

Report: Events Industry Will Enjoy Robust Growth Through 2011

The global events industry is huge, growing and highly fragmented, and in a time of declining print revenue, offers integrated media companies a highly profitable, defensible, Web-resistant platform for growth, according to a new white paper from DeSilva + Phillips and AMR International.

"This is the star of old media," Denzil Rankine, CEO of AMR, said at an event Thursday at the Paley Center for Media in New York City, where the findings were presented.

The white paper, which focuses on the trade show and conference parts of the events business, describes a world where global revenue is \$100 billion and the dominant monolithic player, Reed Exhibitions, holds no more than 7 percent of that total. It describes an industry with an average growth rate of 6.2 percent globally since 2003 and a growth forecast of 5.5 percent (4.2 percent in the United States) through 2011. Some areas, including the Middle East, are projected to skyrocket.

Event panelists included: Neal Vitale, CEO of 1105 Media, Don Pazour, CEO of Access Intelligence, Mike Schneider, CEO of Affinity Group, Jeff Stevenson, co-CEO of Veronis Suhler Stevenson and Richard Kerr, head of group development for United Business Media.

Unlike virtually everywhere else in the media world, M&A activity is expected to remain strong, the white paper indicates. "Despite overall reduced M&A activity, the events market seems to be holding its own and may in fact have another strong year of M&A," it states. "Deal volume appears to be, despite the fact that buyers are paying lower multiples, due to financing constraints and a weaker overall market outlook." The white paper outlines three companies with aggressive acquisition strategies in the events space, including DMG World Media, Canon Communications and Affinity Group, which went from three consumer events in 2005 to 45 events as of June.

Transaction multiples were healthy. D+P analyzed 149 event transactions since the first of 2005, and found an average revenue multiple of 2.4 times, and an average EBITDA multiple of 9.2 times. Also covered in the report are business models,

ownership models, globalization and the effects of the Internet face-to-face.

Raqqine, serving as moderator, asked panelists how confident they were in the growth projections. "If you're showing 6 percent growth with the collapse of the IT event business, then the numbers are conservative," Pazour said. Added Stevenson, referring to a region where the growth is projected to hit 20 percent, "I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm getting on the next plane for the Middle East."

1105's Vitale offered a note of caution. "To treat the industry as whole misses the point," he said. "It's really the type of activity and a market-by-market analysis."

When the conversation moved to international markets and which presented the most challenges, UBM's Kerr outlined conditions in the Middle East, India and China, and added that he avoids "the PIGS—Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain."

Stevenson, describing the business in Russia, said, "Things that you worry about in the trade-show business, there is a whole other level of things that you worry about in doing business over there. Transparency is not the watchword."

The panel debated the ownership models and the pros and cons of the standalone approach—such as Reed—and the integrated-media approach. Stevenson said VSS has invested in both. "Both can be successful," he said. "You tend to find more dominance in the market with the integrated model. Whether the decline of print makes the integrated approach less important is still an open question. Maybe print will become more of a promotional vehicle."

Pazour said strong shows can become brands unto themselves, but the integrated approach offers the opportunity to leverage one to the benefit of the other. "It also helps you avoid boneheaded moves—Galen Poss of Hanley Wood describes it as, 'The market went left and we kept going straight.' With a magazine, you're closer to the market and you can avoid that."

Online Access

Full subscribers to the ispypublications series of publications now have online access to all the content relating to this report.

For instant access, please contact our administration department on admin@cozresearchmatters.com

Subscriptions Office:

PO Box 73319
 Dubai
 UAE
 email: admin@cozresearchmatters.com

Contractor Budgets

Show organisers' 2008 decorating budgets increase more than 4 percent

Show organizers spend an average of 18 percent of their total show expenditures on official services contractor services, according to the 175 show organizers who responded to an online survey conducted by Exhibit Surveys Inc. in June.

Organisers indicate this expense increased by an average of 4.2 percent in 2008 compared with 2007, and their exhibitors paid an average increase of 4.9 percent for show services during the same period.

For-profit show organizers reported spending an average of 19.3 percent of their 2008 total show expenditures on official services contractor services — an increase of 4.1 percent compared with 2007, while associations reported spending an average of 16.8 percent, representing an increase of 3.8 percent over last year. The survey found that organizers producing consumer shows reported spending an average of 21.9 percent of their total show expenditures on official services contractor services — a 5.2 percent increase compared with last year, while trade show organizers reported spending an average of 17 percent or a 4.5 percent increase over 2007.

When it comes to selecting an official services contractor, show organizers report overall that the three most critical factors are customer service (54 percent), exhibitor pricing (43 percent) and show management pricing (41 percent). The least important factors are the extent of exhibitor services available, the relationship the organizer has with the salesperson/company and show experience.

Verbatim Responses

What is your biggest challenge in working with official services contractors?

- Communication
- Meeting deadlines
- Changes in management
- Accessibility
- Consistency from market to market in quality, service, equipment and personnel
- Exhibitor drayage charges
- Customer service at the hands-on level
- Exhibitor satisfaction in relation to labor unions
- Containing costs and level of service
- Employee turnover — never having the same crew from one year to the next
- Consistency with the staff and union workers
- Keeping costs reasonable for exhibitors, particularly small companies
- Labor rates and markup
- Making certain that they keep our exhibitors happy
- Lack of creativity
- Failure to be thorough and proactive
- Cost control
- Getting good subcontractors
- Pricing of services far exceeds the value
- Trying to control rates to ensure ROI for all parties
- Union rules
- Making sure that prices are fair for show management and exhibitors
- Maintaining and managing the relationship while insisting on higher value delivered
- Getting nicked and dined

Do You Live By Price Alone?

“Our products cost so much more than our competitors.

How in the world do we convince attendees to check us out, when everyone's so focused on the bottom line?”

The question could come from any industry, and it's becoming increasingly common as a tightening economy makes buyers more price-conscious.

However, the company that lives by price also dies by price. Savvy exhibitors know that to appeal in this type of market, it's critical to highlight aspects of their products and services that are more important than money.

The three most pivotal factors are:

1. Speed

Can you be, as Seth Godin puts it, overwhelming faster than the alternatives? The speed with which your organization can fill orders, deliver product, and take care of customers is a critical differentiating factor.

Customers are starved for time: no matter what industry you're in, turnaround times are shorter than they've ever been.

You can stand out from the crowd by being the fastest.

2. Spirit

Genuine enthusiasm and conviction that your products and services are the absolute best choice for the customer are powerful selling tools, especially in the face-to-face environment of the tradeshow.

If you can concisely and articulately convey why your products are worth more, without apologizing, price becomes a non-issue.

3. Style

There are trends in everything: in the B2B world, in manufacturing, in retail. Can your organization position itself as the trendy choice? Buyers are influenced by what their colleagues and peers think: no one wants to choose a loser.

Consider what you can do to secure a position as the 'obvious' right choice, or even better, 'the best' company to buy from.

Then, once again, price becomes a secondary consideration.

Attendance Marketing Best Practices

Show organisers struggle with how best to communicate with attendees

Direct mail is dead. Kaput. Finis.

OK, maybe that's a little strong, but when show organizers with attendance that grew in 2007 were asked to rank the 15 marketing tools they rely on, direct mail came in last. Dead last.

And forty-three percent of all shows say they've decreased their use of direct mail — 12 percent have eliminated it completely.

But what to use in place of direct mail continues to confound show organizers, according to the sixth annual AttendTrend survey of trade show organizers conducted by the Frost Miller Group and Jacobs Jenner & Kent.

Thirty-four percent of respondents say they take a shotgun approach using all available marketing methods, while 19 percent admit they don't know what works anymore and use their best guess.

The annual AttendTrend survey, a study of attendance marketing best practices, was conducted by telephone and surveyed 450 major show organizers throughout North America in December 2007.

The survey explores how show organizers market to attendees, what their greatest challenges are and which marketing techniques are most used by growing shows.

"We were curious to get a better understanding of how marketers were dealing with the variety of marketing options available," says Wayne Jacobs, President of Jacobs Jenner & Kent. "As new technologies are becoming more commonplace, there's still a lot of confusion about how some technologies work and how to best apply them. When I go to an industry meeting and ask people about how they're using Web 2.0, for example, not everyone really understands what that means, nor does everyone mean the same thing when they use the term."

Greatest marketing challenges

Beyond confusion over the best way to communicate with attendees, one-third of respondents also struggle with how to communicate the value of their event to new audiences. Nearly the same number say understanding their audience is a major hurdle.

Top five challenges in marketing events

- Knowing how to communicate in today's environment
- Communicating the value of the event to new audiences
- Understanding the audience
- Keeping it fresh, new and relevant
- Getting the audience to read what we sent

Marketing budgets stable

Overall, marketing budgets grew slightly in 2007 from 2006; however, just as in previous years the shows that increased the attendance marketing budget also increased attendance. In fact, none of the shows that reported increasing their attendance marketing budgets reported a decline in attendance. Yet, 68 percent of shows that reported cutting their attendance marketing budget also reported a drop in overall attendance.

Marketing methods employed

E-mail is by far the most popular marketing tool. Eighty-nine percent of organizers reported using e-mail five or more times to promote an event, and 80 percent reported relying on e-mail in



BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE FOR THE EVENTS INDUSTRY
WWW.ISPYPUBLISHING.COM

2007 more than in the past. Web advertising was the second most popular marketing tool. Sixty-two percent of organizers reported using Web advertising five or more times to promote an event and 76 percent said they had increased their reliance on Web advertising in 2007.

Growing shows

Seventy-three percent of shows with growing attendance relied on e-mail marketing and Web advertising in 2007, followed by advertising (64 percent) and targeted database marketing (64 percent). Direct mail is the least used method of marketing at 26 percent.

Motivating factors

The promises reported as most likely to lure attendees to the show remained the same from 2005 to 2007 — new products, networking and education. The prospect of seeing new products leads the way each year, and was ranked first by 65 percent of show organizers in 2007.

VIP buyers still difficult

Once again, show organizers report the most difficult buyers to attract are VIP power buyers. Sixty-four percent ranked them the most difficult, up from 48 percent in 2006. First-time attendees are the second most difficult constituency to attract with 44 percent of organizers citing them as a challenge.

Value-adds

Continuing education or CMEs continued to be the most popular value-add or relationship building strategy in 2007. It was used by 68 percent of show organizers. Holding orientation sessions grew the most in popularity, used by 52 percent of organizers in 2007 as compared with 32 percent in 2006.

Three Business and Marketing Lessons From the Olympics

The Olympic flame has been temporarily extinguished, the athletes have gone home, and the sidewalks of are quiet again. As we look back at the highs and lows of the games, there are three definitive business and marketing lessons to be learned.

1. Don't become overconfident

Businesses and organisations that become overconfident as a result of success run the risk of losing direction or making errors. It's always best to come from a place of hunger, no matter what the size of your business is. It helps keep you focused on serving your market segments with a competitive spirit.

2. Don't put all your marketing weight into one vehicle

NBC paid over \$600 million for the exclusive broadcast rights to the Olympics for the American market. Although NBC claims that its viewers totaled over 170 million, one can't help wonder how many more would have tuned in had the programming not been delayed until prime time.

Years ago, before the advent of the Internet and satellites, the time difference wouldn't have mattered. But now, so many of us are online or receiving RSS feeds for instant news, that it's challenging for television to capture market share when event results and the names of the winners have already been plastered on Web sites across the globe.

Even when marketing budgets are small, it's best to choose at least three marketing vehicles to promote your message. Relying on one medium alone reduces your chances of being visible.

Consumers and business-to-business clients have distinct preferences in how they prefer their communications. And when people are bombarded with over 3,000 messages daily, yours can easily get lost in a sea of messaging in a variety of channels.

3. Develop a plan

According to "Athletic Insight," athletic performance has three parts: physical preparation, technical skill, and psychological readiness. However, it claims that psychological preparation is the component most often neglected by athletes and coaches.

Goal-setting is one element of mental preparedness for any Olympic sport, as it is for any business. Developing a solid business and marketing plan is essential to knowing where your business or organization is heading on the road to success. If there are no set goals, how will you know what you've achieved, or how to evaluate the return on investment for your marketing efforts?

Sports psychologist Dr. Colleen Hacker states in an article, "Once athletes (and coaches, for that matter) begin to set observable, measurable goals and specify the date for completion, it is not uncommon to experience increased motivation and excitement as goals are successfully accomplished."

Balancing these goals and keeping them realistic is important to attaining them. Hacker cautions that setting too many goals too quickly, or setting unrealistic goals based on one's current level of performance, can also be damaging.

"The key point to emphasize," she says, "is that it is better to design fewer, high quality goals and commit to their successful accomplishment than to set too many goals and hope that several will be accomplished."

Translating that to the business world: It's beneficial to develop a realistic marketing plan that focuses on strategic objectives according to the size and nature of your business capacity. You can always increase your ambitions as your business or organization grows, listing your objectives in phases that are dependent on your increasing resources.

The Olympics may be a memory until the Summer Games begin in 2012, but to build your brand, profile, and customer base, your business and marketing efforts should be a year-round commitment.

Attendee surveys

My company conducts an attendee survey at its annual client event, but the response rate has been consistently lower than we'd like. We ask a few multiple-choice and ratings-style questions, and always offer an opportunity for open-ended feedback. Over the years, we have tried a number of things to boost our response rate, like making the survey available online, and e-mailing a link to attendees a week or two after the event. We have tried offering incentives, too, such as a drawing to win a free registration to the following year's conference. But our response rate is stuck at around 15 percent. What can we do to increase participation?

REVAMP YOUR SURVEY

A 15-percent response isn't necessarily bad for a post-event attendee survey, but if you want to improve it, here are some tips for doing so:

Personalize the prize. Typically, attendees' companies pay for the cost of their conference registration, so offering them a free or discounted registration for the following year's conference might not be enough to prompt them to participate. Instead, consider giving survey respondents a more personal incentive that they can put to immediate use, such as a \$5 gift certificate to Starbucks or a \$25 restaurant certificate. If you buy in bulk from places like Restaurant.com and other vendors, you'll typically save a good deal of money on gift certificates.

Respect attendees' time. Limit your surveys to no more than 12 to 15 questions. Then, in your survey invitation and on your survey cover page, be explicit about the number of questions you're asking respondents to complete. Also tell them approximately how long it will take to complete the survey. For best results, you should aim for five minutes. Be sure to do several test runs of your survey before sending the invitation so you know that you're providing attendees with a realistic estimate.

Meter their progress. Another effective way to discourage respondents from bailing mid-survey is to use an online survey tool that includes a "meter" option. On every page of the survey, or as attendees respond to individual questions, a meter shows respondents how close they are to completing the survey — a great way to keep people focused on the finish line.

Avoid open-ended questions. While open-ended questions may seem like a good idea because they allow for unvarnished feedback, they are actually a sign of poor survey design. Why? Respondents hate them because they take too much time and effort to answer. In addition, the results gleaned from such questions are famously underused by almost all of the companies that collect them. Most companies that ask open-ended questions, in fact, never read or study the answers in any depth. That's because companies simply do not have the time or resources to sift through all those responses and compile them into any kind of quantifiable or quantitative results. My advice is to devote time on the front end of the survey-creation process to develop strong closed questions (e.g., true or false, multiple choice, etc.). Doing so will pay off in the form of better response rates and more useful feedback.

Share the results. How many times have you taken a poll on a Web site just because you wanted to see the results and find out how your answers compared to those of the other respondents? If your event attendees take the time to provide you with

feedback, they want to know what their peers had to say, too. Many companies are reluctant to share their survey results out of fear that they will release sensitive information or data that reflects poorly on them. The answer is to compromise. Pick your least sensitive questions and tell respondents that you will share partial results. You might even go so far as to mark certain questions within the survey for which results will be shared. More than any prize or gimmick, this is a key driver to dramatically increasing survey response rates.

5 people of Innovation

Innovation

The creation of a new product, service, process or system, from the first glimmer of an idea to the successful implementation and exploitation of the idea.

1. Idea people

Every human is capable of creativity. In some the talent is buried, trained out of them by schools, parents or bosses. In the information age, part of every manager's and every team member's job is to create an environment in which creativity is appreciated and new ideas are brought out of those who may have almost forgotten their creativity.

2. Intrapreneurs

Ideas are like insects; many are born, but few live to maturity. Most people face a choice: go to their graves with all their ideas unfulfilled, or give up on 99% of them and take the time to push a few through to completion. Once you focus on making one of your ideas happen, you begin becoming an intrapreneur.

The Dreamers Who Do

Because they closely resemble entrepreneurs, we call the people who turn ideas into realities inside an organization "intrapreneurs." Intrapreneurs are the hands-on doers who make a new idea happen. They roll up their sleeves to get things done. They recruit others to help. Whether working on an idea that was originally their own or building on someone else's idea, they are the dreamers who do. Texas Instruments, well known for intrapreneurial successes like Speak and Spell and FLIR (Forward Looking Infra Red), studied fifty of their successful and unsuccessful new product efforts. In each of their successes there is one or more dedicated intrapreneurs who persisted despite great obstacles. Similarly, the common denominator of their failures was that every one of them lacked a zealous volunteer champion. Every one lacked an intrapreneur. Innovations just don't happen unless someone takes on the intrapreneurial role.

3. The Intrapreneurial Team

The purest intrapreneurial team consists of volunteers recruited to the idea by one or more lead intrapreneur(s). They form a core team which stays with the project from its early stages, well past its initial commercialization or implementation.

3M's Project System

In 3M's famous project system, an idea is brought forward by a team of three: one from marketing, one from research, and one from manufacturing. The commitment of the three members with functional skills means the venture has already passed through three different screens, and thus the project is given the benefit

of the doubt and is supported. The formation of the team points to the presence of an entrepreneurial leader who can attract talent and skills. This core team can then stay with the project until it becomes a full division.

4. The Sponsor

Sponsors support their people's ideas by protecting their work from the "corporate immune system" (so it helps if they have some management power) and by helping the group garner resources to implement their ideas. More specifically, effective sponsors: Create a compelling vision that calls for and guides innovation efforts.

Sponsors bet on people, not just plans. They take the time to coach and guide the intrapreneurial teams. Anticipate political obstacles and block oncoming tacklers. Learn to be "one of the team" so they can share ideas without telling the team what to do.

We have studied hundreds of innovations within large organizations. In every case, at least one sponsor with a close relationship to the intrapreneurial team guided them around obstacles and intervened with the hierarchy to keep the project alive. Just as there is no innovation without intrapreneurs, and no significant innovation without teams, there is no innovation in large organizations without sponsors.

5. The Climate Maker

When the Hewlett Packard climate began to turn against the entrepreneurial spirit, the founders came out of retirement to reaffirm the company's commitment to an intrapreneurial climate. They didn't intervene in any specific project, as a sponsor would. Rather they worked to create an organizational pattern and culture wherein businesses had intrapreneurial freedom and many effective sponsors could empower many successful intrapreneurial teams. Growth and profitability, which were beginning to stall, took off again. In the complex world of today's multinationals, it takes more than one or two climate maker to create an environment in which managers can become sponsors and intrapreneurs. It takes a widely shared belief in innovation and a sincere determination to keep it alive. Use the next chapter to see what kind of climate-making your organization needs most.

A Formula for Realistic Goalsetting

How many leads can an organization reasonably expect to gather at a show?

This is a great question!

When you're setting goals and objectives for a show, you want to make sure that the goals are both realistic and obtainable. There's no sense telling your team to gather 1,000 leads when that's not even close to being possible.

There's a formula you can use to get a realistic target number. You'll want to know a few pieces of information: how many staffers you have working the booth, and how many hours the show is open.

Let's say you have two staffers. On average, a well-trained staffer can talk to six attendees per hour - that's a ten minute

conversation, long enough to gather quality information about the prospect and truly understand at least some of their needs. If the show's open for ten hours, you have the following formula:

$$2 \text{ (staffers)} \times 6 \text{ (conversations)} \times 10 \text{ (hours)} = 120 \text{ leads}$$

This formula makes certain assumptions.

It assumes that every attendee will turn out to be a viable prospect, and that traffic will remain constant throughout the show. However, let's take those as given, and look at that final number.

120 leads may not sound like much. After all, if you collect business cards in exchange for an entry in a high value prize contest, you could have thousands of names in an hour. However, you have to consider the value of those leads. I would argue that you're far better off with 120 quality, pre-screened leads complete with identifying information about the prospect's needs!

On the other hand, the business cards in the fishbowl are little better than a cold-calling list: people gave you their info because they wanted the prize — not because they have a genuine interest in your products and services. Small wonder that most salespeople look at these leads with little enthusiasm.

There you go: a formula for setting a target number for high quality leads to be gathered at any show. Use this number in your goal setting with your team, and to measure results after the fact.

Stealing Ideas From Many

"To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism, to steal ideas from many is research." - Anon

One of the most common tips I share with would-be exhibitors who hope to make the most out of tradeshow is to do the homework. Research the shows you're considering participating in, and pick the one that's right for you. You want a show that attracts a large number of people from your target audience. The question then becomes: How do you research events?

How do you know which tradeshow are the best ones for your organization?

Here are the three best ways to research tradeshow:

1. Go Online

Research is as close as the nearest computer. Google the events you're considering, or combine the words tradeshow or conference with your industry type. You can even throw a location into the mix. You'll often get links to the show site itself, as well as blogs, bulletin boards, and other places to find commentary about the event.

Don't miss tradeshow industry magazines. Often these sites, which include TSNN.com and www.tradeshowweek.com, list upcoming events and provide coverage of recent shows.

2. Talk to Your Peers

Colleagues, friendly competitors, and industry associations can be a great source of information about upcoming events. They can also share some 'insider information', if they've attended or exhibited at the show. Ask them about their experiences!

3. Talk to Your Customers

Turn to your customers and ask them what shows and conferences they attend. Make note of the responses, and pay careful attention to those events that are the most popular. Ask them what they like most and least about the show. If it's a show that they love, and that a lot of people go to, there's a good chance you could do very well in that environment!

How to Avoid TMI in Email: When Less Is More

You have them dead in your sights. They're eager to sign up for your email list. (Yeah, they actually want to get information from you!) The user is on your site and that all-important Subscribe click is made. You are seconds away from having another prospect to market to, and then... they stop.

They go away, never to return because they were turned off. Why? What happened?

It's an ill that has plagued marketers for years. Heck, even I had it in my former life as a sports marketer. It's called TMI-tis, short for Too Much Information-itis. You're not alone, however, so don't fear. Read on for help in curing your email marketing ills.

It starts simply. You're setting up fields for your email signup form and instead of grabbing just the basics for information, you start to wander. *What if I got all the information I want up front? That would save me so much time! Who cares about emailing them at that point? I'll have it all! Bwahahahaha!*

So then it begins: name, address, home number, work number, mobile number, bag phone number, AOL IM, Yahoo IM, favorite band, favorite station, favorite team. Sure, you don't make it required that all the fields are filled in, but while they're there why not offer it, right?

All they wanted was to supply you with was an email address, but instead the end users are looking at a form worthy of governmental consideration.

Eventually, the process you create gets so bad that the person attempting to sign up can't even find where to enter in an email address, *which was the only reason they clicked to begin with*. They get frustrated, the browser window closes, and within seconds you've lost a potential addition to your list because you came down with TMI-tis: You got greedy.

Let's get to the root of what you're trying to do: collect emails from someone who wants to stay in contact with your company or client. They've attempted to engage you by opting to give you their address, **so you've already achieved your goal**. Stop right there.

While it's tempting to assume that they'll be willing to give you every possible bit of information while they're at this critical juncture, ask yourself what you're going to do with that information when you get it. Is there an immediate purpose and plan, or are you getting it "just because"? If you hesitate with answering this question at all, then you should be asking just the basics: first/last name, email and zip code. This allows to you know who the email owner is, how to contact them, and where they're from.

However, if you really need that info right away, I'd suggest going about it a different way.

Most times, you will probably get those highly coveted demographics and psychographics just by smart marketing. Try a targeted data-collection initiative to your list, securing information for the chance to win something of high value. You could do a direct sales campaign, offering a specific product in a specific window of time that would achieve your data collection goal. Or you could just practice great email marketing and entice them to provide information in other legitimate ways.

A few examples:

Sending out timely newsletters with worthwhile and engaging content that builds trust. If users trust the source, they will be more likely to supply information for a contest or some other sort of data-collection drive.

Doing a "recommend-a-friend" push whereby you award prizes for the most people recommended who sign up for the marketer's list. On the sign-up landing page, ask the initial user (the "recommender") for the rest of their info. If they're engaged in asking others to sign up and there's a trust already established, this might be a chance to get them if you feel the timing is right.

Surveys: If you can create a very short-and-sweet survey asking some other important information, you can probably also get your additional demo information here.

Ultimately, there are ways to get what you want without overwhelming end users and losing them before they bite the hook. Don't overcomplicate the process... just do what you do best!

A good rule of thumb is to put yourself in the slightly-worn out seat of the end user. You're a busy person just like your potential subscribers. If you were sitting in front of a computer and signing up for an email list, what would you want your user experience to be like? Signing up to receive emails shouldn't be an uncomfortable and lengthy process.

A few other thoughts on the email-signup process:

Please, please, please don't make people choose a username/password to get emails. I subscribe to a few arena mailing lists to get information on concerts, and two of them required me to create a username/password. Why? I'm not that concerned about someone hacking into my account and changing my music preferences from Tool to Toby Keith, so why should they? It's email, not national security.

Always use the double-opt-in process. Keep your lists legit and clean. This is something people are now accustomed to doing, so don't look it as a needless extra step on their behalf.

Keep them on your site during the signup process. I cannot stand it that when I'm attempting to sign up for a list, a non-branded window pops up for me to fill in. Any email marketing company worth its salt should be able to provide you, the marketer, with HTML code that you can format into your own site, so that users don't have jump to a stock order-form landing page.

My marketing friends, the golden rule with avoiding TMI-tis is

to keep it simple. Do whatever it takes to get subscribers in your database with as little difficulty as possible. Then, get the rest of the information the old-fashioned way: by providing a service they absolutely have to have.

How to Write A Blog... And Survive

The question of the day is "Should you start a Blog?"

People all over the planet are blogging. Companies, CEOs, lawyers, journalists, stewardesses. Even dogs and babies. Why? Because they can. It's that simple.

Blogging requires little or no learning curve. If you can type, speak into a phone, bark, chew, record a holiday movie, you can blog.

Blogs have taken publishing out of the domain of those who know HTML and designing, to make this powerful tool available to the rest of us.

That holiday in the Far East, your grandma's birthday, your company's latest product offering, your new recipe for rum cake, your daughter's first step, your pet's antics, what you thought of the Garfield movie - you can blog all this and more.

A blog is an online journal or diary. Which makes it ideal for voicing your opinion, recording your pregnancy blahs or announcing your company's latest acquisition.

People are using them to communicate with family, for education, for business, and almost anything else you can think of.

But one thing not all blogs get is a readership.

Unless your blog is only for your family or your business colleagues, you're probably writing with the hope that someone will read about what you think.

So many blogs are started with little or no purpose. If you want to blog and survive, first start by answering your why. If you're writing only for the search engine spiders, then be prepared for no one but them to read your keyword-rich spam.

Blogs demand a readership. And for that you have to write about something worth reading.

Here are some tips to follow if you want human beings to read your blogs.

1. Stay on topic

Opinions are fine, but unless you're the CEO of Microsoft, very few people will want to know what you ate for breakfast. If you started your blog to air your raves and rants about the latest movie you saw, better mention movies in at least every post you write.

2. Write in a conversational tone

Forget what your English professor taught you. Write the way you speak, or you'll end up sounding uptight and unnatural. And no one reads tightass copy... even from the CEO of Microsoft.

3. Be opinionated

Your blog is not a company brochure or a press release, but a way for people a.k.a. your target audience, to get to know the real you. The worst sin you can commit is to bore your readers. Most people respond better to an honest airing of views than pleasant platitudes. And if you get a few rude or nasty comments in response to your posts, just accept the fact that you can't please everyone

4. Be funny

Infuse your posts with your natural wit for a better response from your target audience. And if not everyone appreciates your particular brand of humor, read the last sentence in the point above.

4. Stay informed

If you're writing about your profession, you'd better know what you are talking about. Word spreads at the speed of thought in the blogosphere and if you're trying to become an authority on something you know very little of, prepare yourself for the brickbats.

5. Stay current

Write about the latest developments in your field. No one wants to read stuff that has been around for a long time, or that hundreds of other bloggers have chronicled.

6. Update frequently, but don't burnout

Most blogs die because of blogger burnout - bloggers trying to update too frequently. Stick to a publishing schedule that is humanly possible for you. If you've just updated your blog and find a story you want to share, save it for later.

On the other hand, don't post just because you think you have to stick to a schedule. Going a few days or even weeks without posting is fine if you really have nothing worth sharing.

So are you still wondering if you should blog?

If you think you can meet the requirements above, and know your why, then like the shoe people say - just do it.

Resistance is futile.

How Social Networks Are Disrupting Everything You Know About Business

As our customers' real-life and online lives continue to intersect, social networks are becoming the glue which holds it all together. Take Facebook, which started as a sort of online frat party. Now it's poised to become the equivalent of a 24/7 bazaar, part of an online industry of web applications which research company IDC says will grow from \$46.8 million in 2006 to \$428.3 million in 2009.

That is a lofty number.

In strictly marketing terms, what does this trend mean for online

business segments?

- (1) self-service applications used by groups and marketing campaign teams;
- (2) brand applications that focus on customer engagement;
- (3) and enterprise applications that provide more effective ways of working with customers, partners and other external parties.

But what this means to you customer is the ability to leverage their online relationships into business relationships. According to the New York Times, Lemonade has just unveiled a service that will let users create kiosks on their Facebook and MySpace pages, among others, to sell anything from old furniture to the products of online retail stores.

The affiliate programs will net commissions of between 5-15% and other incentives to deliver a paying customer. Lemonade keeps 20% of the commissions on behalf of people who create online kiosks, and will pay users the rest of the money.

From lemonade stands to Garage Sale — Buy.com's new service that allows people to sell used items on their Facebook pages for a 5% commission — the best way to dig out of unused products seems to be online these days.

This nexus further breaks down traditional distinctions between the Customer and the Seller. Pioneers in the new market space will find they are becoming, in a sense, partners with their customers — who, in turn, are transforming their online social relationship into small business alliances of their own.

And this is the pervasive and permanent nature of what we currently call social networking. One can imagine a day in which the distinction between business and customer; between network and application; between social and entrepreneurial seem dated and artificial.

So be a visionary: what other manifestations of social networking can you imagine? And what are you doing about it?

Be THE, not A

So you are...

...A marketer.

...A sales person.

...A blogger.

...A [_ _ _ _ _].

But is that settling?

Why be A, when you could be...

...THE marketer?

...THE sales person?

...THE blogger?

...THE [_ _ _ _ _]?

There is a BBQ rib chain in the U.S. that bills themselves as "A Place for Ribs."* If you wanted to take your family out for a great rib dinner, why would you choose to go to *A place*? *A place* is just one of many... Why not head to **THE** place for ribs?

"A" is random. "A" is generic. "A" is one of many. "A" is adequate.

"THE" is singular. "THE" is specific. "THE" is the only. "THE" is expert.

Do you want A (one of any) babysitter to watch your children, or THE (best) babysitter?

When your hard drive crashes, do you call seek A computer tech person, or THE computer guru?!

Do you want your hair cut/styled by A (random) stylist? Or THE (master) stylist?

Does your boss put A marketer on the big holiday promotion? No it goes to THE marketer.

You get THE point!

Being THE is about being remarkable. By being THE, you are standing out tall above the crowd.

So, I'll ask again... are you A or THE?

How To Get True Show Numbers

Q. My company was disappointed with the actual buyer foot traffic at a recent show. Yet show management reported a record attendance of "industry representatives." I believe attendance figures included exhibitors, manufacturers' reps, media and suppliers. When I tried to confirm the actual number of real buyers at the show, I was told by show management that it was not possible to separate the different types of attendees. However, they do it when they send out mailing lists. How can an exhibitor get a true measure of the number of buyers in attendance at shows?

A. A sneaky way to get the numbers is to get your hands on the mailing list. But that doesn't solve the larger issue of encouraging show managers to report "real" numbers. If attendance is down, show management will be defensive. Be sensitive to this. Write to show management and explain how the numbers are important to you in evaluating your performance and participation. Avoid accusations, and focus on the problem. Encourage other exhibitors to share their concerns as well.

If show management doesn't respond, go to your Exhibitors Advisory Committee. This committee of exhibitor and show management representatives works on improving relations and bettering the show for attendees and exhibitors alike. If there is no EAC, consider starting one. Organise a group of major exhibitors (they carry the most clout) and approach show management with a proposal to form an EAC.

How do you know if you can trust the numbers show management is providing? First you must understand the specific differences between each source of information.

Show management uses three methods of collecting attendance statistics: registration data, audience surveys and show audits. Each is compiled using a different method with varying degrees of accuracy.

Registration data - These numbers are usually compiled by the

show's registration service company by simply tabulating totals from attendee registration forms. The most commonly tabulated areas are job title, geographic location and industry type.

Audience surveys - While registration data provide the basic "who" profile information, audience surveys reveal specific marketing characteristics, such as buying influence, purchasing plans and product interest areas.

Unlike registration data, which represent total numbers, audience surveys represent statistical projections. A survey is conducted on a sampling of the show's attendees either on-site or after the show. Results of this survey sampling are projected to the entire audience. The accuracy of the survey hinges on the number of people surveyed. The higher the sample, the more accurate the results. Typical statistical error factors range from plus or minus 5 percent to 8 percent.

Show audit - The show audit is not to be confused with the audience survey. Audited show information has been verified for accuracy by an independent third-party source (not affiliated with show management). Never assume any audience data has been verified by an audit. Always ask. Or look for a note that indicates who verified which statistics.

In most cases, show statistics presented in a prospectus are not audited. That doesn't automatically mean unaudited figures are inaccurate, but you should be aware that no one has verified the registration data. For example, this could mean that figures include the "no-show" pre-registered attendees. Thus a show that reports 20,000 pre-registrants might actually have only 12,000 actual attendees.

How to Make Your Email Program More Productive in 2008

If you haven't done it yet, now is the perfect time to map out plans for your email program. Any changes you might make in the first few months of the year will stand you in good stead.

Resolve to do your homework

Good planning starts with analysis. Have you compared your overall results with available industry benchmarks? There are many sources for this information, but one to check is email provider Bronto. Though your own metrics are more important, you will have a gauge for how well your program is working in comparison with those of your peers.

Drill down deeper and look at results from the types of campaigns you send. Many email marketers vary the cadence of their messaging. They send e-newsletters, product or service promotions, general-themed promotions, and more. Are there variations in your results? If certain types of emails are stronger, attempt to discern what makes them work. If some campaigns are weaker, you may need to try a new communications strategy for those.

And, take the time to analyze your list. Is your list size growing substantially each year? Is your list showing any fatigue in terms of open and click-through rates? If so, you might want to look at

frequency. Have you analyzed performance by the source of the names? Email sign ups from your Web site should be the most productive. Other marketing techniques such as co-registration, contests, or appending may not be as effective. If you find that's so, you might want to tighten your permission practices for those sources.

What percentage of your list has not opened or clicked on a message in four to six months? Possibly a substantial part of your file. Put a plan in place to re-engage them. Some common techniques are to ask recipients to update their preferences, special time-sensitive offers, and text or HTML-lite messages (to overcome potential delivery or image-blocking problems). After one or more reactivation efforts, it may be time to take a big step and selectively prune your list.

Resolve to test new email features or capabilities

Email programs should never be on autopilot. There are great features and capabilities that should be part of your email marketing toolkit. For a well-rounded program, you should include the following features:

A preference center. Today the power is in the hands of your recipients. Make sure they can alter their information and preferences. If you already have such a facility in place, perhaps it is time to add additional features, such as giving them the choice to indicate specific topics or products of interest or the ability to decide how often they want to hear from you.

Triggered messaging. If you are an e-commerce marketer, you should definitely have an abandoned-shopping-cart program in place to recapture lost sales. Consider putting triggered messaging in place for email recipients who clicked through to your site and browsed, but did not purchase. You might start this simply and choose only your top products or services. Or, launch a cross-sell initiative for purchasers. Each of these techniques will improve the relevance of your programs and increase sales.

Segmentation. This is important to your email success and should be part of your communications strategy. Some common elements used to segment are geography, gender, past purchase behavior, demonstrated interest from click-throughs, and the length of time the person has been on the list. If you're not segmenting, set a goal to test one or two factors. If you already see the value of using this technique, it's time to test additional groups. Dynamic personalization makes it relatively easy to set up and monitor results.

Social networking. There's certainly a lot of buzz about blogs and customer reviews. They may not be right for everyone, but more marketers are experimenting with ways to increase interaction and the overall user experience on their sites. And, email is a perfect way to promote any new features you incorporate into your online presence.

Resolve to make your emails work harder

Take a hard look at your email template designs and make sure they put your best foot forward. I continue to be surprised that many emails I receive make no effective use of the preview pane.

Many do not include a link to view the HTML version. Since image blocking is a major issue, this is almost a mandatory element to include. You may also want to include headlines to support your subject line, additional personalization, or even a newsletter table of contents.

View your emails with images disabled. Is there enough supporting text to still stimulate interest and activity? Too many emails I receive are composed of a single large image. It takes more time to hand-code messages with images and text, but it is well worth the trouble. It is very easy to test whether this makes a major impact on your results.

Is it time to develop some new templates? Get your creative team to develop some new prototypes for the various types of campaigns you conduct. An updated look and feel can breathe new life into your program.

Resolve to focus on the customer

Finally, think hard about ways to amaze and delight your email recipients. That effort will make your emails stand out in a cluttered inbox and improve your performance.

My favorite technique is to introduce value-added content such as tips, interesting factoids, or user-generated content. You could also provide the opportunity to interact—via polls, an Ask the Expert feature, or periodic contests or games.

Web Site Revenue On The Up

Revenue from show Web sites is on the way up a recent research by Ispy Analytics has shown.

Sponsorships generate the most revenue. Thirty-nine percent of respondents generate revenue from sponsorship, followed closely by advertising (37 percent).

Only 4 percent of respondents generate revenue from Webcasting or buyers guides. But 22 percent generate revenue from paid/enhanced exhibitor listings/links.

Seventy-two percent of respondents said they offer attendee registration online, while only 52 percent of attendees use it. A majority of respondents (57 percent) expect the attendee online registration to increase in 2005 by an average of 16 percent.

Even fewer attendees book their hotel rooms through the show Web site or the show housing provider's Web site — only 35 percent.

Registration is most popular attendee feature

Top 10 Exhibitor Web Features

1. Exhibitor prospectus — 56%
2. Show/conference registration — 55%
3. Hotel reservations — 50%
4. Printable Floor Plans — 49%
5. Static floor plans — 46%
6. Exhibitor manuals — 46%
7. Banner ads — 44%

8. Separate booth personnel registration — 41%
9. E-mail newsletters — 35%
10. Show directory/buyers guide — 33%

Top 10 Attendee Web Features

1. Show/conference registration — 72%
2. Exhibitor list — 71%
3. Hotel reservations — 59%
4. Host city information — 57%
5. Online payment — 51%
6. Exhibitor search — 48%
7. Floor plan (static) — 48%
8. Printable Floor Plans — 48%
9. Product/Category search — 45%
10. E-mail newsletter — 38%

Sponsorships come first

How is revenue generated from your Web site?

- Sponsorships — 39%
- Advertising — 37%
- Paid/enhanced exhibitor listings/links — 22%
- Product/publication sales — 10%
- Sales of conference proceedings — 9%
- Other — 7%
- Buyers Guides — 4%
- Webcasting revenue — 4%

More from ispy

A complete list of online features for attendees and exhibitors.

Attendee Web Features

- Show/conference registration 72%
- Exhibitor list 71%
- Hotel reservations 59%
- Host city information 57%
- Online payment 51%
- Exhibitor search 48%
- Floor plan (static) 48%
- Printable Floor Plans 48%
- Product/Category search 45%
- E-mail newsletter 38%
- Other travel services (airline reservations, car rental, etc.) 35%
- Download conference proceedings (free or paid) 30%
- Exhibitor product brochures or press release 29%
- Floor Plan (real-time) 29%
- New Products Showcase 26%
- Personalized Expo Planner (simple exhibitor list that attendees can print) 24%
- Appointment scheduler/matchmaking/itinerary planner (facilitates appointment scheduling between attendees and exhibitors) 17%
- Matching Personalized Floor Plan (printable floor plan that highlights exhibitors on personal list) 11%

Exhibitor Web Features

- Exhibitor prospectus 56%
- Show/conference registration 55%
- Hotel reservations 50%
- Printable Floor Plans 49%
- Static floor plans 46%
- Exhibitor manuals 46%
- Banner ads 44%
- Separate booth personnel registration 41%
- E-mail newsletters 35%
- Show directory/buyers guide 33%
- Enhanced exhibitor listings 32%

Press release postings 31%
 Other travel services (airline reservations, car rental, etc.) 29%
 Service ordering 29%
 Individual Exhibitor Logins for do-it-yourself tools 28%
 Real-time floor plans 27%
 Space selection/sales 22%
 Exhibitor Profiles/Virtual Storefronts 20%
 Online booth space deposits/payments 18%
 Info/literature request features 18%
 Confirmation Letters 16%
 Appointment scheduler/matchmaking/itinerary planner (facilitates appointment scheduling between attendees and exhibitors) 14%
 Lead generation/management 14%
 Trackable visitor click-thrus (online activity reports for exhibitors) 8%
 Reports 5%
 Exhibitor access to their financial summaries (password protected) 4%

Exhibition revenue

Despite worries about the economy, show organizers continue to have an optimistic outlook on revenue in 2008, according to a survey of for-profit and association show organizers by Exhibit Surveys, Inc..

Sixty percent of show organizers say they expect revenues to rise, and 43 percent expect to see sponsorship revenues increase in 2008.

Attendance revenue increases are expected by 39 percent of respondents. Of those who don't expect to see an increase in 2008, most expect revenues to at least remain unchanged. Only 15 percent expect to see booth sales revenue drop, 9 percent expect sponsorship revenues to fall, and 15 percent expect to see attendance revenue decreases.

Study reveals most show organizers expect an increase in revenues in 2008

Sixty percent of show organizers expect their revenues to increase by an average of 10.9 percent, according to a survey conducted by EXPO Magazine and Red Bank, NJ-based Exhibit Surveys Inc. Eighty-three percent said their 2007 booth revenues increased by an average of 11 percent.

Thirty-nine percent of show organizers expect their attendance revenues to increase in 2008 by an average of 9.3 percent, while 46 percent expect attendance revenue to stay the same.

Eighty-six percent of show organizers saw an increase in sponsorship revenues in 2007, but only 43 percent expect to see an increase this year. Forty-eight percent expect sponsorship revenues to stay the same.

NEXT ISSUE

When disciplinary hearings go bad.

For the love of checklists.

Futurewatch.

My boss is an idiot. How to manage the managers.

40 Easy Green Tips.

Ten Things You Absolutely Need to Know about Prospecting.

Why do so many new products fail.

The Second Dimension of Screening Sales Talent.

Can medical shows still draw.

Appraising Your Promotions.

MICE Insight subscriptions

Online Licence: 1-5 Users **US\$ 2,495**

Includes PDF, XML and paper versions of the Market Insight plus searchable archive of all back issues.

Payment

Cheque Enclosed

Credit Card (a WRS member of staff will contact you)

To arrange a bank transfer, or if you have any queries concerning payment, please call the numbers below.

Name _____

Email _____

Job Title _____

Company _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Fax _____

ispy publications

PO Box 73319, Dubai, UAE
 Fax: +971 84 480493
 Mob: +971 50 6984478

Editor: Claire Punt
Contributor: Murve J. Patterson
Subscriptions Manager: Julian Temple
Publishers: ispy publishing ltd.

Copyright 2008. ispy publishing ltd. All rights reserved

All information, analysis, forecasts and data provided by ispy publishing ltd. is for the exclusive use of subscribing persons or organisations (including those on a trial basis). All such content is copyrighted in the name of ispy publishing ltd., and as such no part of this content may be reproduced, repackaged, copied or distributed without the express consent of ispy publishing ltd.

All content, including forecasts, analysis and opinion has been based on sources believed to be accurate and reliable at the time of publishing. ispy publishing ltd. makes no representation of warranty of any kind as to the accuracy or completeness of any information provided and accepts no liability whatsoever for any loss or damage from opinion, errors, inaccuracies or omissions affecting any part of the content.