newsletters can be a good way to reach out and deliver a message. You can track how many recipients opened your newsletter (and, you hope, read it through), and how many clicked on the links to visit your event's website. The electronic newsletter makes a great follow-up to direct marketing pieces sent out by post or by fax.

When crafting your text, simpler messages provide greatest impact. Answer the W-5 questions – who, what, where, when, why – and have the answer in mind for the ultimate H question: "How much?"

Hot Tip #5: Build your team

People don't buy from businesses, they buy from people. Consider relationship marketing. Marketing involves providing a market with the product or service it needs. Relationships are built between individuals and are based on trust. So build relationships of trust with your partner organizations and your event's exhibitors, then work together to promote the event. Will a company launch a product at your event? Have them offer their clients VIP passes or a special deal for on-site orders.

Put the event logo on your invoices. Offer your partner organizations a package of logos and prepared text to showcase the event on their websites. Make it easy for them to champion the event.

Above all, always answer the audience's primary question: "What's in it for me?" Tell them the goals and objectives of the event, the people they will meet, the valuable connections they will make and the continuing education credits they will receive. Don't make them guess. Tell them why they dare not miss out on the best thing this year. **So!**

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