

Social Media for Festivals

By now, you likely have a Facebook fan page for your festival, and you're posting updates on your Twitter feed to help promote your event. You've put the basics in place, but you're wondering what the next step is. Are you getting all you can from these tools, and what other tools should you be looking at? In this article, we'll look at some advanced uses of Facebook fan pages and Twitter, and we will go over how wikis can be used for festival planning.



By Carla Pendergraft

Facebook Fan Page

First, be sure your Facebook fan page is all it can be. Here are three pointers:

- Ensure you have links to all your other presences on the web
- Seek to increase fan interactions with your page
- Encourage fans to upload photos and videos.

Links. Gather your links for your website, Twitter feed, YouTube channel, blog, and any other sites you maintain. There are two places you need to put these links. First is the Info tab, under Detailed Info. Be sure to use the full URL including <http://> so that the link is clickable.

The second place is the "Links" box on the left hand side of the page.

Fan interaction. The latest changes to Facebook make it easier for fans to share your updates. When you post an update, it will allow fans to comment, like, or share. Encourage them to share it because then your updates have a chance to spread virally. When fans comment, like, or share, it is called an "interaction" and this is one of the key measures that Facebook tracks.

Fan uploads. Regularly encourage your fans to upload their own photos and videos. Make it clear you might use these in your materials, and offer a prize for those

you use. A free festival t-shirt or free ticket to the festival are some typical prizes.

This way, you gain valuable interactions and free, quality content.

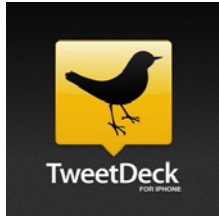
Twitter Feed

There are three things we need to cover about Twitter: what to post about, using a Twitter tool, and enhancing your Twitter profile.

What to post about. Use your Twitter account to talk about real-time happenings. Twitter is about what's happening *now*. For example, talk about the artist you just signed today. Drum up interest in your current online auction. Talk about

how plans are progressing. Solicit votes for your latest poll. Include shortened links and photographs where appropriate.

In your posts, regularly interact with others on Twitter. Answer questions, ask questions, and respond to general Twitter posts you see. Follow those who follow you, unless the poster is clearly a scammer. You can usually tell by the lopsided ratio of followers vs. followed when you



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click on the person's profile. If no one is following that person, or they have a provocative profile picture, it's probably a scammer that you don't need to bother to follow.

Tweetdeck. To get the most out of Twitter, I recommend the use of a Twitter tool, such as Tweetdeck (www.tweetdeck.com). This software package allows you to easily post photos, videos and links. There is a Tweetdeck app available for iPhones and BlackBerrys so you can post on the run.

Tweetdeck will also allow you to continually monitor a search term such as "festival" or "marathon" or whatever is most related to your event. Anytime anyone in the world posts on Twitter using that search term, you will see the post. You can then look at that person's profile and interact with him or her if there is an area of common interest.

For example, I reposted an item about the new orangutan exhibit at our Cameron Park Zoo. I was immediately followed by the Australia Orangutan Project, which likely had a saved search on the term "orangutan."

Twitter profile. Be sure you have a link to your main website on your profile. Use the full URL, including <http://>. (In fact, get in the habit of always writing your URLs this way; it's a good habit.) Also, use keywords in your profile that will help people find your festival or event. To check whether you have the right keywords in your profile, do a search on Twitter using the terms you believe a searcher might use to find you if that person did not know the name of your festival or event. Does your festival come

up in the search? If not, think about adding some of those search terms to your profile. There are some basic terms lacking from many Twitter profiles that make those festivals invisible in searches.

Wikis for Festival Planning

Most festivals are planned with the help of multiple committees. Often, these committee members are geographically

dispersed, and it costs time and money to bring them all together. Schedules vary and emergencies come up, and suddenly plans don't progress as they should.

There is a free, easy-to-use tool available that can assist in the planning process for festivals and events. It's called a wiki.

First, what is a wiki? A wiki is a free webpage that you can set up without programming skills. The term 'wiki' comes from the Hawaiian term for 'fast' – "wiki wiki". You've no doubt used Wikipedia to look something up, but did you ever notice there is an "edit" button on every page? You can click that button and add or edit information on that page.

Setting up the wiki. Setting up a wiki is relatively straightforward. There are

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many free wiki tools out there, but one I currently use is at www.wikispaces.com. You create an account, choose a name and a theme, and then begin creating pages in the wiki based on the festival's or committee's needs. Once it's ready, you'll invite the members of your committee to become "members" of the wiki so that they can edit it as well.

There are an unlimited number of ways you could set up this wiki. For multi-day festivals, you might have a page for each day's plans. Or perhaps you set up a page

for each of your committees. Take a look at the festival wikis listed on the sidebar for some good ideas.

A wiki can also be used to promote the festival itself, in addition to handling the planning process. It can even be used as a means to receive user submissions, as did the Utah Multimedia Arts Festival (see <http://umaf.wikispaces.com/>).

So where's the catch? If you use the free version of a wiki, ads will appear on the wiki. If these are a problem, you can pay a low monthly fee to make them disappear.

Once you've cut your teeth on a wiki for your festival planning committees, you may very well find yourself creating others for other purposes. They are tools well suited to collaboration, sharing, and learning.

But start with the committee management wiki, and allow yourself some time to master the tool. You'll find it's intuitive and easy to use, and your committees may find they can decrease the number of face-to-face meetings while still meeting deadlines for getting their work done.

Conclusion

Nowadays, a Facebook fan page and Twitter account are being used on a widespread basis by the festival and event community. Keep expanding your knowledge of these tools, especially as their features change over time, and add a wiki or two to your repertoire of tools. Once you use a wiki, you'll wish you had one long ago for your planning process.

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