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Notes



Social Media Marketing for International Trade Shows

By Michelle Bruno

In the past, U.S.-based trade show organizers marketing to potential buyers and exhibitors overseas have had traditional marketing channels to rely on: press releases, print advertising, in country sales representatives, exhibiting in international trade shows, etc. With the advent of social media, the range of options has expanded to include Webinars, LinkedIn, foreign social media platforms and other alternatives. Here are some ways that social media—channels that offer two-way conversations—can augment traditional methods for marketing exhibitions overseas.

Webinars

Live or archived broadcasts of presentations, footage from previous shows, exhibitor/attendee testimonials and other content—especially on topics that are of particular interest to international participants—can offer prospects a glimpse into the U.S. Market. Q & A sessions using the chat function (on the Webinar platform) allow viewers

to ask specific questions. Using overseas presenters or live translators who can field questions from non English-speaking participants can broaden the audience for the Webinar.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is one of the most popular social media platforms for international business. Organizers can use it to market their events in several ways:

- Create LinkedIn groups (and sub-groups) specifically for non-U.S. participants and employ group managers with multi-language skills. Posts to the group should include content in multiple languages.
- Post information—market research, white papers, and articles—geared specifically toward international attendee and exhibitor prospects in established LinkedIn groups that have large participations from overseas business professionals.

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- “Create an event on LinkedIn (events.linkedin.com) and ask attendees and exhibitors to “attend” the event,” says Eric Ly, founder and CEO at Presdo, Inc. and co-founder of LinkedIn. Doing so publishes the event in the participants’ LinkedIn feeds helping to create more awareness of the show.

Foreign Social Media Platforms

“Some social media channels are more popular in other countries than Facebook and Twitter are in the U.S.: Hyves in the Netherlands, Orkut in Brazil and India, and Sina Weibo in China, for example. If your desired market is in those countries, then you need to figure out how to connect with them there or wherever they ‘hang out’ online,” says Sheila Scarborough, co-founder of Tourism Currents, an online learning community for tourism, hospitality and economic development professionals.

Multi-language Blogs

Blogs are a popular way to attract the attention of search engines using key words and tags. They work as well in foreign languages as they do in English. ●

Organizers can use overseas sales representatives or U.S. based staff to post content in the languages of the prospective customers. Content can be repurposed and translated across numerous blogs. Multi-language white papers, videos, and podcasts can also be posted on the blogs to create “international” buzz about the show.

Twitter

Although Twitter is not as popular in overseas b-to-b communities as it is in the U.S., its popularity could increase after the notoriety that the micro-blogging service has received during recent news events. Show organizers can create multiple Twitter accounts—one for each target market—and tweet in multiple languages including “hash tags” that are understandable and relevant to the prospects. Search engines can search Twitter as well as LinkedIn (when groups opt to be searchable) so that relevant content on the show will appear on Google, Yahoo, Bing, and other services.

Social Event Directories

Plancast is one of a new breed of Internet-based event directories that allow users to “create inclusive, location-based plans and share them with friends via Facebook and Twitter.” Even though Facebook and Twitter are not as widely used outside the U.S as some other platforms, search engines (which are used worldwide) list content from these services in their rankings. Trade show organizers can use Plancast and other social event directories to boost awareness about their exhibitions across a wide community of users.

As social media channels become more popular for marketing U.S. shows to a domestic audience, organizers will begin to develop applications that are suitable and effective for overseas prospects. Because the use of mobile phones for business is so pervasive in major international markets, social media channels are the perfect avenues for getting information into the hands of prospective international customers.

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