

EVENT SOCIAL MEDIA 101

38 Tips for Promoting,
Engaging, and Measuring Your
Event Using Social Media



Strategic Event Design
the intelligent choice

Introduction

If you have yet to incorporate social media in the planning, execution and aftermath of your events, you might be of the mindset, “I don’t get all this Twitter stuff!” But trust, us, your event attendees do get it. And you’re missing out on a real opportunity by not using social tools at your events.

For better or worse, although the landscape may change, social media is here to stay. But we like to think it’s for the better. There are so many opportunities for us event planners that we simply didn’t have before names like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and FourSquare came into the picture.

Social media allows us to get a glimpse into what the consumers are saying. And we are in the consumer age, so this it’s vital that we listen.

In fact, 92% of consumers trust peer-to-peer recommendations more than any form of advertising, up from 74% in 2007 (Nielsen).

That means the message is no longer top-down, generated by the brands. The consumer’s opinion matters. And if you’re not in on the conversation, you’re dancing at the wrong party.

If all of this sounds like Chinese to you, fear not. Your pals at Strategic Event Design are here to help you understand how to incorporate social media at your next event. We’ll include introductory, intermediate, and advanced strategies for before, during and after your event.

Best of Luck!

~ Bethney

First Things First: Where Should You “Be”?

You may be overwhelmed with the number of social networks you’re being told you need to be on. And new, trending networks pop up so frequently, it’s hard to keep up. Where is it important for you to have a social presence? While this all depends on your specific business type and model, we’ll give you a general idea of where you should be, and when.

Introductory

If you’re just getting started in the world of social media, there are a few places where you must commence: Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. You’ll get the most bang for your buck out of these networks, as they have 1 billion, 560 million, and 240 million users worldwide, according to [Leverage Social Media](#).



The world’s biggest social network has **one billion users** worldwide, with over 2.5 billion pieces of content being shared daily. Almost every brand should begin their social media presence on Facebook, as most of their audience is on there, and it’s a non-obtrusive way to get in front of them via natural or paid posts.



The second-largest social network is Twitter, with **560 million worldwide users**. Twitter takes a little getting used to, with its 140-character limit and the short lifespan of a tweet. Hashtags have their origin on this network, which might throw you for a loop at first. We’ll speak about hashtags later.



Again, your selections for networks to start with will depend on your individual business. If you market to teenagers, LinkedIn might not be the right space. But with **240 million professional users**, it’s a great place for many B2B and even B2C companies.



We also recommend that you have a blog as a place to generate content and build a community with your followers. What you post on your blog can be shared to the social networks. Be sure you have somebody dedicated to updating the blog with high quality content, or this strategy won't work. As an added bonus, blogging great content typically helps increase your organic search placements and traffic.

Intermediate

Once you start seeing fans in the triple digits on those networks, it may be time to expand your efforts. Your choices for where to go next depend on your target market and the style of your business. If you are unable to dedicate a person to managing these accounts by posting and interacting with other users, it may not be worthwhile. With that said, here are some considerations for where to go next in the social world.




If you have the resources to create videos, YouTube is the first place to go. **Over one billion unique visitors go to YouTube per month.** 80% of YouTube's traffic comes from outside the U.S., but that still leaves a lot of domestic visitors.





While Google+ touts **300 million active users**, marketers have been skeptical about the actual use of the social network. Google's products and services - Gmail, YouTube, Analytics, etc. - are often connected on one Google account. So some say the usage stats may be skewed. But, there's no questioning that if you want to be ranked on the world's #1 search engine, you may want to join their social network.



 Instagram is one of the image-centric social networks. While some stats show that Facebook is dropping among teenagers, Instagram remains popular with the younger generation. The network has **150 million active users** and boasts 50 million photos shared per day. Over half of the traffic is outside of the United States.



 Pinterest is another photo-centric social network, as it allows users to pin and categorize images onto boards. However, you'll find the audience quite different from that of Instagram. An astounding 1/3 of American women are on Pinterest, with **48 million users globally**.

 You may not think of email as a social network. On one hand, it isn't. On the other hand, it's the original. In either case, it's not a marketing tool to ignore when it comes to event promotion, engagement and measurement. If you've built up a decent number of fans on all of these social sites, you might want to think about setting up an email service to keep them abreast of your events in that way. There are **3.6 billion email accounts**, 91% of which check their email daily. 74% of consumers prefer to receive commercial communication via email.

Advanced

If you're blowing it out of the water on those networks and want to reach even more users, there are plenty of niche social networks to get involved with. If you're to this point, you already know your community and should be able to decide which additional networks might be right for you to tackle. Some ideas:



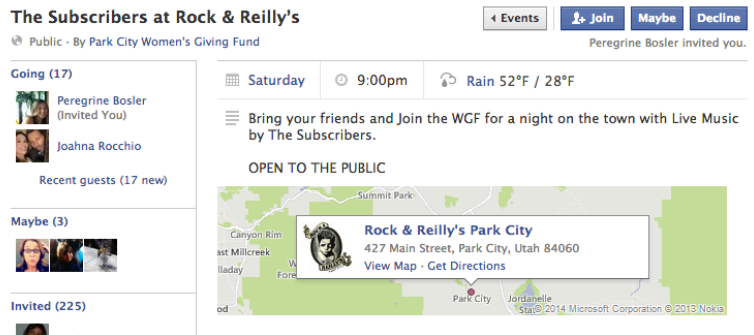


Event Promotion. Now let's talk about how you can use social media to promote your events. It all starts with getting bodies at your function. Whether we're talking about an incentive event for your employees, entertainment for top clients, or an experiential marketing event for your brand, without attendees, it's all for naught. Social media has completely turned around the way event planners make this happen. That said, consumers are more inundated with information, and are likely to be picky about the events they attend. That's why having multiple touch points is your greatest chance for maximizing attendance.

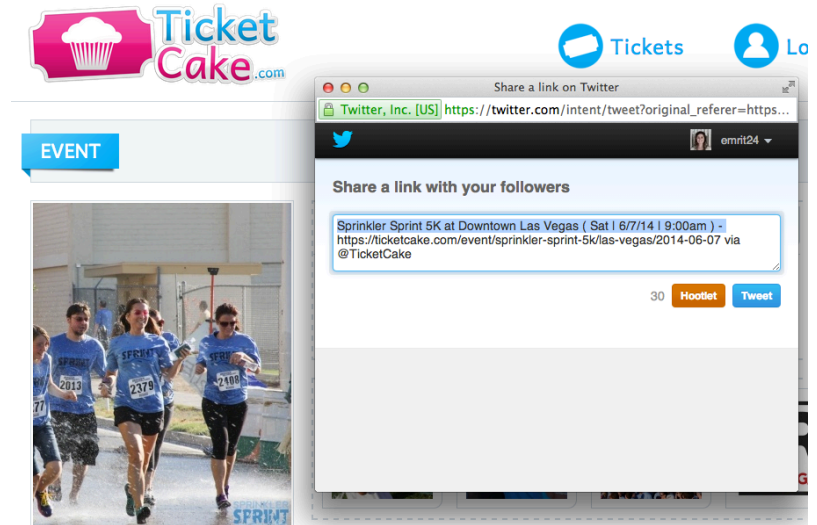
★ **Post your event to social media calendars.** Many social websites have the functionality to post your event in calendar form. Notably, *Facebook*, *LinkedIn*, *Plancast* and *FourSquare* have calendar options. Be sure to pay attention to various types of listings and whether your event is open or by invitation.

★ **Post your event to online calendars and services.** Then there are the national event websites and services: *Anyvite*, *Evite*, *Eventbrite*, *Ning*, *Patch*, *Meetup.com*, *Jambase* (music), and conference search websites. Think about the type of event you're holding and post it to relevant sites from there. If it's a chili fest, find some foodie calendars online and post yours.

★ **Post your event to community calendars.** If appropriate, find the local event listings such as the *Chamber Bureau*, *local newspaper*, and other popular *community websites* to post your event. Even *Craigslist* has a community calendar. This is not necessarily "social media", but rather traditional web marketing that can lead to more social buzz.



★ **Sell Tickets Online.** Many online ticket sale sites make it easy for customers to socialize their purchase. Check out sites like ***Ticket Cake*** and ***Eventbrite***. If you're hosting ticket sales on your own site, be sure to use social sharing icons on your sign up and thank you page to encourage it.



★ **Invite the influencers.** Not only is this a great way to jumpstart your attendee list, you can give it a real jolt by selecting influential people to attend your event, by way of speaking or simply attending. Offer those people free or heavily discounted tickets, and then provide them with collateral to share with their own networks. If you want to compare some people according to their social media influence, use a service like ***Klout*** or ***Kred***.

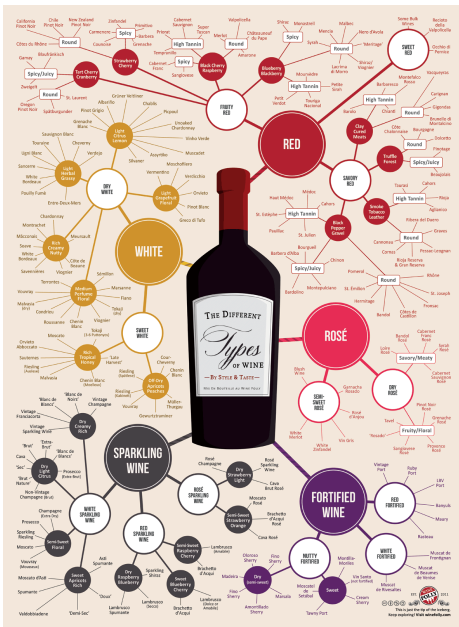


★ **Get sponsors.** This might seem like an obvious benefit to your event overall, as it will help you recoup costs and maybe even make money on the event. But when you get a sponsor, you can be sure that they'll share their affiliation with their own customers and prospects, extending your event's reach even further.

★ **Get everyone involved.** Be sure that everyone with a stake in the event – from affiliates, speakers and employees, right down to the catering company – are promoting it to their audience. Make it easy for them by giving them collateral to share, and inviting them on all the same avenues where you invited the general public.

★ **Create a shareable video.** It's important to cover a variety of mediums in your event promotion, and video is no exception. Don't just create a boring recreation of last year's event. Do something that is viral-worthy. Find a local comedian or

share the funniest stories from last year's event. Post the video on [YouTube](#), [Vimeo](#), [Vevo](#) and other relevant sites.



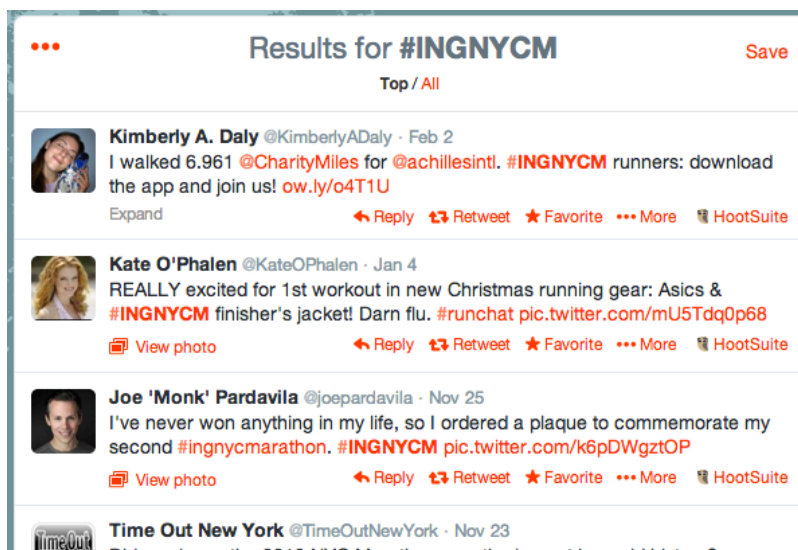
★ **Create visual graphics.** The use of infographics and other visual media can boost the rate at which your content is shared. It's already been proven that images get more interaction on sites like Facebook. If you can use intriguing images or graphically designed content, it's all the better. One idea: create a graphic of the top ten things somebody will get out of your event. Stay abreast of trending memes and use those in your graphics to grab attention. If you don't have the means to create stunning infographics, search for a template online.

★ **Piggyback on a current trend.** Perhaps the Olympics just happened or the Super Bowl is coming up. Take advantage of an event that will already be highly covered on news and social sites. Relate that event to something at your own affair. For example, you could have a sponsored "Olympics Luncheon" at your conference, where guests can compete to win gold, silver and bronze prizes. Promote this heavily in your pre-event messaging, including blogs. You can search [Google Trends](#) to find the latest trending topics.

★ **Hold a contest.** One of the best ways to get people who you know are interested in the event already to buzz about it is by holding a contest. Give away free or discounted tickets with a social media contest, perhaps powered by [Wildfire](#), [OfferPop](#) or [WishPond](#). Note that a third party app is no longer necessary to run a contest on [Facebook](#). Be sure to read the current guidelines.



★ **Promote a hashtag.** Setting and promoting a hashtag your event early in the process will help you with all three steps: promotion, engagement and measurement. Use a simple hashtag that's easy to remember. For example, #tedtalks or #sundance2014. Utilize this hashtag in all of your pre-event collateral. Hashtags.org and Twubs can help you with your decision.

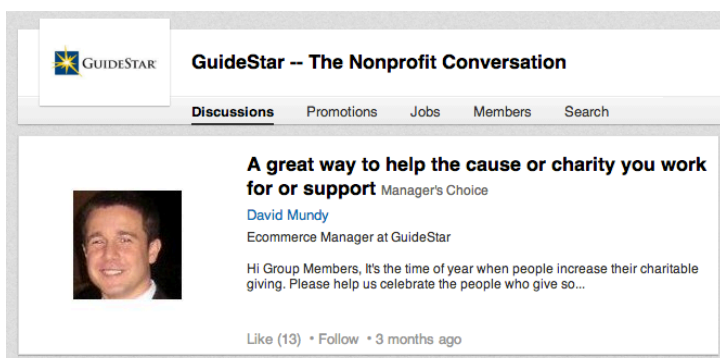


★ **Schedule social posts in advance.** Use software like [HootsSuite](#), [TweetDeck](#), or [Sprout Social](#) to create a social content calendar leading up to the event. Be sure not to inundate users. One idea would be to post once a week when the event is 3 to 6 weeks out, and post every three days for the 2 weeks prior. During the last three days, post daily. Use a variety of appropriate mediums to attract different users on different networks.

★ **Boost your posts.** You're spending a lot of money on this event; why not add a small portion of the budget for social advertising to extend its reach? We recommend starting off with some [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) ads, and then testing the waters on other networks. Keep in mind that Facebook's algorithm ensures not all of your followers will see your posts. Boosting your post can increase its reach literally by thousands of percentage points. Try it out.

★ **Share it with relevant**

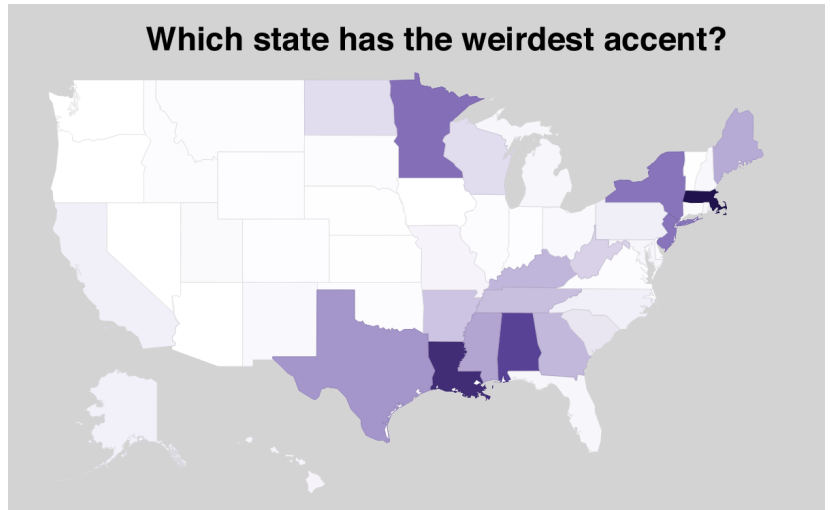
communities. If you're holding a non-profit fundraiser, reach out to other local non-profits to get the word out. Online, share it on community groups on [LinkedIn](#) or [Meetup](#).



★ **Run a poll or crowd campaign.**

One of the best ways to get people to interact is to ask for their opinion. So what better way to get them to talk about your event than to ask? Run a crowd campaign to ask what type of content they'd like to see at your conference, what type of food they'd like to eat at you

luncheon, or what band they'd prefer to hear. Whether you use *SurveyMonkey*, *Google Forms* or *Doodle*, make sure to make it easy to share socially.



★ **Use retargeting strategies.** Retargeting is a tactic that allows you to get in front of a prospect who has already seen your website. This can help you close ticket sales by staying on the top-of-mind of people who already know you. In addition, more advanced retargeting and remarketing strategies allow you to get in front of potential customers based on their search history or if they were a past customer. Companies that provide this type of functionality include *Google AdWords*, *Responsys*, *Marketo*, *Magnetic*, and a host of others.

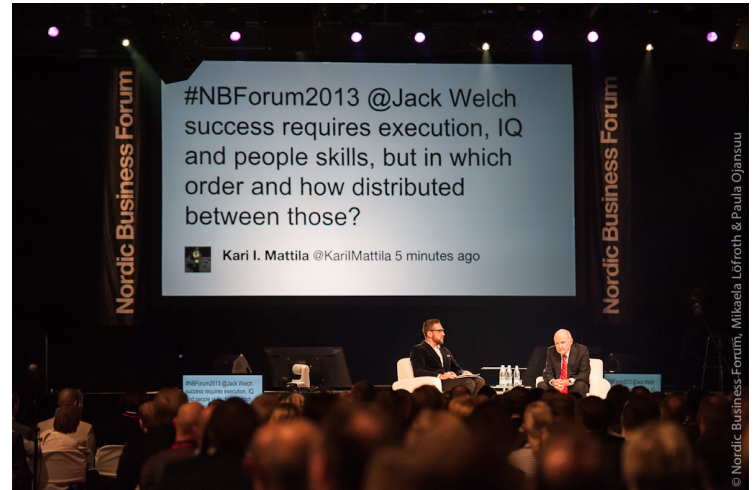


Live Engagement. Now that it's time for the big day, how will you ensure maximum reach and engagement? Social media can help. If you can encourage attendees to use social media while at your event, you will reach all of their networks. It's as simple as that. This not only improves your chances of a larger subsequent events, it expands the reach of your message. Here are some ideas for encouraging social media engagement during your event. What works for you will depend on the nature of your business, clients, and the event itself.

★ **Twitter, Twitter, Twitter.** You guessed it. *Twitter* works great for live events due to the timeliness and short lifespan of a tweet. How Twitter can work for you

depends on the nature of the event. You may want to have a dedicated company representative prompting users with questions and encouraging them to “live tweet”. You could also set up a live Twitter stream. More on that below.

★ **Live Stream Social Media.** Whether it’s Twitter or all social media, you might find that it encourages people to post if they can see their message in real time. Many conferences post Twitter feeds right behind the speaker, although some argue that can get distracting. Wherever you choose to do it, be sure the live feed is available somewhere at your event. *LiveStream*, *TweetWall*, *HootFeed*, *Tint*, or a number of other services can power this easily.



★ **Live Stream Video.** You may think to yourself, “why would I stream this content to at-home viewers for free when they should have paid to be at my event?” Your concern is not invalid, but in today’s multimedia world, a live video stream of at least a portion of your event is expected. Those at-home viewers are probably wishing they could have attended, and will still help boost your social presence. *YouTube* has a feature that allows you to stream your videos live, or you can try a service like *Ustream*.

★ **Set up live blogging.** Have a representative of your company, or (better yet) a leading local blogger post about the event in real time. If your event is just one day or evening, perhaps one blog would suffice. But for a multi-day conference, engage multiple authors so that your blog posts can be timely and relevant. When a user relates to a post in both content and recency, he or she is more likely to share it.

★ **Invite the Media.** Again, the traditional news media is not considered social media, but the more coverage you have on various mediums, the more your social

coverage will spread. Send press releases; invite local news crews and top local bloggers to cover the affair.



★ **Use that hashtag.** Remember the hashtag you created in step one? It's time to keep that rolling. Be sure to use the hashtag on printed event materials as well as any social streams you have going. Have your MC mention it periodically as well.

★ **Provide a place to take photos.** Photos are the low hanging fruit of shared content.

Something visual is much more likely to go viral than plain text. And people love taking photos of themselves. So why not make your cause part of their photo? Set up a photo booth or backdrop and either hire a photographer or simply encourage people to take their own pictures and share them on photo-centric sites like *Instagram*, *Facebook* and *SnapChat*.

★ **Encourage guests of honor to stick around.**

If you did your job right, your speakers, band members, or other guest of honor is a large part of why your attendees came. Why not give them the opportunity to chat with them after the main event, or even encourage photos that are likely to be shared?



★ **Ask your speakers to participate.** Let your speakers and key event personnel know that social media is a goal of yours. Perhaps they can incorporate an opinion poll on *Facebook* or *Twitter*, or live social stream into their presentation, giving you a nice boost.

★ **Offer high-speed wireless.** Be sure to have fast, reliable wireless Internet service available, and make the password readily available. A good connection will encourage guests to be online and post using their mobile or other device without

having to use data on their own plans.

★ **Have check-in spots.** If your event is large and spread out on a larger campus, for example, encourage users to check in at various locations. They can use a service like *FourSquare* or *Facebook* to do this. You could even make it fun by offering a prize or incentive to check in at the most locations.



★ **Help attendees connect.** A major reason people attend many events is to network, and you should help them achieve that goal. On your event website, make an option for attendees to fill out the details of their profile with their *Twitter*, *LinkedIn* and *Flickr* account names. When attendees connect online, their networks can see that your event was the point of connection, helping the word spread. An app like *Double Dutch* can even help you set up badge scanning so that business information can easily be exchanged by mobile phone.



Measurement & Communication. The event is over; the hard work is done. Right? Wrong. The conclusion of your event only means it's time to start measuring the success of your event. What went right, and what went wrong? Take a look at the expenses and try to understand the return you might get on your investment. There are tools to help you, and you have to take measurement with a grain of salt and understand that each touch point is just a part of the funnel. But, you should always measure what you can.

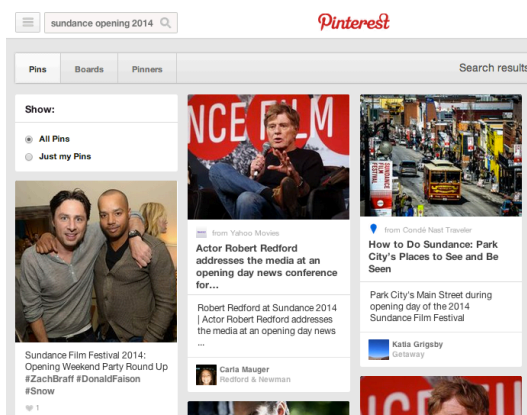
Aside from measurement, post-event is also the time to continue the conversation, send follow-up communication, and start the buzz about any subsequent events you may be planning. Without further ado, we give you the third and final step, measuring and communicating after the event's conclusion.

★ **Employ the right software.** Don't try to manually measure or reinvent the wheel. There are many great services to help you measure your event. Event-specific apps like *Sched.org*, *DoubleDutch*, *QuickMobile* and *Cvent* help you every step of the way. There's also traditional social media monitoring tools to help you gauge the conversation, like *Sprout Social*, *Trackur*, *Twitalyzer*, and *Mention.net*. These tools allow you to measure the conversation using a variety of words, so that you can account for common misspellings and variations. If your event is on a grand scale and you want a third party service to give you reports without having to learn new software, we recommend *Channel Signal*.



★ **Measure your check-ins.** If you had various check-in spots, measure which spots were hot and at what times. Were there reasons for the trends? Analyze the data to make your various stations more useful and popular at consecutive events.

★ **Consider a survey.** While monitoring social media has removed a lot of the need for a survey, because the opinions are more candid and often unwarranted, there is still a place for surveys. If you want an officially sanctioned collection of your guests opinions, try conducting a survey through *Survey Monkey*, *Google Forms*, or *Doodle*. Be sure surveys are conducted in a timely manner, and are never too long.



★ **Share event photos.** Of course, one of the great social mediums is imagery. Share photos of your events, and share lots of them. Be sure to use all of the appropriate photo-based apps, which is nearly all of them: *Facebook*, *Pinterest*, *Instagram*, *LinkedIn*, *Twitter* and more.

★ **Share event videos.** Post videos to [YouTube](#), [Vimeo](#) and [Vevo](#) to continue the viewership and buzz around the event, and ramp up the excitement for next year's event. No matter what type of event it was, you can share videos of the presentations, speakers, live entertainment, or a compilation of clips.



★ **Share event presentations.** If your event included presentations, be sure to make them available to attendees. You can also publish them on websites like [SlideShare](#) or [Prezi](#). If you have the presentation available with voiceover, you could share it on [YouTube](#) and other video sites as a recorded live presentation video.

★ **Share other event info.** Spread conference or event information collected at the event as free information. This includes any public polls that were taken, favorite tweets of the event, classic photos, or moments that went viral. Anything that may have left people curious, share it afterwards.

★ **Don't overlook email.** With all of this post-event activity, don't overlook email as one of your outreach sources. If it's timely and relevant, your email will get opened. People generally want to receive that post-event content that they've been waiting for. Don't wait too long to send it, however.



★ **Say thanks.** Don't forget to thank your attendees for making your event so spectacular (which it surely was). Not only is this the polite thing to do, it's a great way to follow up with them shortly after the event to stay on top of their mind, and perhaps include a little reminder about any subsequent events you may be planning.

Successful Events

So, you get it. Social media is an asset, not a liability, when it comes to events. But the fact of the matter is, all of this does take the time of a skilled person to put into place. At Strategic Event Design, we always recommend that companies subcontract their event management. There are so many benefits to hiring a third party event planner, it's a separate whitepaper altogether.

If you're looking for an event planner with the experience and expertise to help you pull off a successful event, contact Strategic Event Design. We specialize in meetings, brand experiences, digital and corporate events.



Let's Connect!



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