The Guide to Modern Event Planning

How to Throw an Event in the Mobile Age

Your step-by-step guide for planning a complex event like a conference, tradeshow, or convention and making a maximum impact using mobile technology.
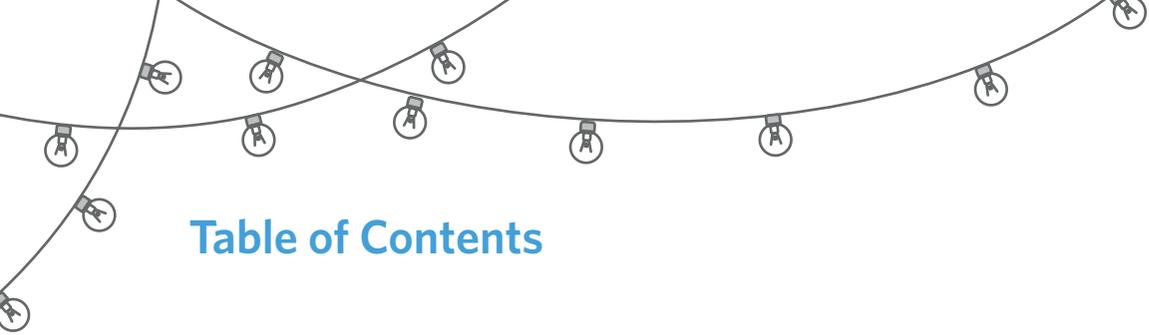
207 likes

modern_event_planner Look at the #gorgeous lighting for tonights event #marketplacelights #modernevents

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Introduction

In the past decade, technology became smaller, smarter, and more accessible than ever. As a result, it's leveled the playing fields in many industries - the events industry included. Whether you're a first time event planner, or a veteran who is looking to keep up with the trends, there are all sorts of mobile tech tools you can use to streamline, measure, and make your events more engaging.

In this guide, we'll walk you through the planning process while also offering up some ideas for how you can make the most of mobile technology during each phase. You'll benefit from events that exceed your attendees' expectations, deliver value to your sponsors, and give you an incredible amount of feedback for improvement.
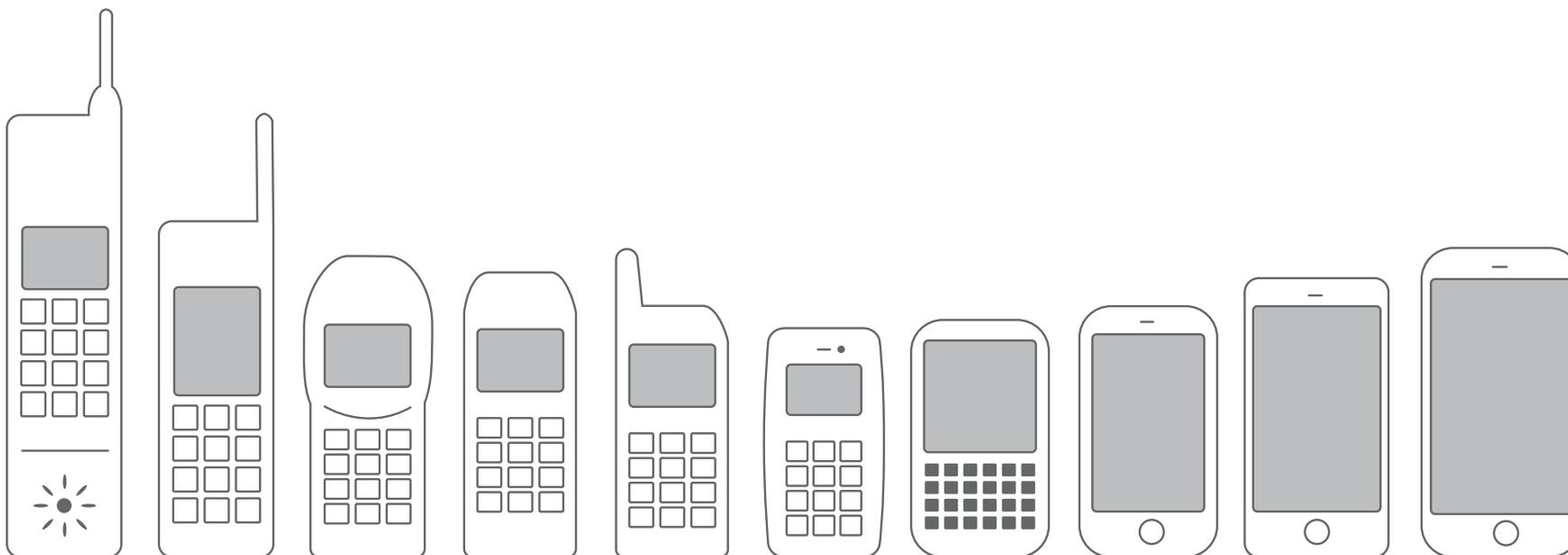
Part One: Planning Your Event

Building the Team

Get ready to build an event team that is organized and communicates well!

If your event is small, you may personally be handling most or all of the tasks discussed in this chapter. For big events, you probably have committees reporting to a project manager. However you structure the responsibilities, make sure there is a hierarchy to ensure accountability. All committee members should in some way report up to the project manager.

The Ultimate Event Team

Project Manager

Oversees all departments and is ultimately responsible for the execution of the event. Manages the budget. Drives strategy. Makes top-level purchasing decisions. Can't live without her note-taking app.
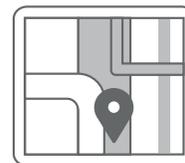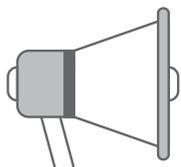
Communications

This team makes sure a guest has everything he needs to get the most out of the event, from maps, schedules, speaker info, and how to network. They build out and update the mobile event app. They always know what to say, you know?

Scheduling

This team is in charge of setting the agenda, working with speakers, and making sure the schedule is up-to-date and communicated to the right parties. Your scheduling guy coordinates meetings at the event, and he lives to make attendees into successful networkers.

Marketing

These guys make the right people aware of the event, create offers and timing strategy to boost registration, oversee branding, communicate with registrants, coordinate social media amplification and media relations, and send and measure follow-up materials. Oh, and they're just nuts for measurable performance.
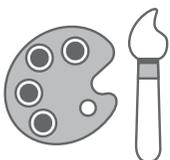
Creative design

Creative designers put together all visual design for printed and web materials like schedules, collateral, registration and signage, and anything needed for the mobile event app. To break it down: they make you look good.

Sponsorships

These guys work to map out booth spaces, sell sponsorship opportunities, maintain relationships with sponsors, and explore community organization relationships. They have killer timing and great people skills.
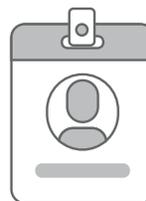
Registration

These heroes own the development of the registration setup, work with a software provider, produce and manage badges, generate reports, and make sure the registration process (pre-event and during the event) is infallible and smooth. And when they really rock… they make it look easy.

Promotions

This team handles contests, raffles, auctions, offers, giveaways and games. They're creative, energetic and not afraid to have fun. You might find them loading a t-shirt cannon or handing out prizes for the scavenger hunt.

Venue/show floor

This team is the main contact for the venue, the vendors, the sponsors while on-site, and the on-site volunteers and staff: security, photography and food/beverage. They remember everyone's name, and they know where all the outlets are.

Keeping everyone organized?

Is your team in place? You're ready to create an event project plan. A project plan is more than just a to-do list. It's a detailed breakdown of every single action item that identifies owners, dependencies, due dates and completion status. You should be able to justify every action item by mapping it to your top-level event goals.

Your project plan can be as simple as a spreadsheet.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	**Task**	**Owner**	**Dependencies**	**Larger goal**	**Due**	**Status**
2	Cut video for Save-the-Date teaser	Anna	Alex for sound	Increase registration	9/5	Done
3	Send Save-the-Date email to house list	Anna	None	Increase registration	9/10	
4	Schedule tweets and FB posts for Save-the-Date	Anna	None	Increase registration	9/10	

The project plan keeps everyone moving. It identifies elements that are taking too long or are holding up other deliverables. Don't be afraid to reassign ownership of a task—sometimes a new perspective can be all it takes to be able to move on.

When your event is over, the project plan can also be a valuable relic: you'll be able to see what went smoothly and what didn't, and use it as a template—to be refined based on your learnings—for next time around.

Tech Tools for Organizing a Team

Google Docs is a simple, effective, free tool for your project plans and fundamental event details. Google Docs allows you to create tabbed spreadsheets that can be edited in real-time by multiple users, and can include features like notes, chat, and version control. Docs (word processing), Sheets (spreadsheets), and Slides (presentations) also have their own mobile apps for editing on the fly.

Project management tools like Basecamp and Trello can be synced to mobile devices and are designed for keeping large groups of contributors on track. Between these, and an instant team communication client like Slack, you can basically kick email to the curb.
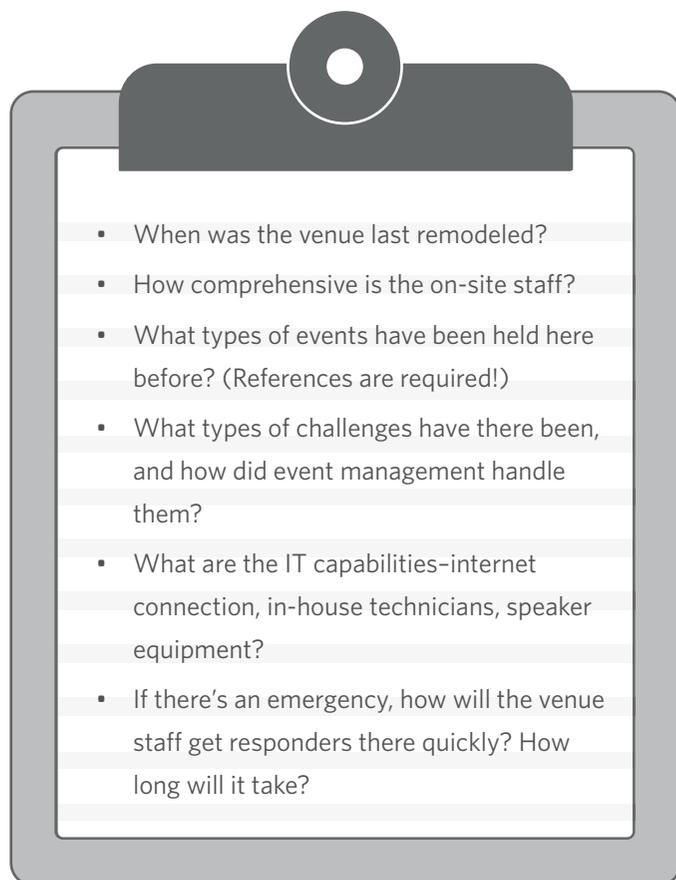
Select the Date and Venue

Choosing a date for your event is a tricky process. You'll need to do some research to find a good time in the event marketplace—a time when there will be venue availability. You'll also have to consider dates for your location based on seasonal factors like travel impediments and costs.

"In January it's very challenging to find large spaces," says Romy from PRIME, a full-service events agency in Vancouver. Romy is an eleven-year veteran of the events industry. *"January and February are heavy on sales conferences, and it happens again in September and October."* She says that during these times it's tricky to find traditional locations with show floor space.

Romy also suggests sending a pre-conference survey to suss out attendees' openness to traveling for the event. *"Given the key agenda, does it warrant being in a destination where you don't have to worry about flights?"*

As you talk to the representatives of various venues, ask as many questions as possible to make sure you're getting the complete story. Look for budget, thematic fit, location (is it central, easy for transport?), facilities, on-site staff. Are there restrooms conveniently located throughout the venue? What's the situation with fire control and emergency response?

Checklist: Questions to ask about every venue

- When was the venue last remodeled?
- How comprehensive is the on-site staff?
- What types of events have been held here before? (References are required!)
- What types of challenges have there been, and how did event management handle them?
- What are the IT capabilities–internet connection, in-house technicians, speaker equipment?
- If there's an emergency, how will the venue staff get responders there quickly? How long will it take?

Tech Tools for Choosing a Venue

EventUp is like the Google of event venues. You can search their giant database of venues with specific requirements, submit inquiries, and even compare quotes. If you want to just take venue selection off your plate completely, EventUp offers concierge-level service as well.

Plan the Budget

Your new motto: let there be no surprises! (There will probably be a few, but it's not a bad goal.)

You will be more successful if you plan your entire budget in advance, work in several stages, and stay very close to the process.

Begin by listing everything you will need, ideally, for your event. Comb your project plan to trigger any forgotten items. You can start with our example here, designed for a hotel-based conference, and add or subtract costs based on your event's needs.

Workbook: Plan your event budget

All Staff	Amount
Compensation and gratuities	
Travel	
Accommodations	
Food	
Total	

Facility	Amount
Venue Rental	
Furniture, serving items, decor	
Food/drinks	
A/V equipment and labor	
Security	
Technology (wifi, IT support)	
Badge scanning	
Total	

Logistics	Amount
Event insurance	
Contracts	
Permits	
Total	

Registration	Amount
Software	
Badge printing	
Signage	
Total	

Marketing	Amount
Marketing Tools - email marketing - Survey tool	
Printing	
Shipping	
Video Production	
Photography	
Web development	
Media relations	
Swag/merchandise/giveaways	
Total	

Sponsors	Amount
Thank you gifts	
Total	

Activities-Entertainment	Amount
Music/DJ	
Gaming rentals	
Auctioneer	
Offsite venue	
Total	

Sponsors	Amount
Airport shuttle	
Charging stations	
Storage	
Total	

Communications	Amount
Mobile app	
Printing	
Signs	
Maps	
Flyers	
Schedule	
Total	

Nail Down the Schedule

Set your agenda as early as possible! Is there a keynote speaker? Will there be an extra day or evening planned just for your sponsors? Will there be a single "track" of workshops and talks, or will attendees have the choice to choose between more than one session at a given time?

But don't fret: it's not crucial to have the schedule completely figured out before you start telling the world. You can make changes to the schedule after you have begun to market your event and registration begins to grow. Technology makes this easy. You should be able to update your website and the schedule on your mobile app, simultaneously, with the click of a button.

But it's best if you have the basic framework confirmed as early as possible. For one thing, the schedule is an important selling point!

A Word About the Keynote

A great keynote can set a strong precedent for how the time at the event should be used. It's one of the best methods at your disposal for guiding the conversation and getting the community to network.

Vet your speakers. Watch videos of their previous appearances to make sure they're engaging. You don't want to be disappointed when the renowned author of a relevant work ends up being well-versed... but sadly unable to captivate the audience.

To land a really good speaker, you'll need to impress upon her that this is the right event for her.

- What are the different ways you can compensate your keynote speaker? It can be as simple as payment... but a per diem or a nice hotel might go a long way, too.
- Get her attention by providing a compelling snapshot of your audience. Remember, speakers are public figures who want to be able to talk to the public, and they are working on growing an audience of their own.
- Tell a prospective speaker why you want her specifically, make her feel welcome, and be clear upfront about compensation and expectations.

As you build the agenda, keep a dialogue going with your audience. *"The last thing you want is to throw a conference and find that there's no interest in the topic,"* says Romy from PRIME.

You can use your pre-event survey to get prospective attendees to vote on topics, speakers, workshops and more. It will help your eventual agenda be more relevant to your audience–and it'll remind your attendees that they're being heard.

Start Building Your Event's App

Apps are no longer expensive, unobtainable nice-to-haves. With cutting-edge tools like event-specific app templates and what-you-see-is-what-you-get editing tools, you can have one up and running for your event in a matter of hours. It will save you money on printing, keep your content accurate and updated, and can even help you generate additional revenue.

Event apps are the norm, and regular conference and meeting-goers are starting to ask for them by name. Guidebook found that 80% of event attendees say that event apps "make an event better" and

that 54% of planners say they plan on using more event apps this year than last.

We've found that printing can cost twice as much as deploying an app. But other than cost savings, what makes an event app so great?

An app is your engagement platform

"Attendee engagement" is on the lips of every event planner, but what does it mean? Well, depending on the type of event it can mean a variety of things - but essentially it's an all-encompassing term that expresses the fact that event organizers are looking to connect with the people who attend their event.

Before mobile technology, encouraging (and measuring) attendee engagement was a bit of a nebulous process. And the larger the event, the harder it seemed to accomplish. But now that most of us are carrying around mobile devices at all times, organizers have found that they can use those devices to their advantage and ensure more personal event experiences through the use of an app.

Features

An app's native features have a lot to do with creating that more personal experience. Here are a few common app features that you can take advantage of:

Social Activity Feeds: Encourage an atmosphere of sharing and excitement with an activity feed right on the homepage of your app. Liking, commenting, and sharing actions instantly forms your attendees into a community.

"54% of planners say they plan on using more event apps this year than last."

Private Messaging: Allow attendee connections to live beyond the event with a private messaging function. Increased opportunities to network will ensure your event offers true value.

Push Notifications: Prompt and remind attendees right on the homescreens of their phones. Push notifications give you the ability to talk to large groups of attendees - or the entirety of them - all at once.

Live Polling: Turn speaker sessions into a conversation with live polls that offer feedback in realtime. No need for polling devices or awkward hand raising - just let your attendees use their phones to engage with speakers.

See how the Advancing Improvement in Education Conference completely turned around an old, stuffy event using an event app!

Metrics

One of the most valuable aspects of your event app is its ability to offer you data about attendees and their actions. Use metrics to unlock the big black box of attendee behavior and start making your event better year-over-year (or in real time).

Surveys: Want to know something about your attendees? Ask them directly! With event app surveys you can get feedback when it matters most - in the moment. Poll your audience on everything from what they thought about lunch, to how much they got out of an individual session.

App Data: The way your attendees navigate your app can give you excellent insight into the event itself. See which schedule sessions were most popular, or how many days before the event people started engaging with your content - all from passive data collected by the app.

2-Way Conversation

Most importantly, an event app gives you the chance to speak with your audience. A mobile app is a great way to deliver your message, but it can also be used to listen as well. Using surveys and activity feeds, it's now possible to adapt in the moment to attendee sentiments and preferences. Any event planning veteran will tell you that there will always be changes and mistakes during the actual event. But with this communication tool, it's easier than ever to change on the fly and keep attendees happy.

An app can help you generate sponsorship revenue

Event sponsors are always looking for new and creative ways to get in front of audiences. Thanks to event apps, now they're able to reach as far as your user's phones. With creative placements and ads in your app, sponsors can get a lot of value and you can drum up even more sponsor revenue (and maybe subsidize the entire cost of the app).

Strategic Placements

Banner ads: Keep a sponsor's logo or message top-of-mind, while also giving them control of where the user is led when they ultimately click.
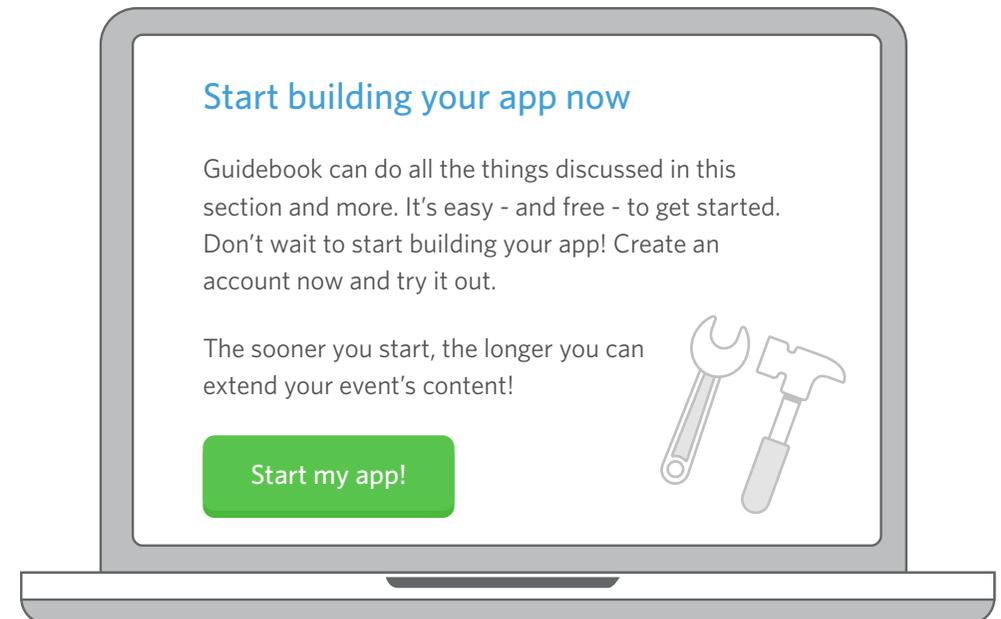
Gamification: Add a sponsored game in your app for another layer of fun and interactivity - plus the ability to collect cool swag!

Sponsored Surveys: Give your sponsors the exact data they're looking for with a survey in their name. Talk about a captive audience!

Learn more about the ways you can include sponsors in your event app!

Sponsor Data

As with everything else in an event app, you'll also have access to data on how attendees are interacting with the sponsored sections and modules. Sponsors will appreciate the promise that you can give them precise metrics on just how far their reach took them within the app. You'll be able to deliver reports on banner clicks, impressions, and conversion rates - a vast improvement from just hanging a banner in an exhibit hall.

Start building your app now

Guidebook can do all the things discussed in this section and more. It's easy - and free - to get started. Don't wait to start building your app! Create an account now and try it out.

The sooner you start, the longer you can extend your event's content!

Start my app!

Make Registration Seamless

Your goal: a smooth, accurate, painless registration process.

Event registration is notorious for going awry. This is simply because there are so many moving parts. You can combat this by testing the system many times and taking it step-by-step.

Choose a registration and ticketing tool that is designed for your needs. A pre-configured solution like Eventbrite or Ticketbud can work very well for most needs, and larger events may choose a tool with more custom development.

Either way, the registration page must be user-friendly and accessible on any device. You need it to be just as easy for someone to sign up on their mobile phone or tablet as on a laptop or desktop computer.

You can use traditional web form and landing page best practices to drive your registration form strategy:

- **Only ask for what you need.** If your form is long and requires a lot of personal information, fewer people will complete it (either because they don't wish to give that information or because there are more opportunities for the form to fail).

- **Include questions that will give you ideas about how to improve your event.** For example, asking registrants how they heard about the conference can help you prioritize your marketing efforts next time.

- **Optimize your confirmation email.** It's a great opportunity to prompt new fans to share their exciting news on Twitter or LinkedIn. You can also try a referral offer on the confirmation page: for example, if a registrant gets another person to sign up, they'll get a free upgrade, some cool merchandise, or an extra entry into the raffle.

- **Test the entire process over and over again.** If your system has a bug that prevents people from registering, you're actively losing registrants and alienating people. Regularly test your registration system all the way through with different web browsers and devices.

Without bombarding your registrants with emails (a good rule is 1-2/ week or fewer until the week preceding the event, when you can get away with sending a few more), keep them updated and remind them what they signed up for.

Choose a strategic moment to deliver your event app to your registrant list. You might want to offer it up directly upon registration, or choose to send it out to everyone closer to the conference. What's key to understand is that the sooner you get the app in their hands, the sooner they'll be engaged with your content. This can promote sharing and networking before they ever step foot in your venue!

Learn how to use a video to promote and increase the adoption rate of your app!

TIP: App users tend to build their personal schedules within the first 15 minutes of downloading their guide! Read more here.

Tech Tools for Registration

Eventbrite, Showclix, and TicketLeap are all great, easy-to-manage ticketing platforms. The best part is they also play well with mobile. Mobile ticket delivery will go a long way towards making your check-in process run smoothly.

Need a quick website to host your registrations? Try a landing page tool like Unbounce that's built for conversions.
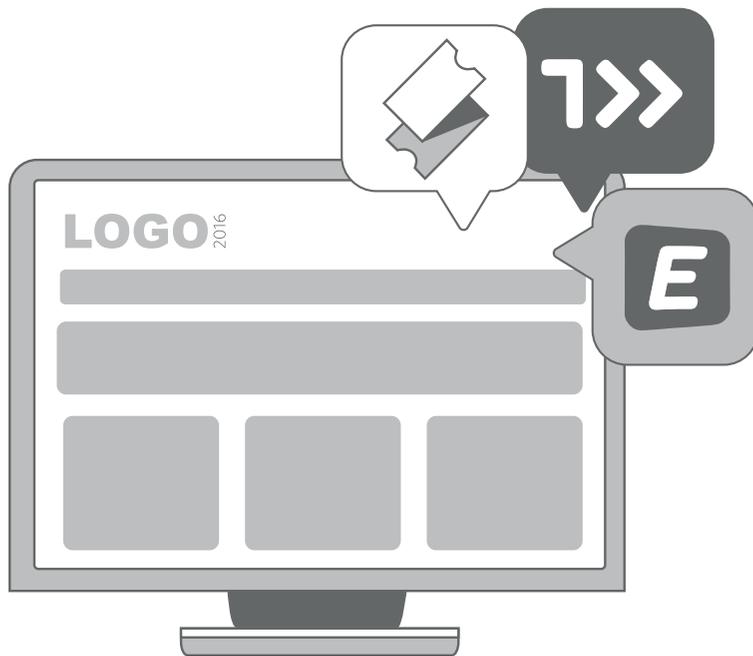
Get Your Permits and Insurance

One of the benefits of working with a venue or agency that has experience handling events is that they may be able to obtain all the permits. Most hotels and conference locations should have a checklist that covers the permits you'll need for parking, alcohol, sound, street closure, and anything else that applies.

If you don't have the guidance of an event venue, you can find information about the permits required by researching or contacting your local government's entertainment commission or events office.

Special event insurance will protect you in case of lawsuits, injury, and property damage, and is a must for an event of almost any size. The laws and coverage vary across states and countries, so try browsing websites that offer free event insurance quotes first to get an idea of what you will need.

Start the permits and insurance process as soon as you've confirmed the venue.

Part Two: Marketing Your Event

Tell the World

The most successful event promotion starts early and utilizes multiple channels. Your audience will find you in different ways. They'll respond to a variety of approaches.

Your event marketing mix may include email campaigns, traditional call-downs, digital ads, public relations, social media, partner promotions, referrals, direct mail, print media and more.

Stick to a marketing timeline. List the promotions and messages you need to share, and map each marketing channel to the timeline.

Email campaigns

It's customary to send a total of about 4-8 emails to a list member who hasn't yet registered. Each email should have a different message and a different spin on the urgency to "register now". (Remember, if a list member registers, immediately stop sending them emails soliciting registration!)

Check out the next few pages– we've put together a sample email campaign for you to use as a template.

Email Marketing Guidelines

- Use an email marketing tool like MailChimp, or send emails through a marketing automation tool like Marketo or Eloqua.
- Don't send emails from a personal address or use the BCC function.
- Keep your subject lines short and to-the-point.
- Include a clear call-to-action in your email. If a recipient wants to register for the event or learn more, she needs to know where to click.
- Provide an unsubscribe link in your emails. It's a requirement to comply with CAN-SPAM regulations.
- Don't email too often. A couple times a week at most.
- Check your email provider's analytics for bounces and unsubscribes. This will help you determine list quality/relevance and whether your message is resonating.

Email #1: Save-the-date

Send this email as far ahead of the event as possible–it's a great way to get a spot on the calendars of attendees who are the most likely to register. You'll be generating buzz about your brand, and you can take this opportunity to ask for feedback about your agenda. Include the date and location, a teaser about any speakers or attractions you've confirmed, and maybe a video or photo from the last event.

Email #2: Early bird invitation

Is your registration system tested? Is your event agenda posted? (A link to your web-based mobile guide is enough.) You're ready to send an early bird invite! Most pros send this promotion around 2-4 months prior to the event.

If you plan to sell tickets at a discounted rate, this first email is the place to share that offer. Generate some urgency by making it clear that these discounted tickets are in limited supply and a prospective registrant will need to act fast.

> **TIP:** Encourage people to sign up early without alienating them from the regular ticket sale. It's a good strategy to share, up-front, all ticket prices and the dates they can be acquired.

Email #3: Early bird reminder

Let your email recipients know that time is running out for these high-value tickets.

- Just 24 hours left!
- Get tickets while they last!
- Save 30%–buy today!
- Last chance to save $200 off the regular ticket price!

Email #4: Main sale invitation

Now that the time to buy discounted tickets has passed, shift the message. Focus on the value the event will deliver, and accompany it with social proof statements and highlights from the upcoming event. Include an event-related tweet from your keynote speaker. Share an exciting update to the schedule.

Email #5: Main sale reminder

At this point… well, you've sent quite a few emails. You can assume that anyone on your list who has actually opened and read your emails understands the basic value propositions of your event. So it's time to get a little creative!

Highlight the social and networking aspects of your event. Cool parties or musical guests? Unique food and drinks or a fun venue? This is the time to talk about the sponsor party with the open bar!

Email #6 Last chance tickets

By now you have access to data that helps you understand who's registered so far. Your final email can focus on the dwindling number of remaining tickets or the volume of high-quality registrants.

- 400 of San Francisco's best dentists will be there. Will you join them?
- 26 tickets left!

Social Media

Event marketing and social media marketing: they go hand-in-hand. These days, members of even the most traditional industries are using social media. You have the opportunity to share your message, generate buzz in the industry, and increase event attendance/ engagement through the social channels your audience and partners are using every day.

Each social network can be used to promote messages from other networks. If you create a blog post about your event, you can share that link on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. If you are creating Vine videos about your event, you'll want to link to them from networks that are more commonly used by your customer base.

Let's talk about how you can get the most out of social channels, and how you can get your sponsors and partners involved.

Twitter

With Twitter, you can share short messages and links and have two-way conversations with your audience. As an event professional, you'll be using Twitter for two primary purposes:

- Generating buzz and sharing information about your event
- Engaging with your audience and attendees to get to know them and to learn–for better or worse–what they are saying about your event

Your interactions on Twitter work just like conversations in real-life. If all you do is talk, eventually people will stop listening to you. But if you ignite conversations, reach out to individuals, answer questions, and show that you are taking the conversation seriously, you have the

opportunity to get people on board with your organization. They might even share your message for you!

Twitter Hashtags

Choose an event hashtag early on: before you choose your save-the-date information. Stick to the same hashtag consistently throughout the event.

A hashtag is a word or phrase shared in tweets. It can be searched, indexed and shared. Appending your tweets with a hashtag and encouraging your audience, attendees and partners to do the same will help you amplify and measure your social media influence.

More specifically, you can use the hashtag to pull together people's event-related photos and messages in real-time, and share them in your mobile guide and on your website. Your attendees can search the hashtag to see what other people are saying.

1. Your event hashtag must be short. Twitter restricts posts to 140 characters, and if your hashtag is too long users will leave it out in order to fit what they need to say.

2. It needs to be unique. Use the search function in Twitter to make sure your preferred hashtag isn't being used by another organization or trending topic.

3. It needs to be relevant and easy-to-understand by someone who isn't familiar with your event.

Strong hashtags: #DentalCon2015 #SFDentists2015

Less-effective hashtags: #Dentists (Too broad) #SFDC (recognized by a different organization)

Here are some ideas to help you get the most out of Twitter for events.

- Put the power of sharing in your registrants' hands! Events are exciting, and people want to share that feeling. Include clickable social media icons in the pre-event informational emails to your registrants. Share your event hashtag and embed a button with a pre-filled tweet.

See an example of a prefilled tweet and **share** this Event Planning Guide with your followers.

- Put your social media icons and hashtag on the registration thank you page.
- Use Twitter to share info about your keynote speakers. Include the speakers' Twitter handles in the tweets so they can continue the conversation.
- Tweet out teaser videos, sponsor updates and messages about promotions and ticket scarcity.
- Pre-fill your hashtag into the Twitter application in your mobile event guide so it gets used every time.

Facebook

Facebook is the largest social network in the world, with the most demographically-broad user base. This means that your audience is using Facebook!

- Create an event or fan page where people can post comments and feedback

- Link directly to your registration page
- Share venue photos or videos of your speakers
- Encourage conversation on your event page by asking questions, running contests, and linking to surveys

LinkedIn

LinkedIn Groups give you an effective way to grow your audience, and promote your registration page.

Groups are user-built communities focused around an industry or interest. Participants can post questions, conversations, links, and jobs, and they can network with like-minded individuals.

Search LinkedIn for Groups whose members are relevant to your audience. To post in a Group, you will need to become a member. Group posting etiquette asks that you become an engaged member of the Group before promoting your cause, so join Groups early and become a part of the conversation first.

- Share blog posts with topics related to your speakers' talks. Include a link to your registration page at the bottom.
- Start conversations with a question! The most active posts in a LinkedIn Group will come from a request for help or advice.

Tech Tools for Social Media

Try a social media management dashboard like Hootsuite or TweetDeck to keep track of all your accounts, hashtags, and mentions. It's much easier to see it all in one place as opposed to managing all your messages in each individual native website.

Social Media and your Event App

Social Networking accounts for the largest single share of the overall time we spend on our phones. If you make your event app a hub for the social media related to your event, it will provide another reason for people to return to the information channel that you control!

- Set up a Twitter stream in your app that aggregates all the tweets including your event hashtag
- Use your app's social activity feed before the event begins to ignite conversation and debate
- Include a video section linked to a YouTube channel with need-to-know information about your event

#DentistCon2015

More information about making your event social with a mobile app.

Public relations

Drive awareness and event credibility with industry press and blog coverage. Give these publications a good story early on, then treat them well at the event (potentially granting free press tickets). You may be able to get more than one story out of the relationship!

Be prepared to pitch the press with a strong hook and a concise list of event details.

The hook: Your PR hook is a compelling one-sentence explanation about your event. It's what makes a story newsworthy. Don't use the same hook for every publication you approach; it should be tailored to the outlet and the writer.

Partner promotions

If you plan to work with sponsors or partners at your event, you have a great opportunity to get someone else to do some of the marketing work. You just have to make it easy!

Sponsors definitely expect a return on investment from your event, but they might also benefit from a reminder that registration volume is directly correlated to that return.

Ask your sponsors to send event invites via email. Prompt them to share social events and offers on Twitter. Coordinate so their promotions happen at the same time as yours: you don't want sponsors talking about early bird prices when you've moved on to the main ticket sale.

- Will you be at the Dentist's Weekend? Join us at Booth 212 for prizes and drinks.
- Don't Miss It: Open Bar Cocktail Reception Sponsored by PlusDent!

Make it painless and increase the chances your partners will actually play along. Send them ready-to-use marketing materials like HTML emails, PDFs, tweet copy suggestions and landing pages. Give them a promotional calendar and outline the expectations.

Referrals

What would you pay to get a registration without having to find it yourself? With a referral program, your fans can generate signups for you in exchange for a reward.

Put a referral offer on the thank-you page of your registration and in the confirmation email. Share the offer on Twitter and LinkedIn.

- Refer a friend and we'll give you free VIP seating at the keynote!
- Share The Love: If you refer a friend, we'll give you both $50!

How to Market Your Mobile App

If your mobile app is going to be the communication hub you want it to be, you'll need as close to 100% adoption as possible. Getting people to download and use your app doesn't have to be hard, but it will take a few strategic moves to ensure success.

The number one rule for ensuring app adoption is to make sure that it's useful. If your audience recognizes your app as a useful resource the second they open it up, you've hooked them. And if it's the main source for finding out all the important information about what will be happening - they'll basically have to download it! Here are some other app marketing guidelines:

Tell Them Early

The sooner you can have your event app ready, the better. Ideally, you'd be able to deliver it to them the minute that they register for the event. Keep in mind that this doesn't have to mean that the content inside of the app is 100% finished at this point. (You can always update it later.) It just means that there has to be some content of value already inside. For example, your app might be the exclusive place to see your event's schedule.

Tell Them Every Way Possible

People don't always respond to a marketing message the first time around. In fact, they rarely do. That's why it's important to spread the word about your event app in a variety of ways. Email works, social media is great, but one of the best ways we've found is to make a video. Try making a simple walkthrough of your app that explains a few basic reasons why someone would want to use it. You don't have to be Steven Spielberg to make a great video.

Check out our How-To on making a quality app promo video.

Tell Them Onsite

The absolute fail-proof way to get 100% app adoption is by making it a part of your check-in process onsite. Train your registration and check-in staff to ask each attendee if they've downloaded the app. They might be particularly motivated to do so if they find out that they only way to access the event schedule is by downloading the app. You can also make mention of it in your opening sessions.
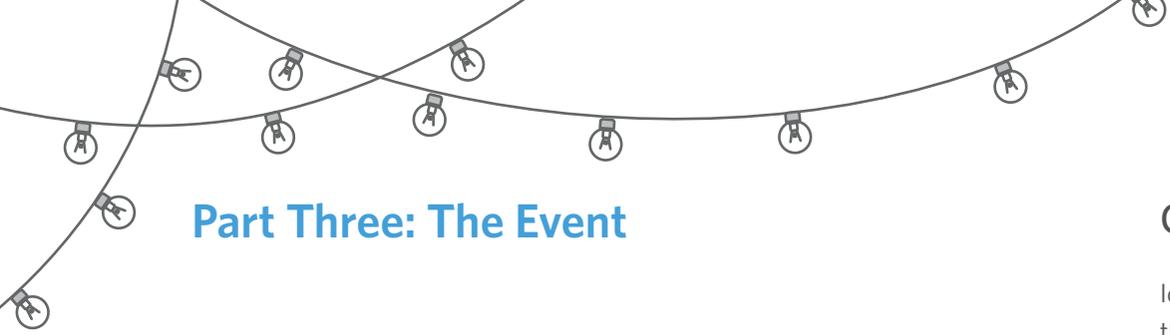
Part Three: The Event

Getting Ready

Ideally you'll be able to complete a site walk-through and meet with the entire team a week before the event.

On-site registration

The registration line is your chance to make a good (or bad!) first impression. Your attendees are making judgments about the event as a whole based on this process. They're standing around looking at their phones, and they're more likely to share their experience on Twitter and Facebook. So make that experience positive!

- Alleviate registration "rush hour" by offering pre-event registration in the days leading up to the event.
- Registration staff should know the venue and the schedule well enough to answer every question. They should know how to direct users to download the mobile app.
- Offer coffee and snacks in the registration area and set up some tables and chairs so people will have a place to go through tote bags and wait for friends.
- Post the instructions for downloading your mobile event guide so attendees waiting in line can begin perusing the schedule and planning their day.

"The opportunity for human error is tremendous when you try to work without an established system." Romy Yan - PRIME Romy cautions against using a printed spreadsheet to check in guests at the door.

Audio/Visual

Touch base with your speakers, sponsors, and anyone who is presenting publicly, and determine what A/V support they need. If speakers plan to present slides from their own laptops, confirm what type of computers they have and add the necessary connectors to your supplies list. If your presenters will be sending in their slides in PDF or .PPT format, require the final versions 48 hours prior to the event.

Test all projectors, microphones, audio equipment and technical connections. Confirm who will be moving equipment if it needs to be re-used elsewhere during the event.

Team run-through

Once you have your team in place, work through the entire event to make sure there aren't any gaps. *"I like to begin with a full needs assessment,"* says Romy from PRIME. *"It's an A-to-Z with the whole team, going over everything we will need for the event."*

"Print a run-of-show document and share it with everyone. It's detailed down to the minute if it needs to be." Dayna Rosen, Go! Experience Design Dayna, a corporate events producer, works directly with dozens of global finance, automotive and television brands: ideating, managing and executing their customer-facing and internal events.

Walk through the event plan and confirm that every element is assigned to someone who is accountable for it. Quiz the owners of each task on their plans for various contingencies. If you workshop potential problems now, it will really take the pressure off when they happen!

Set your level of expectations. Talk to the team about who the attendees are. Everyone on the team–from the hotel's front desk team to the security detail–needs to know who your guests are and how they should be treated.

Picture the event from the attendee's perspective during this walkthrough. Are transitions smooth? Is anything confusing? This is your last chance to find wrinkles in the plan.

Require that all team members arrive at the location at least 1 hour prior to the event. Make sure you have a secure place for staff to keep their personal items.

The Event Itself

All of the planning, coordination and hard work are about to pay off! You will be called upon during the event by staff members looking for guidance or help, but try to spend some of your time acting like an attendee. This will help you evaluate the whole experience.

Circulate the event space. Check in with sponsors and speakers. Chat with guests about the experience. You will get the best idea of the event's efficiency and experience by making the rounds.

"Even when things get hectic, you have to trust your team. You've all worked to get to this moment. You all have the same goal." Dayna Rosen, Go! Experience Design

Provide an official place for event feedback in real-time. As you talk with attendees, prompt them to fill out a comment card or complete an in-app satisfaction survey. This will help prevent you from getting roped into a long conversation about feedback when you need to be moving on, and it will give you the ability to follow up personally.

The schedule will tell people where to go, but you might encounter unexpected traffic patterns. Part of the venue or schedule might be getting less attention from attendees. If you notice that the exhibit hall is quiet, send a push message to guests' mobile event guides with a sponsor offer or an update. A push message will go out instantly, even to the users who don't have the app open and running on their phones.

Get the message out

Your event's influence goes beyond the walls of your venue. You have the opportunity to convert your attendees into fans—and to get your fans to spread the message!

Plan ahead: Schedule tweets and other posts ahead of time. Schedule a few posts per day, with the expectation that you or your marketing team will supplement the scheduled posts with real-time updates.

Put social front and center: Encourage your attendees to share what they're experiencing on social media. Post the event hashtag around the venue and pre-load it as a template in your event app's built-in social media features. You can make photo sharing fun by aggregating user-created photos within the app. Project a live feed of photos and other social media shares relating to your event on a big screen in a public place. Offer prizes and giveaways for people who share photos and videos.

Get your speakers and sponsors involved: Your event partners and VIPs have more to gain from social amplification than the average attendee. Make it easy and valuable for them to share their experience and knowledge. Promote their Twitter handles on venue signage and in the mobile event app.

Collect audience questions through social media: Let attendees know that they can submit questions for your speakers and panelists by tweeting with your event hashtag. If there is a Q&A portion of the discussion, have the speakers take a few of the questions live. Speakers can follow up on unanswered questions within a few hours.
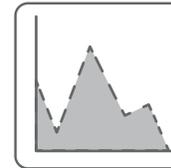
Listen using your app

Assuming you've got everyone on board with the event app, you'll now have an active feedback channel to access while the event is happening. This is great for adjusting on the fly and being sensitive to your attendees' experiences. Here are three ways you can keep an ear out during your event:

The Social Feed

This is where most of the social app activity will be gathered. You can see which sessions are most popular, what subjects people are most interested in discussing, and a feed of recently added photos to the shared photo album. Use the feed as a way to gauge your attendees' overall sentiment, but keep in mind that not everyone is a social butterfly. A social feed will mostly tell you what the most active app users are thinking.

Metrics

Checking your app's metrics during the event is the best way to get an objective view of how people are navigating it. Take a look at your download numbers to see what percentage of your attendees are using the app. You can also get an idea if one particular schedule session is lagging in interest. If so, take the time to send a push notification to remind people it exists!

Surveys

Yes, surveys are great for reflecting on your attendees' feedback after the event, but they can also help you improve in real-time. If you have a burning question about any element of your event, try tossing a survey into your main menu to get a quick burst of informative data. You can get as creative as you want - even let people choose the type of music they want to hear at the after party!

Part Four: Evaluation and Follow-up

Close the loops

You've closed the doors and said goodbye to your guests. What happens next?

Before you can rest, you need to wrap up.

- Collect files from photographers and videographers on-site before you leave.
- Check in with the strike teams, the partners who are packing up, and the security team to make sure everyone is exiting properly.
- Go over the equipment checklist for missing items.
- Take care of any vendors who require payment right away.
- Gather any lost-and-found items from the venue.
- In the morning, send an email to team members. Ask them if they have any loose ends that need to be dealt with right away.

Say thank you

A successful event is the combined work of many people. A personal, warm, sincere thank-you goes a long way toward giving a positive last impression, and helps build strong relationships for the next time around.

Make it personal. It's appropriate to send a handwritten card or a gift to sponsors, partners, donors, speakers, team members, volunteers and vendors. If you aren't planning to send something physical, send an individual email to each contributor. Don't send an impersonal mass email.

This is also a good time to ask for feedback from the people you worked with on the event. Ask for specifics like how smoothly the setup and breakdown were, if there were any technical issues, and what you can do to make the event better next time. The responses you get from your team and partners are extremely valuable. If there were any complaints, it's appropriate to follow up personally, acknowledge the issue, and give an outline for how to address it next time.

Extend the lifetime

Your message and theme don't need to fade into obscurity when the event is over. A coordinated campaign of follow-ups and social media will keep attendees engaged and sharing. Your goal is to keep your event top-of-mind for as long as possible... until registration opens for the next one.

Tracy Robey's event, the RSA annual meeting, hosts some members who have been in the society since the 1950's. But many of her attendees are young and extremely tech savvy. How does she communicate to her very disparate guests, making them happy and excited for next year's event?

"For newer members, it's important to pay attention, and to let them know you're listening and willing to change," says Tracy. She has seen success from responding to social media outreach and survey results, and sharing details about how the event plans to adapt. For older members of the RSA it's all about upholding traditions. Tracy's strategy for that portion of her audience includes a post-event email focus on the closing dinner, a long-held tradition. Tracy will grow the event each year because she knows her audience, understands what they look forward to, and communicates about those elements in the follow-up campaign!
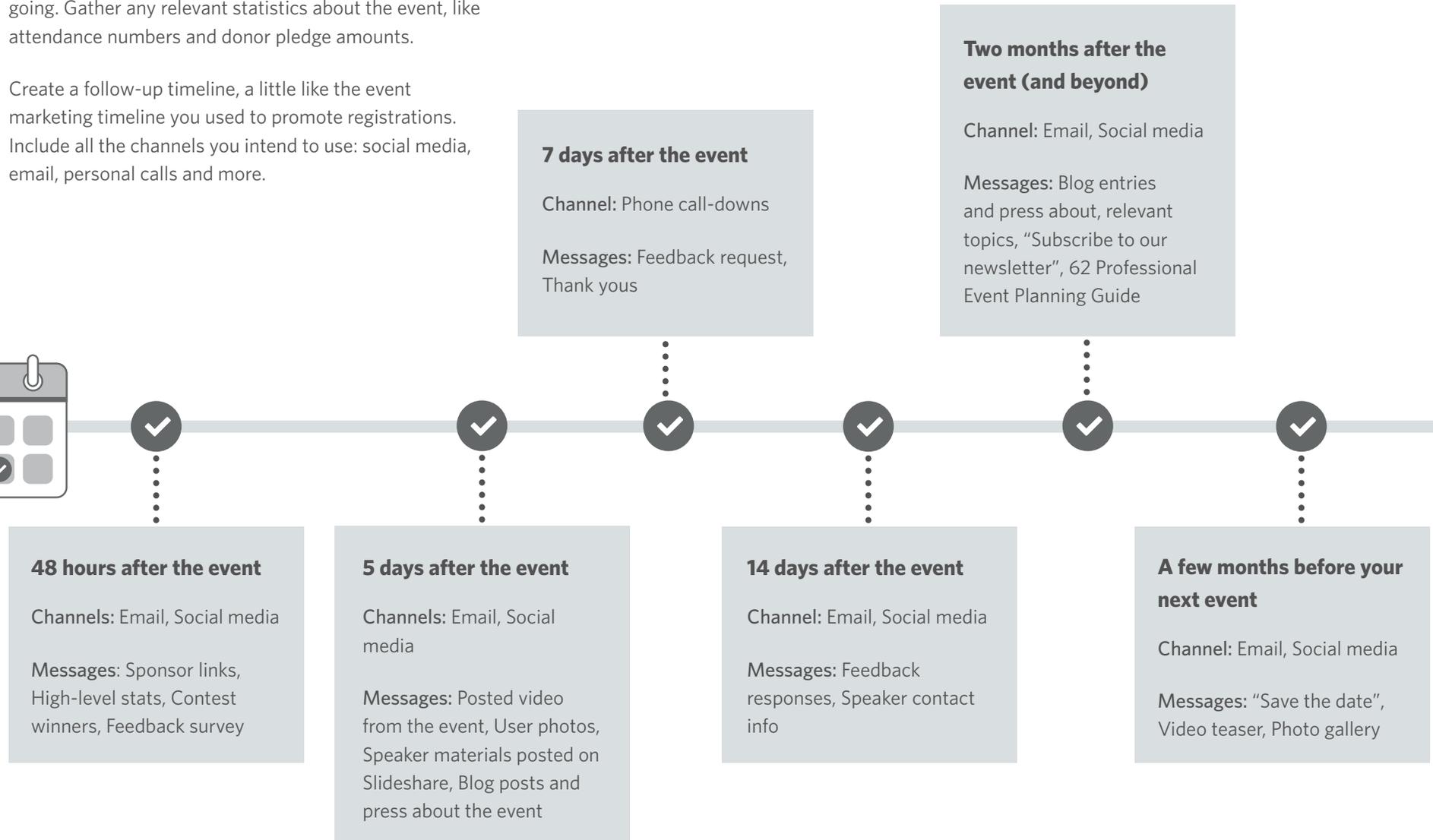
If you succeeded in making your event app a go-to hub for attendee interaction, you can also rely on it to carry on the conversation beyond your event's end date. App users can return to remember information related to individual sessions, keep in touch with their new contacts, and may even still contribute to the social feed!
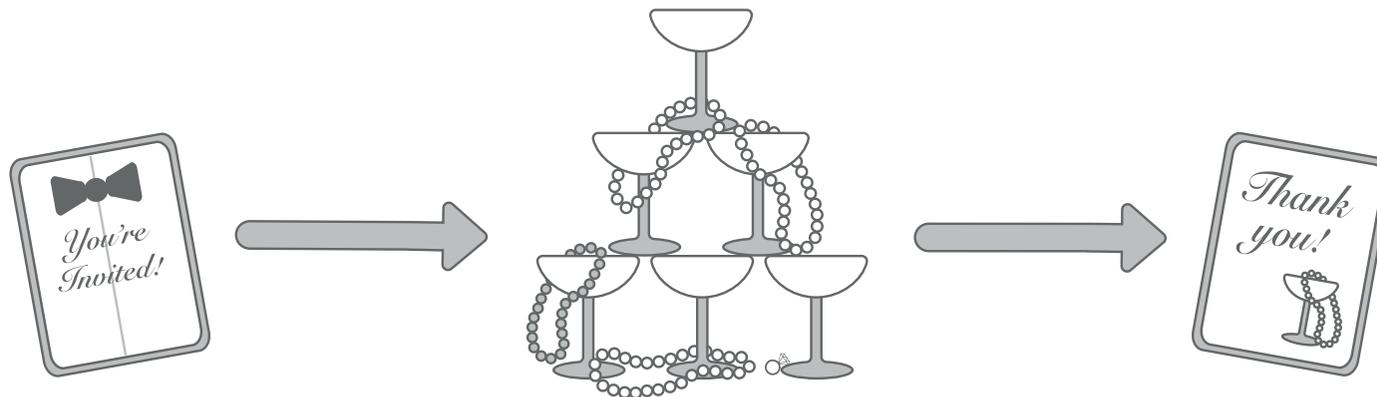
Follow-Up Plan

Collect recorded video of the sessions, speaker presentations, user-submitted photos, contest winner information, blog entries about the event, press, and anything else you can use to keep the conversation going. Gather any relevant statistics about the event, like attendance numbers and donor pledge amounts.

Create a follow-up timeline, a little like the event marketing timeline you used to promote registrations. Include all the channels you intend to use: social media, email, personal calls and more.

7 days after the event

Channel: Phone call-downs

Messages: Feedback request, Thank yous

Two months after the event (and beyond)

Channel: Email, Social media

Messages: Blog entries and press about, relevant topics, "Subscribe to our newsletter", 62 Professional Event Planning Guide

48 hours after the event

Channels: Email, Social media

Messages: Sponsor links, High-level stats, Contest winners, Feedback survey

5 days after the event

Channels: Email, Social media

Messages: Posted video from the event, User photos, Speaker materials posted on Slideshare, Blog posts and press about the event

14 days after the event

Channel: Email, Social media

Messages: Feedback responses, Speaker contact info

A few months before your next event

Channel: Email, Social media

Messages: "Save the date", Video teaser, Photo gallery

Evaluate

Taking a critical and informed look at the event as a whole will allow you to improve over time, will give you vital information you can use to sell to sponsors and sign up great speakers next time, and can help you understand where your budget went.

Begin to evaluate your event right away, and put your conclusions in writing!

Some types of data, like survey responses and sponsor ROI follow-up, will have to be gathered over the next few weeks and months.

"If one person goes to the trouble to write a comment, there are probably thirty that didn't. We read every one, and we shift and adjust." Mark Knowles, Bend WebCAM

Dorian Tomace, VP of Global Risk Education at MasterCard, agrees that a post-event survey is one of the best ways to evaluate your success. *"We hold ourselves to a high standard, and we are always adapting,"* says Dorian. *"Use a survey to make sure your expectations were met on content, topics, speakers, venue, location and price. Ask if it compares with other events they attend."*

Putting Your App's Data to Work

One of the great payoffs of your event app will be the wealth of data it collects over the course of your event. If you know what to look for, you can use the metrics your app provides to evaluate your own performance, get better year-over-year, and decide where you can afford to adjust your budget. Here's how you can translate your app data into actionable insights for yourself.

App Downloads: This can tell you the percent adoption of your app. It will give you an idea of how effective your app marketing was, and just what exactly your mobile reach was.

Most-Clicked Menu Items: What were the most popular items in your app? This will tell you how effectively your app was designed and which pieces of information people gravitated to the most.

Most-Viewed Schedule Items: Which of your sessions were most popular? In addition to your session feedback and ratings, this metric can be used to determine which sessions were most immediately appealing to people viewing your schedule.

Most-Viewed List Items: Say you had a list of speakers or sponsors in your list. This metric will allow you to see which ones stood out most to your app's users.

Sponsors Views and Taps: Provide your sponsors with real ROI by comparing their impressions to the number of taps they received. It's oftentimes hard to quantify the value a sponsor receives from a particular placement, but an app allows you to deliver exact results.

What should you evaluate?

Registration and attendance

- How did your registration numbers compare against your goals?
- What was your no-show rate?
- Would you plan differently for food and budget, knowing the no-show rate?
- Was the registration process smooth all the way from signup to check-in?
- Would you work with the registration tool again?
- What can you do to increase registration numbers and actual attendance next time?
- Did your engaged audience grow before, during and after the event?

Budget

- What were some of the budget "surprises"?
- Were the big-ticket items worth the expense?
- What would you do differently next time?

Revenue or funds raised

- How did this stack up against your goal?
- What can you do to be more effective as a fundraiser?
- Were tickets priced appropriately?
- If you gave out free or discounted tickets, did you get a return on investment?

Marketing spend and performance

- Which marketing channels gave you the best volume?
- Which channels generated the best cost-per-lead?
- Which channels performed poorly?
- Was there a correlation between specific channels and a specific type of attendee?
- How would you evaluate the tools you used for marketing?
- What kind of marketing mix would you use next time?

Attendee satisfaction

- What did attendees say about your event in the surveys, in your follow-up calls, and on social media?
- Were there any sessions or parties that fell flat?
- Did attendees have complaints about the venue or the food?
- Did they seem happy with the networking opportunities?
- Was their perceived value of the event worth more than the price of the ticket?

Message amplification and lifetime

- How many people used your hashtag before, during and after the event?
- What was the volume of social shares, user photos, comments and follows?
- If you wanted to encourage a specific message or tone, were you effective?
- How engaged is your audience a week, a month, and 6 months after the event?

Sponsor success

- Were your sponsors happy with the volume of leads they collected and the conversations they had?

- Did they feel like the attendees were relevant to their customers?

- After a few months, are sponsors able to report a positive return on investment?

Venue and vendor performance

- Did the venue and vendor teams perform professionally and capably?

- Were they able to deal with contingencies?

- Would you work with them again?

- Effectiveness of the events team

- Was everyone on your team accountable and effective?

- Were there any gaps in accountability, or team members who weren't pulling their weight?

- Did you have enough staff overall?