

# 10 TIPS

## TO DRIVE ATTENDANCE TO YOUR EVENT

The needs, values, and priorities of event attendees are ever-changing and to create success in driving event attendance, the marketing strategies need to be as nimble and evolving as the needs. By implementing strategies that create meaning and engagement in your events, you can build word-of-mouth advertising and benefit from a loyal fanbase of repeat attendees. These strategies are crucial for both the long-term success of your event and create solutions for building out a more extensive attendance list for your upcoming production.



# INCREASE EVENT ATTENDANCE WITH THE FOLLOWING TIPS

## 1 WORK WITH THE DESTINATION ORGANIZATION TO UNCOVER AND MARKET WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT THE DESTINATION.

Work with your Destination Organization contact to identify infrastructural, cultural, and individual aspects that make the location unique and to understand complementary services that can impact the attendance of your event. Tapping into the destinations capital and marketing it effectively can not only ease the lift on the planning team and impact the bottom line, it can also drive an experience that the attendee could only get at your event in that destination. Some creative solutions could include:

- Explore opportunities that provide discounts and incentives for attendees to extend their trip and experience the destination recreationally before or after your event.
- Re-allocate funds from strategies such as a pre-promote toward introducing the local culture and creating special and unique experiences.
- Provide easy ways for participants to extend their trip, such as partnerships with hotels or providing leisure travel suggestions.
- Take a “collaboration over cancellation” approach to each location and be intentional in supporting the progress of the local community.

## 2 CREATE AN INTERACTIVE, EXPERIENTIAL, AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL.

Attendees come with different learning styles, individual needs, and attention spans. Building both planned and organic networking, collaboration, and connection into your event space and flow will maximize the experience for all delegates in attendance. Consider the mix of personalities and align a mix of interactive opportunities and event elements that make all feel that they have a place and an important role at the event. Some creative solutions could include:

- Semi-circle Q&A sessions following presentations that encourage engagement and active participation.
- A “choose your own adventure” format that allows attendees to feel they are in control of their learning and can maximize the value of their time.
- Develop a plan for the in-between session moments that provides structured opportunities for participants to connect.
- Looking at the branding and signage as more than just wayfinding and advertising. Plan out how this resource be used to make people feel informed and connected.





### 3 DON'T JUST DEFINE THE INTENTION OF YOUR EVENT, ARTICULATE IT TO THE STAKEHOLDERS.

Examine the values of both your organization and your attendees to create events that are values-aligned and to provide opportunities for participants to see themselves as part of the bigger picture. Once you have defined the goals, objectives, and intentions of your event, share it with all stakeholders internally and externally, including attendees. When the objectives of the event are clearly defined, attendees have the opportunity to create meaning for themselves and advocate internally for the value of attending. Some creative solutions could include:

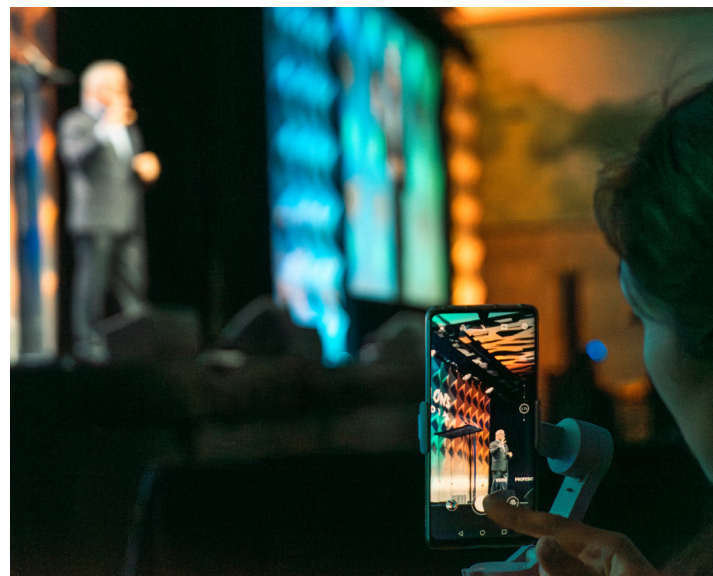
- Provide the attendees with verbiage and resources that will help them articulate the objective of the event and advocate internally for budget approval to attend. Provide these resources in a timeline that aligns with the typical budgeting season of your attendee base and ensure that the value proposition is adjusted for each event to align with the new objectives.
- Consider attendee needs when determining the physical infrastructure of the event by including elements such as prayer rooms, nursing mother rooms, calming spaces, inclusive language, etc. Make sure these intentional spaces are articulated in advance and help attendees feel secure in their decision to attend.
- Work with the destination organization to understand how your event can make a positive environmental and sustainable impact and voice those sustainable practices to your attendees before, during, and after the event. Supporting the progress of the local community.

### 4

### CONSIDER THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON YOUR EVENT.

Technology is a valuable tool and using it strategically to engage participants can create ongoing and meaningful interactions that transform one-time attendees into ongoing event ambassadors. Every audience is different and understanding the needs, wants, and learning styles of your participants is key to a successful use of technology. Some creative solutions could include:

- Work to understand the “why” behind hybrid and online attendee preferences, no matter how small the percentage. Do they prefer a hybrid option due to accessibility needs, budget needs, or other event factors? Once you uncover the why, adjust to meet those needs in the live event and segment your marketing to this group.
- Determine how technology can be used to impact the accessibility needs and learning preferences of your audience. Be sure that the technology used is enhancing the participant's experience instead of complicating it.
- Work with the Destination Organization to understand any technological tools that could provide you with a better understanding of the attendees' behavior patterns. This technology could be in the form of movement tracking platforms or apps that provide discount programs at local entities. Gaining a better understanding of where your attendees are going in the city can help you build more robust attendee profiles and create meaningful partnerships and experiences at future events.
- Consider how you can use technology to create communities prior to the event and create space for those groups to connect at the event.





# 7

## CREATE AN ORIGINAL AND UNIQUE EXPERIENCE FOR ATTENDEES.

More than ever attendees are aware of the value of their time, and they are increasingly specific on where they are willing to spend it. Creating an original and unique experience that allows attendees to connect with the content and community will ensure that they leave with a sense of fulfillment and, ultimately, return to the event in future years. Some creative solutions that will create a “must-attend” event could include:

- Consider the gaps in the industry and include compelling topics that meet the industry’s needs. These topics could be new to your audience or discussed with an un-traditional or different perspective. Unexpected guest speakers or unanticipated learning formats are a great way to present information that stands out.
- Create specific spaces for mentoring sessions, allowing the community to connect with other professionals on topics that matter to them.
- Work with the Destination Organization to provide opportunities for attendees to engage with the local community around causes that are important to them. Letting attendees give back will create long-term impact and leave the attendee with a sense of deeper value.

# 8

## STAY CONNECTED THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA.

Strategically utilizing social media and digital plans as a way to further understand your audience, gather feedback, and engage will create a more comprehensive attendee profile and communication plan. Some creative solutions could include:

- Utilizing influencer marketing and user-generated content as a way to create trust and reach the right audience. Choosing endorsements wisely is a great strategy for ensuring awareness of your event reaches the desired group and builds positive impressions of your event.
- Strategically monitor your participant’s preferred social media platforms to stay connected and engaged with your audience before, during, and after the event.
- Gather feedback through social media by analyzing your participants frustrations, needs, complaints, and desires during your event, and make adjustments in real time.



# 5

## DETERMINE HOW YOU WILL MEASURE SUCCESS AND REPORT IT BACK TO THE ATTENDEE.

When measuring the success of your event or marketing strategies, it's important to take a holistic approach. Depending on your event goals and intentions, there are several measures of success beyond straightforward metrics like attendance numbers. Because success looks different to each stakeholder, increasing what you measure and how you report it back may increase long term attendance outcomes. Some creative solutions could include:

- Partner with the destination organization up front to understand what success looks like to their community and what they measure. If the destination can share information around economic impact or other local engagement statistics, the planner can help attendees see the impact they have made into the community.

- Attendee satisfaction is important for long-term success and can be measured through different avenues. Considering looking at the data from survey satisfaction results, tradeshow traffic, reviews, year-over-year booking timelines, hotel shoulder night bookings, and social media engagement during the event, etc. Compiling the intel into one picture can support a successful blueprint for the future.

- Measuring the impact that attendees have made on the community and the environment can be a very important tool that allows them to not only feel emotionally connected to the event, but also attend with the comfort of knowing the planning organization is taking those factors into consideration. Sharing measurements around environmental or social offset areas will create a deeper connection between the attendee and the event.



# 6

## CONSIDER THE OPTION OF CO-LOCATION.

One option to consider when planning your event is co-location. Co-location is an opportunity to partner with a non-competitive, or even complimentary organization to expand availability, secure prime dates and locations, decrease costs, and offer attendees an opportunity to engage in multiple events at one time that could benefit them professionally. Some creative solutions could include:

- In the case where a destination or hotel does not have preferred availability, ask if there are other non-competitive groups that could be layered with yours to create a lucrative pattern and rooms-to-space ratio, and even secure a better deal for the event and attendee.

- Work to have a deep understand of the specific job disciplines of your attendees and what co-located events would benefit them without being in direct competition with your event.

- Explore co-location opportunities that may also provide a prospect to pull from a new audience not previously accessible. By combining resources and marketing strategies with another organization, there is an opportunity to increase reach.





# 9

## KNOW YOUR ATTENDEE BASE PROFILE AND BUILD YOUR STRATEGY ON IT.

Having a deep understanding of who is attending your event will help you create an event with a higher return rate. This understanding needs to go beyond surface level understandings. Some creative solutions could include:

- Consider the ratio of attendees who are members vs non-members, how that number changes year-over-year, and how those attendees interact at the event. Gaining an understanding of the value a non-member associates with the event can evolve into a value proposition to retain them as a member and create a repeat attendee.
- Consider the workforce associated with the industry and look at any shifts that are taking place. With many industries experiencing new members to their workforce and largely remote teams, there could be opportunities to create programs and spaces that meet new needs. Consider event ambassador programs that connect newcomers with repeat attendees or spaces for remote teams to connect with each other at the event. Evolving the value proposition to meet the new needs will encourage organizations to send more of their team to the event.
- Consider the typical booking patterns of your attendees. More and more events are experiencing last-minute registrations and looking at those patterns and working to create incentives to book earlier can help the event organizer create a better overall experience and communication plan.



# 10

## CREATE A STRATEGY THAT ENGAGES BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE EVENT.

Communicating with your attendee base throughout all stages of the event cycle will increase the likelihood that they feel informed and comfortable attending the event. Some creative solutions could include:

- Work with the Destination Organization to build excitement about the destination appeal in advance of the event. Most destinations have marketing resources and teams in place that can help in the creation of a plan that exceeds a simple micro-website or brochures. Tap into those resources.
- Have a strategic plan in place for how you are going to communicate safety and accessibility. Attendees have varying needs, wants, and perceptions of safety. Understand what is important to your attendees and overcommunicate. The more they know what to expect, the more in control they will feel.
- Event teams find themselves at the point of exhaustion by the time of event departure. Set a post-event communication plan in place in advance and have communications scheduled so your attendees leave feeling excited about the next event. Keep your event top of mind by consistently communicating the event value proposition and building excitement going into the next registration cycle.





