

**Mobile and Social Media -
New Communication Methods for
Event and Trade Show Marketing**



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I recently had an opportunity to review the results of an interesting survey of corporate trade show and meeting managers created and implemented by [MC²](#). MC² designs, constructs, installs and stores exhibits from small strategic exhibits to comprehensive trade show experiences. The company also produces corporate events and meetings including general sessions, special events, entertainment booking, production, meeting logistics, and deployment. This is an ongoing survey, and MC² shares the results with anyone who participates.

[Click here to take the survey >>](#).

(<http://survey.constantcontact.com/survey/a07e2i3kbp1ftbn57hg/start>)

The survey turned up a wealth of interesting information, but one response caught my attention more than any other. The question was “Is your company always looking for new ways to deliver your messages and products at trade shows?” Seventy-five percent of the responders said yes.

Of course, this interested me because for three years I have been writing about new ways to deliver marketing messages, mainly through social and mobile media. Therefore, I am dedicating this white paper to those people who are looking for new ways to communicate at trade shows and events and to MC² for conducting the survey.

How Social Media Can Engage Your Attendees

I would suggest two social networks for meetings, events, and trade shows. The first is LinkedIn.com (40 million members), and the second is Facebook (200 million members).

Yes, I said Facebook! This network has undergone an amazing transformation over the last couple of years. What once was a mash-up for college students has become the darling of the 25-to 50-year-old crowd. In fact, the average age of a Facebook member is about 32. Facebook, unlike some other consumer social networks, has made accommodations for businesses. You can create a “page” for a business and gather fans. You can also create event pages that allow you to post information and invite people to the event. More importantly, you can allow invitees to post comments, photos, and videos to the event page.

LinkedIn is decidedly for business and allows you to create groups, a personal profile, and a company profile. Once a group is created, you can invite LinkedIn members to join, send messages to the members, and allow them to post information on the group page. You can also create polls and ask people what



information they are seeking. In addition, you can create an event page with general information. LinkedIn also allows you to add applications to your profile. There are two applications that allow you to share PowerPoint presentations, and there is even one for collaboration.

Here are my suggestions for ways to use LinkedIn.com and Facebook:

LinkedIn

- Create a group for your event. Keep in mind that you can restrict and approve any members of the group. You can even pre-approve some members.
- Be sure to add the RSS feed from a blog to the news feed. Hopefully, you have a blog established for the meeting.
- Invite both general contacts (many of whom will be members of LinkedIn) and LinkedIn members to join your group, participate in pre-event information exchanges, and post event evaluations and impressions.
- Send messages when you have newsworthy information or to remind people to obtain accommodations because the event is coming up and as a follow-up after the event.
- Post information in the discussion forum and elicit interaction with members.
- Create polls and use the discussion forums to ascertain what attendees are most interested in learning from the event.
- Create an event page containing general information about the event.
- If you don't have one, create a company profile that includes general information about your company.

Facebook

- If you do not have a personal profile on Facebook, create one. You must have this before you can build pages, events, and groups.
- Create a company page and include general company information. A company profile is not allowed to create groups or events, but you can post and have the information show up on your fan's page. Use your page as a general marketing tool.



- Create a group for events. You can create as many groups as you want, so if you have events targeted to different people, create one for each of them. If your events are targeting a single group and are not overlapping, you might create just one event group and use it for all of your events. It will be easier to manage. Groups allow you to send a message to all members, post information on a wall, and have group members post as well. You can post photos and videos, as can your members if you allow them to do so. You have the choice to have an open group where anyone on Facebook can join or a closed one for selected people.
- Create a Facebook event page for each event you want to promote. This can be done through the group administration or through your own personal profile. Either way, your group members are invited with a click of the mouse. If you also want to invite your personal profile friends, you can. Although you will have to select them one at a time, it isn't a hard task.

One other social media tool you might find useful is Twitter. I am sure you have heard about it, as it is the darling of the news media. Twitter has real value for the event business. Twitter is a status update tool. It allows you to tell people what you are doing by creating a message of 140 characters. These short messages can help you draw attention to pop-up meetings at events and trade shows; remind people of parties, seminars, and other activities; and send short lists of facts about activities you are experiencing but others are missing. Twitter followers can opt to receive their messages via mobile phones, so it is perfect for the active meeting guest.

Linkedin and Facebook, as well as a number of other social networks, also use the status update concept. I know what you are thinking. You just don't have time to go to three different networks to enter status updates. The good news is that you don't have to. There is an online tool, www.ping.fm, that allows you to enter your update once and broadcast it to Linkedin, Facebook, and Twitter.

Whichever social media tools you use, you must promote the fact that you are using them and provide links to each. Ask your attendees to share them with other potential attendees.



How Mobile Marketing Can Energize Your Attendees

One thing is for sure. You can bet that your event attendees will have a mobile phone, and it is more than likely that they can receive text messages. Since they will certainly carry their phones everywhere they go, the mobile phone is a great message machine. However, it is much more than that. It is a promotion tool, a mash-up device, a billboard for your brand, a voting machine, a place to post an attendee opinion poll, and on and on. There seems to be no end to its uses, especially now that many people are using smart phone technology. You can even talk on it. Imagine that! 😊

Just to get you started, here are eight ideas for using the mobile phone at events.

- **The Qwest**
Set up a sponsored/branded mobile hunt that utilizes hidden 2D barcodes or text codes to send clues. The participants send the code via their mobile device and receive a clue. The clues will direct participants to specific areas or booths at the event. You decide on the pay off.
- **Opt in**
Prior to the event, send communications using traditional methods, offering to send valuable information during the event if the attendee signs up for your mobile service. Attendees simply send a text to a number to be placed on the list to receive texts during and after the event. Signage can be used during the event to add to your mobile opt-in list.
- **Event Updates**
For people who cannot attend the meeting or an activity, you can broadcast via mobile text. During the activity, you can send information about new products, services, or other information of importance to those who are not present. This also can be done through your status updates on social media and can include links to photos.
- **How-to Service/Product Videos**
If your audience has mobile video capability, you can send how-to videos they can view on their mobile phones.
- **Drive attendees to activities**



Send reminders to mobile phones about seminars, meetings, parties, and other special activities taking place during the event.

- **Local Offers**
Contact destination retailers, clubs, restaurants, and the like to obtain special offers you can pass on to your attendees. Ask the vendors to accept reading the message on a mobile phone as proof of the offer. Send the offers to your attendees throughout the event. Again, this can also be done via your social media, with a printed offer being provided as proof.
- **Pop-Up Events**
It might be fun to conduct some pop-up activities that are not publicized and offer a value to attendees. This could be as simple as a free drink at the hotel bar, a cocktail party with guest speakers, or an offer for the first ten (you decide a number) who respond to see a show.
- **Surveys**
If you do seminars or have speakers, using a mobile phone survey would be a good method to get instant information. You simply send a series of questions (one at a time) with the answer choice being 1 to 5. The attendees answer the questions, and all are tabulated for instant review.

The uses for mobile communications and social media at events and trade shows are innumerable, and with the right brainstorming, I am sure you can come up with excellent concepts that will make your event even better than you imagined. If you need help with the concept and implementation, you can always call me (404.664.5664). After all, this is our business.

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