

24 Tips to Increase Conference & Event ROI by Integrating Social Media!

If you have attended, managed or spoken at an event in the past couple years, chances are good you noticed changes in communication. Conversations are going to a new dimension. No longer is the conversation limited to a one to many dialog from the keynote speaking stage to the audience. Nor are the conversations limited to the event floor, breakout rooms, event handbook or website.

Events are the perfect medium to fully embrace the power of social media. Social media is really one big conversation. Social networks simply serve as a platform for communication to help you build community, generate brand awareness, increase customer intimacy and loyalty, and the list goes on.

If you are hosting an event my guess is you are looking to achieve some if not all of the below objectives:

- *Increase customer intimacy*
- *Improve customer satisfaction*
- *Increase brand awareness*
- *Establish market positioning*
- *Learn about the market or competition*
- *Earn support of loyal brand evangelists*
- *Increase earned media*
- *Identify and establish relationships with partners*
- *Keep the conversation going after the event*
- *Build community*
- *Integrate all of the above*
- *Generate new leads*
- *Sell more products or services*

For the purpose of this document I will offer solid tips to help you achieve higher results leveraging and integrating social media into your business conferences and events. By no means am I going to attempt to give you a full playbook on how to integrate social media into your event. To do such I would need to know more about your business, goals, objectives, audience, community, format of event, location and the list goes on.

Hopefully this white paper will help you get started on the right foot and if nothing else inspire you to better integrate social with a focus on results.

24 Tips to Turn Up the Social Media ROI Volume at Conferences and Events

1. Have a plan. As I state in every article I write... you must have a plan. Know where you are going and why. WHY are you having an event? What business goals and objectives does it support? Bottom line, failing to plan is planning to fail!

2. Don't forget event and conference marketing 101!

Don't over focus on the technical specifics of social media that you lose track of basic event marketing 101! I have seen several events where the host forgot to print an agenda for breakout sessions yet they have a full social media lounge setup.

Ensure every step of the way you are offering value for your attendees, partners and exhibitors.

3. Align social where it can have the greatest benefit for your event attendees and partners. As much as I hate to "assume," I am going to assume that you have accomplished #1 above and that you have a plan with goals and objectives. Assuming you do, then your focus should obviously be on your audience and attendees and helping them reach their goals and objectives. Don't just think of social media at events as "stunt marketing."

Truly focus on the needs of your audience and the chances of your content being shared beyond the walls of the venue are high.

4. Integrate & think about post show before pre-show! The more you can integrate the better! When developing your event plan do not bolt social media on as a band-aid. Instead set clear alignment of goals where social can have a positive impact.

Include social with the other key communication mediums used for the conference or event. This includes but is not limited to email communications, direct mail, in person pre-show networking meetings, flyers, pre-event webinars, and websites.





5. Do a social media audit prior to event. How are all of your social media profiles looking? Are they in need of an update? Are you delivering a consistent brand message? Who is going to tweet, post to Facebook? How will you ensure your messages stay on brand? Does your team have the needed skills to launch a social event or conference? If not, how will you get them trained in time? How will you manage risk? What will you do if a PR crisis should happen? What is your back-up plan should your Twitter hashtag get spammed the first day of the event?

If reading this give you a headache, then call someone that can help. We do [social media audits](#) and [help businesses](#) of all sizes with ensuring success at events and conferences. We would love to [help you get started](#) right and reap the highest business return possible.

6. FOCUS. The worst thing you can do is to attempt to be everything to everyone on every platform. Select the social networks that best align with your audience. What platforms are they hanging out on? What platforms are you going to use and why? Be something to somebody versus nothing to nobody!



7. Know your event attendees, partners and broader ecosystem. The more you can know about all audiences you want to engage, influence and call to action the better.

Get in their heads. WHY are they attending your event? Why should they spend the money on registration fees? Why should they take the day off?

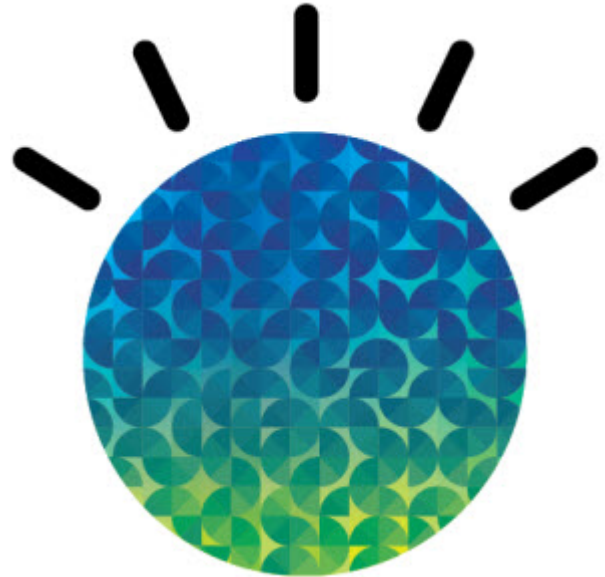
What is in it for them that is different than they can get on your website or the website and blog of the speakers and partners who are suppose to be adding value. Why should an influencer give a rip about your event let alone tweet on your behalf? What is in it for them?

8. Educate your partners and make your partners accountable. Inform your employees and partners of your plan. Ensure they understand your objectives and goals as well as the goals and objectives of the attendees.

Make it known you also have a genuine interest in helping your partners achieve their goals and objectives. The tighter you can bring your key stakeholders and partners into the inner circle the better your results will be.

9. Think out of the box. This is not your granny's social event. Consider technology and mediums you may not be 100% familiar with. As long as you become properly educated and setup the process and procedures to leverage the new technology prior to the event you will be fine.

As an example we were honored to help the IBM Smarter Commerce team with their recent [IBM Smarter Commerce Event in Orlando](#). We helped them turn up the volume in their social media lounge with integrated strategies to build community pre-show, during and post-show. Our work included being present and tweeting live in their social media lounge and at key sessions and special daytime and evening events. We also hosted them and several of their [#SmarterCommerce](#) clients on several live tweet chats and on our [#GetRealChat](#) series. I was very impressed with IBM's genuine commitment to providing value, giving more than they took & leveraging innovative social business tactics.



10. Consider a social influencer outreach program. If your company is new to social media and doesn't yet have the reach or the relationships to turn up the conversation volume on the social waves, explore partnering with others.

IBM did a fun social media influencer outreach program prior to their Smarter Commerce Global Summit event I spoke of in #9 above. You can see a [fun video here of the goods received](#) and [my response to the program](#). Note, for full disclosure, we were already working with IBM prior to receiving the package.

11. Hire the right team both internal and external. Do more than fill tweet and Facebook seats. If you want to increase brand awareness, turn up the relevant social buzz during your social media event, hiring 20 interns from the local college is not going to get you the reach you need. Chances are highly unlikely they are going to help get your message or tweet read by an audience who has an interest in a relationship with you or your company.

You are much better off working with an [agency or consultant](#) who can help you [develop and execute a real plan](#) that includes relevant influencer outreach and engagement. You want people to be facilitating the conversation that "get the content." They need to tweet with context so that your message will resonate with the right audiences to drive the right actions that nurture the right relationships that bring the right results.

12. Share your best stuff. Don't hold back. This is your time to shine and don't be afraid to do such. Don't be afraid that your competition is watching. Be a leader, let them follow you. Don't hold your best content until after the show or the last day.

Give them solid nuggets and treasure chests of value throughout the entire event starting with pre-show.

Deliver value prior, during and after and you'll be amazed at the results. The heartbeat of social media is you. The more you give, the more your audiences will hang on to and share with their communities your every word! Check out our [agency video](#) that speaks directly to this tip "[Heartbeat of Social Media!](#)"



13. Focus on real value to your audience and attendees. Do not lose sight in between the hashtags, Twitter profiles, Facebook event pages who your event is for.

Keep your objectives, goals and priorities focused on the real needs of your audience. What problems are you going to help them solve in their life or business by attending your event? What keeps them up at night that you can help them with? How will you inspire them to connect with you pre, during and after the event?

Focusing on their needs is the best way to ensure success regardless how successful the Twitter campaign or social engagement may be.

Focus more on giving your audience something to tweet about versus getting them to tweet. If you do the first the second will take care of itself!

14. Select a Twitter hashtag early. Don't wait until the day of event to start using your Twitter hashtag and building community. Start using the hashtag the first day you send an email, post an update to Facebook or send a tweet. Be consistent and leverage the hashtag to build community and keep the conversation beating strong during all phases of the event or conference.

15. Be ready for plan B. What happens if your hashtag gets spammed the first or second day of a three or more day event?

What is your backup hashtag? What if one of the tools you planned to use goes haywire? What if the wi-fi has issues? Hope for the best but definitely plan for the worst.



16. Create social visual experiences. We live in a visual social world. An event without pictures is like chicken and dumplings without the yum!

Embrace imperfect perfection. You don't have to be the best camera man or woman on the planet. Use an iPhone, iPad, Android or device of choice. Continually feed photos capturing the awesome event or conference moments to Instagram, Pinterest, Facebook and Twitter.

Setting this plan ahead of time is critical. You must know what platforms you are going to use and how.

Look at it as a social fabric you are weaving and the event is part of the masterpiece. The images can offer insight into your brand, the people within your walls, the customers and partners supporting you and the list goes on. Use the photos to emotionally connect with your audiences near and far.

Check out [SeeSaw](#). It's a new tool which provides a visual display of tweets for specific topics, hashtags. You can search for any word and see a beautiful visual display of the tweets. It encourages people to take photos during the event and share via Twitter as they see their smiling Twitter avatar and tweet appear real time anywhere the SeeSaw wall is displayed. IBM used [SeeSaw](#) at the [Smarter Commerce Global Summit](#). It was so fun seeing our hashtag #GetRealChat displayed throughout the show on the SeeSaw display walls.

17. You are marketing to an audiences of audiences. I love this post Brian Solis wrote titled "[An Audience With an Audience of Audiences](#)." He nails it. You are not just sending a tweet or posting to Instagram an image or status update for the one person. You are posting it with the goal they will share it with their audience.



18. Assign clear roles and responsibilities early. If it needs to get done, assign someone to do it. Don't assume you will figure it out the night before the event. Document the roles and make them available to everyone involved in executing the event including partners and employees. Establish a solid escalation path in case something goes wrong. Assign one person to be the go to person for all things social media related. They can help answer questions, delegate and solve problems when necessary.

19. Make it easy for others to engage. Get in the head of your attendees and partners. Remember, they will be experiencing information overload. Though it may be easy for you to remember the spelling of your CEO or the Twitter handle of the keynote speaker, it may be the first time the attendees have seen the name.

Publish hashtags and Twitter handles on posters, signs, display screens, and even hard copy handouts. Try creating a reference card with all key social media and key speaker information.



20. Don't assume people know what action you want them to take. If you want them to visit a website, include the url. If you want them to retweet content then provide the Twitter handle, hashtag and even the content you want them to tweet! People can't take an action unless they are clear on what it is you want them to do. Don't assume they know if you haven't told them.

21. Don't be afraid to set requirements for presenters. Require your presenters be part of the social conversation. Don't hesitate in requiring them to provide their Twitter handle and event hashtag at the bottom of every slide.

If you are providing the presentation template for presenters to use, make sure you include appropriate place holders for social profiles, web urls, and hashtags.

If you are offering special perks for presenters make it known you also expect them to share information about the event with their communities. This is where the OPC (Other People's Communities) comes into play in a big way! You can read more about it here: [I Respect Your Social Media Community, Do You Respect Mine](#)

22. Confirm the chosen venue can support your digital needs. Confirm all venue capabilities prior to booking. Ask for references. Visit conferences at the location to see the flow, where digital displays are located. Ensure the wi-fi works properly.

Know the upfront costs so you can plan and purchase appropriately. The worst thing you can do is count on an event being uber social to find your attendees can't even get on the internet. Sad to state I have been to numerous events with this problem. Again, this is again falls into the camp of "Failing to Plan is Planning to Fail!"

23. Setup up social measurement early so you can track results. Don't wait until after the event to track social media results. Select measurement tools and strategies early in the planning phase. If you wait until during or after the event it may be too late. Many of the affordable and free tools will only go back so far in measuring past impressions and conversations. Proper and proactive planning in this area is crucial.

24. Have fun! Remember social media really is one big conversation. Don't just do social or be social, be socially relevant and have fun doing such. Your good attitude will shine through via your tweets, posts and images. Roll with the good, bad and ugly. If you do such, your attendees will too!

We know it can be overwhelming navigating the social web today! Connect with us so we can help you zoom far above Status Quo! You can do this!

- Join our [Facebook Fan Page](#) communities. We answer any and all questions related to marketing, brand and social media usually within 24 hours!
- Send us a [Tweet!](#)
- Our blog and website is loaded with tips, tricks [and best practices for business, marketing and social media.](#)
- Hire our agency, Marketing Nutz and Pam Moore our CEO for speaking, social business consulting, coaching, social media training, website development, social media strategy development and execution, brand and identity development, reputation management, SEO, SMO and loads more!

We want to help you achieve real results by integrating social media where it can have the greatest impact on your business.