



THE DIFFERENT SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS FOR EVENT PLANNERS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Each year there are probably hundreds of “top ‘something’ trends for ‘this and that’ year” different publications swear by and publish. We believe such reports may have a value but they should be deeply scrutinized. They won’t mean anything to your organisation unless you reshape them strategically and apply them to the overall strategy of your business.

It is a little bit like listening to motivations speakers or TED Talks and trying to copy-paste the story – the outcome will never be the same, as each individual is different and reacts differently in various situations. The same holds true for associations. Each has their own values and company politics, different views of the world, and mostly different views on how the world should see them. So it is important to get inspired, but to also strategically analyze it and never forget to ask “why”.

That is why we are taking a different approach with this article. We would like to inspire you - event professionals - and the organisation you work for so you can ask yourself the right questions.

1) WHAT IS YOUR GOAL? DOES THE WORD “COMMUNITY” FIT WITH YOUR GOALS?

One of the very first tasks anyone has to do with regard to social media is define a clear goal. Many employ social media because it

is trendy. Well, remember when you were a kid and you wanted to wear “those trendy jeans” just because you wanted to be “cool”. It panned out for some and for others it was a clear disaster. Do not do something only for the sake of it. Make your research and see if you can build your own community by joining one or more channels. By doing this, would you improve the spirit of that community? Do you have something to say and does that fit with the language of the chosen channel(s)?

Ask yourself the hard questions, align your actions with SMART goals, and think of your community and how can you become one of its valuable members.

2) STOP TARGETING EVERYONE. ARE YOUR SERVICES FOR EVERYONE, REALLY?

Talking about community, it is important how you define it. Do you see it as everyone - from that old lady with the dog (seemingly potential member?) through your members, to the family and friends of your employees, etc.? Are you trying too hard to speak too many languages at once?

DO NOT TAKE SOCIAL MEDIA LIGHTLY. IF YOUR GOAL IS TO HAVE A "LIKE" OR TWO IT IS EASILY ACHIEVED. BUT YOU CAN AIM SO MUCH HIGHER!

Use your resources in order to define who you want to speak to, their demographics, and their interests. Only then can you become that valuable member of the community you want to be.

3) Are Millennials all that important?

Lately, everyone associates social media with Millennials. They seem like this special group of people speaking a special language. We will tell you one thing - Millennials, as with any generation, might indeed be different from the generation before. Generation X was different from the Baby Boomers before them but nobody seem to be so obsessed about this change.

So do not think so much about this generation change, as it happens in your audience so, simultaneously, does it occur in your workforce. And remember that while it is still not easy to identify the right person to take care of your social media do not simply

give it to the person with the most active personal Facebook. Be more critical - being a Millennial does not make a professional in social media.

4) ARE YOU TRYING TO BE EVERYWHERE? IS YOUR AUDIENCE THERE TOO?

After you have defined your audience and have not slipped on the slippery slope of buzz words, there is another trap awaiting you - which channels to join? You might be thinking of joining all the big ones (buzz words again) – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. but can you “speak” all these languages?

If you do not often (or indeed ever) produce videos it does not make sense to join YouTube. If your community does not have the time to screen or post on Twitter (as busy doctors often don't), do you see a point in joining?

After defining clearly the goals and the target audience, doing research on the type of social media channels would yield the right answer as to what is worth joining and what not.

5) GIVE VOICE TO YOUR EMPLOYEES. MAKE THEM BE THE FORCE BEHIND YOUR STRATEGY.

It is hard to sound like a human when your organisation employs so many people and has a strictly defined brand message. And it is already a widely spread opinion that it is not companies as such that are the ones succeeding but the people of which they are made.

So instead of spending money on others talking about your brand, inspire your own people and ask them to show that pride to everyone, everywhere. They will be the biggest advocates for your brand, the biggest motivational speakers talking about each success made together.

6) AT THE END OF THE DAY, ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH ONLY "LIKES"? HOW ABOUT DISLIKES?

Do not take social media lightly. If your goal is to have a “like” or two it is easily achieved. But you can aim so much higher! If you have already done all the research and strategic thinking, why settle for low targets? Measure. Measure again and analyze the results against your goals. Quality is more important than quantity, certainly, but numbers will give you another view on the situation and will inspire further actions for you to take and keep abreast of what's changing in your field and social media alike.

This article was provided by the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers, author Patrizia Semprebene Buongiorno, Past President of IAPCO, and Vice President of AIM Group International, Rome, Italy. IAPCO represents today 120 professional organisers, meeting planners and managers of international and national congresses, conventions and special events from 41 countries. info@iapco.org / www.iapco.org

