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Event Marketing

How “Relationship Management” Optimizes Attendee Marketing And Grows Revenue

By Terence R. Donnelly, CMP

Growing quality attendance plays a major part of an event organizer's role. Taking into consideration factors such as lures from competing events, tightened attendee travel budgets and economic pressures, today's event organizers must also be

Terence R. Donnelly, CMP, is vice president, corporate markets, for Experient, an integrated meeting and event solutions provider offering customized registration, housing, event management and lead retrieval services. Learn more at www.experient-inc.com.



savvy marketers. Research indicates a direct correlation between marketing efforts and attendance growth or decline. As an event marketer, the organizer must understand the marketplace, identify strong prospects, reach them with appropriate messages and influence them to become registered attendees. A strong attendee-customer relationship management program is a key element in successful attendance promotion.

Understanding Your Attendee Base

First of all, an event must provide something of value to attendees to experience growth. Additionally, not all attendees choose to participate in an event for the same reasons. To increase attendance, event organizers must

understand their current attendee base and know the specific reasons why their attendees choose to spend time and money participating in their event. The relevance of event sessions, the attractiveness of the venue, the cost of participation, the products and services of the exhibiting companies, the networking opportunities and the event's reputation are all vital measures of the event's value to the attendees. Armed with this understanding, the organizer can identify subsets or segments of their audience and create interest profiles specific to each segment.

Tracking Attendees

Event organizers already have a wealth of untapped information about their current attendees in their computerized and perhaps even paper data files. These files potentially hold records and background information that identify the best ROI deliverables from past shows or events. The key is collecting all of this information into a dynamic attendee-customer relationship management tool and then dissecting the data to track, analyze and identify demographic, psychographic and behavioral parameters and then weigh the importance of each factor. With this information, the organizer has a true picture of who these people are and what they're looking for. Identifying companies, the individuals from these companies, their interests, their decision-making capacities, their buying histories and

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their level of satisfaction with an event forms a basis for relationship marketing against which future prospects will be measured.

Building a global database with prospect and attendee information for all of an organizer's events is an important first step to successful attendee acquisition. Effectively measuring the effects of the marketing efforts to this database is the key to long-term success. With a relationship management tool, event organizers can streamline their marketing efforts and automate them to a large degree. Attendee-customer relationship management tools have the ability to organize files, query data, analyze and specify demographics, filter new data against established criteria, manage multitiered marketing campaigns, accommodate real-time campaign modifications and, most important, track all results.

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taking advantage of technology tools to enhance and manage the process makes sense. A customer relationship management approach to attendee acquisition that integrates database qualification, warehousing, marketing campaign management and analysis leads to more accurate attendee profiles and messaging, more qualified buyers, happier exhibitors and more sponsorship dollars. The end result is a successful program. **ACF**

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With a comprehensive, segmented prospect database and an attendance marketing campaign that addresses the hot buttons of these targeted audiences, the organizer is ready to initiate contact. Using the interest points identified through the segmentation process, the event organizer chooses the appropriate campaign elements for selected prospects, establishes goals and target completion dates, and delivers the first messages.

Measure Success Through Evaluation

After the campaign is launched, it's time for real-time analysis and evaluation. By monitoring registration numbers and response rates following each campaign element delivery, an attendee-customer relationship management program tracks the effectiveness of each marketing tactic and documents the campaign elements that attract each prospect, allowing the event organizer to make mid-campaign changes to immediately improve the response rate. In-depth analysis after the event provides solid data needed to enrich future campaigns.

Technology Tools

With attendance promotion playing such an important part of a busy event organizer's role,