

Five Components You Should Include In Your Trade Show Social Media Plan

By Traci Browne

If you plan to use social media as part of your trade show strategy, whether a show organizer or an exhibitor, you're going to need to include in your plan how that activity will be monitored. I know of a company who put together what sounded like a great social media activity. Attendees would be posting pictures of the company's mascot all over Vegas and then posting them on Facebook. The most creative picture would win a prize. But it didn't work.

They failed to include in their plan what exactly was going to happen when the contest was actually in full swing. Attendees were doing some posting on the company Facebook page, but no one in the company was playing along. The contest went cold very fast.

When you create your social media plan, you should:

1. Include a timeline for exactly when each piece will be implemented.

That timeline should include check-in dates. Check-in dates are intervals where you will evaluate how your plan is progressing. Making minor changes and fixes early on can save the entire plan from failing in the end.

2. Plan for the before, during and after the show.

How will you promote what you are doing in your booth to both the trade show audience and the wider virtual audience? How will you get them interested and involved in what you are doing? How will you instruct people how to participate? If visitors are unfamiliar with the tool or platform you are using, you will need to have personnel available to assist them. But the last thing you want is for your salespeople to spend all their time teaching visitors how to set up their own Twitter accounts and explaining what *retweeting* is.

3. Plan who specifically will keep your audience engaged and how he will do that.

It is clear in the mascot photo plan that no one was assigned to keep the online audience engaged or to build excitement. You could assign this task to someone in the office and/or to someone at the show dedicated to this task. At least one booth staffer should be assigned the role of helping booth visitors with the contest. That way, the sales and support staff could focus on their assignment of promoting the company's products.

4. Have a clear policy in place as to what is ok and what isn't.

What if someone posts an inappropriate picture on your Facebook wall? Appropriate is not subjective. Not in this case. If you clearly define what kind of photos will be deleted (and post these policies on your Facebook page), those responsible for monitoring the photos will have an easy job. Include in your plan who exactly is responsible for this task and how often the photos

will be checked. This not only will help you sell your strategy to management, but will also eliminate the “I thought you were going to do that” discussion.

5. Define how the program you are running at the trade show will be used in future marketing or messaging.

If it is a one-time promotion, how will you close it out in a way that will make sense to people who stumble across it months later? Remember, social media doesn't go away. The last thing you want is for people to stumble on a wacky content when doing a Google search on your company and wonder what it's all about. On the flip side, you don't want to let good marketing gems fall through the cracks. Be sure you have a way to collect any customer tweets raving about your product demos to include in future campaigns.

Traci Browne spent the last 15 years in the trade show industry. Much of that time was spent teaching exhibitors how to get more from their trade show marketing dollars and teaching show producers how to structure their shows to make their sponsors and exhibitors happier. She is the author of “The Social Trade Show - Leveraging Social Media and Virtual Events to Connect With Your Customers.” Traci now spends her time working with clients as a content marketer, captivating her clients' customers through story telling. [Click here to check out her website: Trade Show Institute – A Service of Red Cedar Marketing.](#)