

HOW TO BE A CONVENTION ROCK STAR

(...or 12 ways to attract the best delegates)

Great content and over-the-top talent (yours and others) make it possible to increase and enhance attendance at international conferences, writes **Monica Freire**, head of the Congress Department of professional congress organisers AIM Group International, in Lisbon. Follow 12 easy steps and you, too, could be a convention rock star...



1 Target the ideal delegate

Identify leading industry figures in specific regions and constituencies. Each target will require its own unique, locally relevant value proposition, one that could deliver results critical to the success of your meeting.

Be social

Don't be afraid to use these sites for the purpose for which they were intended, being social. It's not enough to post event updates, you need to grab attention. Create conversations and join conversations. Give your event credibility by creating a two-way dialogue with your audience. Choose one or two channels relevant to the target audience and once they are defined make sure they look good, with right-sized quality images and up-to-date profiles.

Enable social sharing on your event site and registration page – include the official social media icons since people are more likely to use them.

3

Optimise your event website

More and more registrations are made from mobile devices. If you have an event that requires online registration, make sure your website works well on smart phones and tablets.



4



Do not forget content

Offer content that's appealing to your audience by communicating what makes it a "can't miss" event for your customers and prospects. Is it peer to peer interaction, ideas sharing, or tracking new trends? Feature the rock stars of the disciplines and professions.

5 Build your event programme early and share it with your audience

The clearer and more detailed you are with your agenda, the more people will feel they can make an informed decision about attending. Make sure you include this in all of your communications.

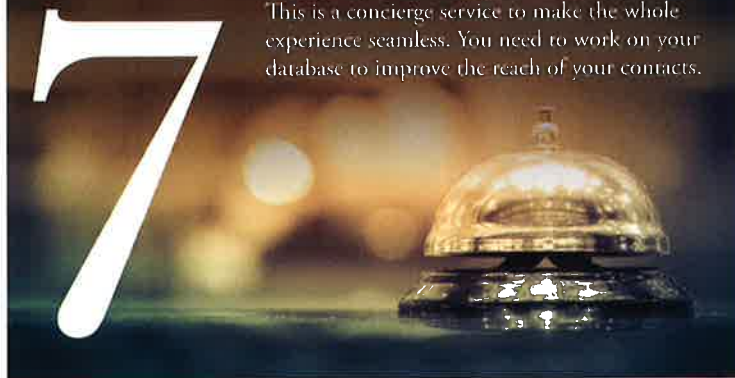


6 Express multiple value propositions in your promotional efforts

One benefit usually isn't enough for most people to attend. Emphasise the many valuable take-aways of the event, especially what attendees will learn; feature keynote speakers and/or entertainment; provide photos and testimonials of past events; offer videos; highlight the people/companies that attended past events.

7 Work on a registration fee strategy

Remember, you aren't just selling them a conference, but also offering them an exclusive one-stop-shop service to register, book accommodation, coordinate visa application and arrange any incidental programme registration. This is a concierge service to make the whole experience seamless. You need to work on your database to improve the reach of your contacts.



8 Cross promote with other organisations

Contact other organisations that may target your audience and propose incentives (registration discount or in-kind items like a display table).

This will allow you to cross-promote your event on their lists.

9 Ask your attendees and speakers to help you promote the event

Empower your attendees and participants to spread the word, to be multipliers and conference ambassadors! Make it easy for them to reach out to their friends and peers via email and social media. Offer discounts for bringing colleagues. Encourage speakers and participants to promote the conference on their networks.

10 Reach out to key publications

Arrange advertising agreements with the media outlets to publicise your conference in exchange for attendance, booths, etc.

11 Make new contacts

Beyond an association's existing member, customer, or prospect database, it is possible to extend the range and scope by prospecting new contacts. For example, within a given target market for a medical meeting an association could locate key organisations and institutions like hospitals, ministries of health, medical journals and pharmaceutical companies to build a list of key opinion leaders and decision makers.

12 And finally... involve your team

Define the goals to reach and get your team involved. By requesting feedback you tap into your team's expertise and may discover nuances it would be hard for one person to have thought of on their own.

