



## BUSINESS

### Benchmarksmanship

If increased performance is the benchmarking bulls-eye, what are the primary metrics that would drive the greatest impacts for your organizations and events? Join Andy Smith, Senior Vice President for the Experient Sales Network, for this discussion about how to design meaningful benchmarking initiatives that consistently hit the mark.

- Stories are more compelling when they have data to support the message. Trident Statements, for example - 3 out of 4 dentists surveyed recommend Trident gum...
- Analytics behind registration and housing data can assist in specific destination marketing.
- Destinations...Why are we making the decisions we at about the destinations we choose?
  - History for past city use. Did it draw higher numbers? For eh largest meetings top cities rotate every 4-5 years.
  - It would be valuable to know trends among like industry meetings to understand which cities are showing increases in attendance for their meetings. It could in some cases influence city selections.
- Trackability of attendees relative to drive or fly, housed within block or not, etc.
- Venues...tracking more than just rates. Include concessions with offerings and terms.
- On the event level...
  - Track satisfaction levels among other Experient clients.
  - Beyond data, how much of the client decision is based on feel? After the space fits and the dates are available, as well as offerings are attractive, what are the intangibles?
- Does marketing influence your decision? The overwhelming answer was no.
- Familiarity and past satisfaction is the driving force...not necessarily marketing.
- Internal influencers can definitely dictate the destination but not necessarily the venue.

## CHEMA Café

The world of higher education is being rewritten under several pressures, including soaring costs, increased government regulations, and a greater financial reliance on international students, among other factors. Tom Michalisko, Director of Strategic Account Management for Experient, hosts this discussion relative to these changes, risk management and revenue enhancements for higher education association events; staying viable and relevant. (CHEMA members only please.)

### Higher Education -

- Attendance for some associations is up
- Using an APP like EnGAGE as a lifetime sponsorship opportunity.
- Associations are experiencing growth in both institutional and individual membership.
- Most have a transient base where members are with institutions then move on to another association but then maintain their membership individually.
- Cannot use Pecha kucha name without gaining permission.
- TED talks are almost impossible to use name as such.
- Future trends in delivering content.
- Save space and time slots for last minute topics /meetings that could be valid for the membership.
- Some institutions are embracing online education and partnering with those providers
- Trends - sending pre conference mailers
- Re-vamp program book to eliminate wasted pages.

## Improving Your RFP Process

When RFPs go unanswered or come back incomplete, organizers can lose opportunities for potentially better solutions and costs while venues and other local entities can miss out on profitable revenue: everybody loses. Join Jeanette Alvarez and Nathan Tollett, Director of Global Account Operations at Experient and Director of Sales for the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau, to discuss the advantages of engaging CVB partners, and other resources before the RFP is written to maximize the likelihood of quality responses.

### **How to receive Timely, Accurate and Competitive Responses from your Search the first time around**

- Improving your RFP – how to provide the right information the first time – be sure to include accurate information around dates, history, decision timelines! Discuss your event with the local CVB prior to sending lead out. They can guide you through the city or hotels’ need time and ultimately save you a lot of money and time.
- Identify the most important questions to ask hotels and CVBs up front – do not include every question you have around the event. Include only those questions that will help you make your decision. Example – Green Initiative, if you require this information for reporting but not to make a final decision, ask only the city or property you ultimately choose. This will help the city or property focus on the important things up front that will help your decision making and respond a lot quicker.
- Understand how CVBs and hotels evaluate a lead
  - CVB’s and hotels are skeptical when they see the lead going out to more than 5 locations at once. Sometimes they see up to 20 locations!

- Discuss with your city in advance what time of year you can get the best package, what is going on in that city that you can work in as an event for your meeting, or, something that will help draw your attendees.

## Fanning the Flame

Face it: sometimes this business can beat the spark and creativity right out of you, especially for those of us who are more “experienced” in the industry. Join Shannon Watson, Director of Meetings & Education for the Solar Energy Industries Association, for this brainstorming session about how to escape daily ruts and create fun and innovative ideas that drive our events and our organizations forward. (Event professionals with at least 10 years of experience only, please.)

- How to get out of a creative rut?
- All of us in attendance were from the assn and supplier side
- Creativity is not a talent, it is a way of operating
- 2 views:
  - Open mode- wide open view
  - Closed mode - u farmed that creative side of u and u pick and choose which ones to execute well
- How to achieve the open mode...
  - Space - Does being alone help u be creative?
  - Time - give yourself the time to create
- We r solution driven ppl,
- Creativity should be on going... We should constantly be thinking about this
- "Yes and...."
- Feed off of each other, collaborate with each other
- Brainstorming, no boundaries
- Best intention, everyone is free to fail
- Target mtgs, team mtgs for creating
- We all agree that brainstorming is important to the creative process. \*more effective in a smaller group
- Next piece of brainstorming= who is accountable! implementing, etc....
  - Preparation
  - Incubation
  - Illumination
  - Verification
- Incubation- is real, your brain is actively growing this idea (asleep and awake), easily achieved when u r doing something mindless
- u r able to be more creative after u work out
- U cannot be creative in the middle of "noise" ... It helps to lower stress levels
- Another core piece is the "capture"
- We all agreed that the distractions of life and our job get in the way of being creative. We tend to get hung up on the tasks

## Filling the House

Increasing attendance with the right audiences at events makes the financial model work for organizations as well as their exhibitors and sponsors, while also generating greater word of mouth marketing. Join Harby Tran, Director of Marketing for Experient, to discuss attendance building strategies and tactics designed to fill the house for every show.

Here because having issues growing attendance. Anyone research as to why attended is not increasing?

How early are you marketing for your event? We market at the current event.

How do grow attendance when trying to break through the budget issues.

- Offer alumni rates, first time rates, group rates.
- Buying lists are not helpful.
- Get them to your web site. A lot of social media to push people to the web site. Use lists from exhibitors to help them succeed too.
- Exposure...a product offered by Experient. First need to drive them to your website.
- Email campaign has been successful.
  - Spam blockers are detrimental to email campaigns. Change subject line. More isn't necessarily better.
- Conference apps another way to push out content.
- Segment your lists and reach out to past attendees.
- Get sponsors involved as they have a stake in event.

How do you attract younger generation?

- Create young professionals network.
- Make it of interest and relevant for them to come and learn.
- Mentorship program.
- Provide recent college graduate free membership.
- Referral programs.
- Look at who's paying out of pocket vs those whose fees are paid by employee.
- Incorporate job placement component at the conference.
- Include a career consulting segment.
- If it's relevant, cost is irrelevant.
- Facilitators engaging through linked in groups.
- Blogging, twitter....influencer marketing.
- All depends on quality of lists!
- It's an ongoing effort.

How are we capturing data?

- Segment database and customize the message.
- It's not the message you send, but how are you sending it.
- Customer testimonials, videos.
- Incent the exhibitors to bring in attendees.

### Pennies from Heaven

As per person budgets wane and experience expectations continue to escalate, event pros are often forced to make difficult and unpopular decisions to reach budget goals. Dee Blakeney, Vice President of Event Planning at Experient and Joy Womack, Director of Event Management with Experient, lead an exploration of strategies and tactics for delivering what matters most when budgets are tight.

- Food and Beverage
  - Vouchers for breakfast - is it working?
  - Could they could be good for anything?
  - Downtown gift cards for fast food places
  - Combo of sit down breakfast and grab and go for those that show up 3 minutes before
  - Can you negotiate more items on consumption?
  - Banquet pricing vs booth pricing saved \$70k
  - Eliminate a course from meal - served entree without starter and no one missed
  - Set dessert table instead of preset dessert and less people are likely to take dessert
  - Talk to executive chef
  - % discount in contract not necessarily smartest way to go - discuss budget and make menus based on that
  - Piggyback on what other groups are serving
- Av - production
  - HD screens
  - # of staff
  - Local labor vs traveling labor
  - Local labor for set up and tear down - save money
  - Put in contract with av vendor
  - Same as food - talk about budget up front, present options
  - Spandex on stage - looks cool but not more expensive
  - Multi year contracts
  - \$50k new idea fund - credit back for new things you try each year
- Social media
  - Twitter
  - Instagram
  - Extends life of show

- Instant feedback for org
- Free production
- App
  - Can be revenue generating - sponsor able
  - Sponsor for app
  - Make on site program smaller and put more on app to save money
  - Stop handouts
  - Ads on app can live for a lot longer than in the program
  - Jump drives with handouts programmer

### Social Marketing

Reaching people where they are today, especially with younger audiences, means including a healthy dose of social media in the marketing mix. Tom Kaufman, Senior Director of Marketing for MTC, leads this discussion about the most effective social media strategies and tactics for marketing organizations and their events.

- Marketing to individual members seems to be harder.
- More states have budget issues. That revenue stream has become more challenging.
- Challenge is balance of self promotion vs. helping others (1 out of 10 times)
- Can link Instagram with Twitter
- Jab, jab, jab, hook
- Vine useful tool
- Who is your audience and where are they
- Product Showcases on LinkedIn very personalized

### Time Machine

Quantum physics be damned, we're traveling to 2015 (and perhaps beyond) to explore the industry trends that will define the most progressive meetings and events on the planet. Gary Schirmacher, Senior Vice President for Sales and Marketing-Event Management at Experient, captains this voyage to discover the future of events.

What does the future look like?

- Interactive Sessions
- Getting the right people on the floor
- Compiled location based data

## The Participant Story

Surveys can be one of the most strategic and important documents organizers can design to help elicit the rich feedback of our most important stakeholders, yet many wait until the end of the event planning cycle to develop them. Join Jennifer George Lion, Director of Project Management for Experient, to explore how surveys can be designed in advance (beginning with the end in mind) to help simultaneously drive organizational and guest objectives during the event design process.

- Surveys and how they can work for us
  - Metrics that Matters
  - Knowledge Survey
  - Use Pre-event surveys to gauge knowledge of participant in advance of the event and then follow up post event for measuring learning outcomes.
- Communication
  - Make sure you're communicating with the attendee "we would like you to take away one learning objective." Follow up 6 months post survey.
  - As event professionals, we need to ask the attendees for their feedback so we can meet their expectations.
  - Communicate to the attendees "we want to hear what you want." Use baby steps.
- Keep the survey simple and relevant
- Use discussion boxes for additional feedback in the "other" choice.
- Network - set up "speed dating" opportunities for specific appointments. Speed Mentoring.
- Return/completion ratio
  - Use rewards for participation.
  - Return of 20 percent or higher is great participation.
- Other ways to collect data:
  - Focus group with first timers

## You Are Here

Traditional exhibit floor plans often force guests to walk miles to see three different vendors with similar offerings, assuming they're actually able to figure out where booth 1326G is located. Join Cheryl Trinidad, Vice President of Conference Services for LPL Financial, for this discussion of "neighborhoods" and other guest-friendly tradeshow designs.

LPL experiment at advisor national conference for 6K.

Problem how to drive traffic from Home Office to Sponsor booths. Decided to create 6 neighborhoods showcasing San Diego with distinct food and entertainment in each. Reconstructed entire floor. Incorporated Home Office and mini theater into every neighborhood. No matter what sponsors paid, they got the same size booth. Drivers were different food and home office. Created Pavilion with mini-theaters with coaching by top advisors. Also had 289 breakouts. Sponsor packages differentiator was number of breakouts and ability to have more advisor face time. Used WorkSpring to create spaces - ie. an Innovation room with sponsors paying to play. Staff in each neighborhood with buttons "How can I help you" to assist attendees. Started over sharing the Expo concepts - over communicated, which helped meet everyone's needs.

It was time to shake up the same old, same old. Home office partnered with their sponsors to create a different look and feel- ponchos & sombreros in Old Town, etc. easier to give directions to specific sponsor booths. Used 1 on 1 sponsor meetings.

Starting to create Advocates/Ambassadors to run proposed changes past top advisors to get preliminary feedback before committing lots of dollars.

Did count down on Twitter to get concept out to attendees, home office, sponsors, etc.

Noise levels were fine. Entertainers weren't overplaying on each other by pointing them away from each other. Also had roving entertainers - stilt walkers, face painters, etc. have dedicated expo time with nothing else competing as well as open during other hours.

Andrea - must sponsor events to get booth. Don't pay. Very subjective. Some sponsors are competitive and can't be by each other. Taking sponsors out of convention center and putting in ballrooms so fewer attendees. Need reason for attendees to go to sponsors. Fortunately kids are very techy so hopefully some non-sponsor activities will encourage attendance. Creating Olympic model - stuff in lots of different venues. Sponsors are looking for work force, get word out about their product.

Solutions: arrange interview schedules, educating how to present thru mini-theaters. Use social media type treasure hunts with mobile apps to drive attendance. Working on creating student focus groups. Make it a competition/game for kid teams - assign points with rewards

Valerie - sells space to sponsors. Start with a virtual exhibit hall prior to event.

Tanisha - sponsors want private exhibit rooms to talk content, capabilities. Exhibit halls - created an Aisle around exhibit halls for 1600 exhibitors with lounge and theater in center. Have lots of product categories so not everyone wants to play in their specific hall but none of the stories mesh together.

## GLOBAL

### Mi Casa es Su Casa

With more events moving to Latin America, many destinations are coming on strong as legitimate players for organizers seeking something unique for their guests. Eduardo Chaillo, Global General Manager of Latin America for MTC, hosts this café discussing the pros and cons of a variety of emerging Latin American destinations.

- Registration last minute onsite for events
- Time and planning concepts
- Fiscal Housing Brian Bureaus safety context
- Cultural differences
- Imex pavilions
- Taxes in different countries rfc invoicing
- Data collection big data confidentiality rules
- Custom brokers