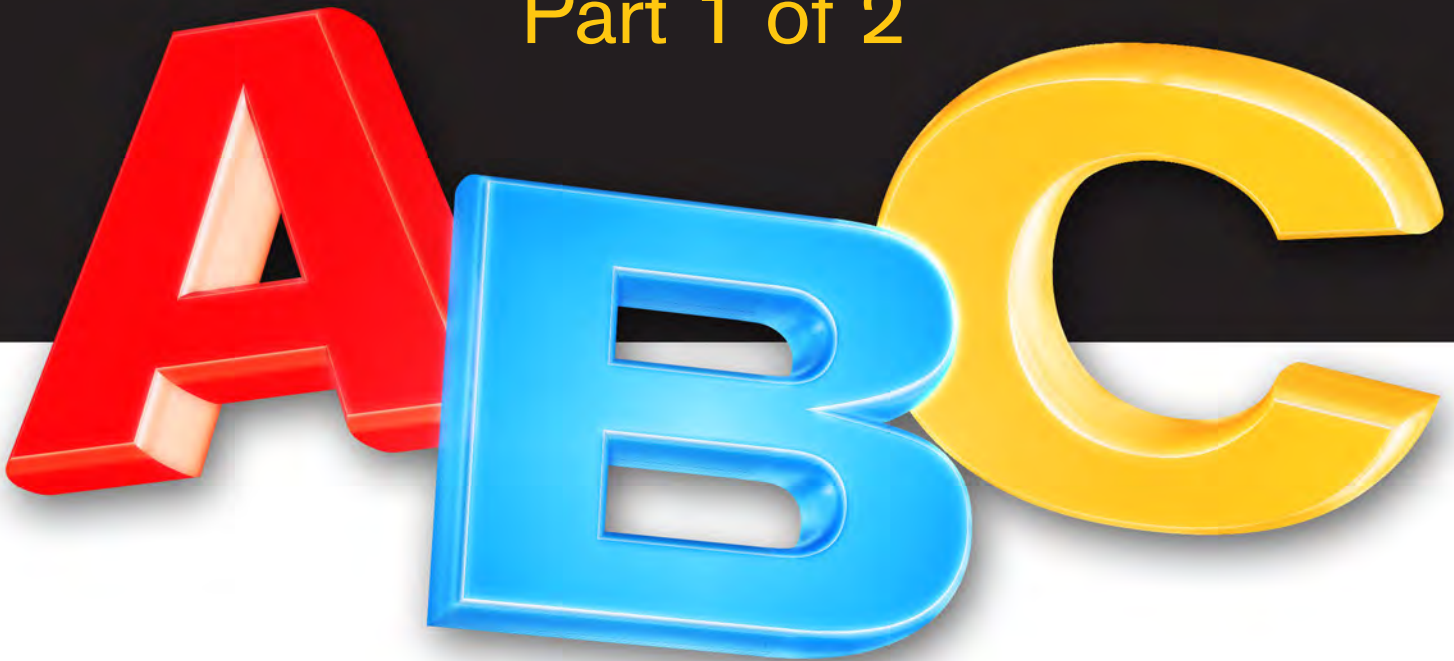


The ABC's of EVENT MARKETING 2016 Edition

Part 1 of 2



Whether you're a grizzled veteran of the event marketing wars or gearing up for your very first event, there's a baseline of knowledge we all need as the basic building blocks from which we can grow, innovate and provide amazing guest experiences to an ever-expanding audience.

In this first article of a two-part series, along with a companion webinar to be featured on the IFEA Webinar Series on April 28, we take a look at the ABC's of Marketing updated for the 2016 event season.

What are the new trends? How can we take a fresh look at the old basics

we need to implement as part of our marketing and promotional strategies?

We break the alphabet into 13-letter topics to provide a brief, top line perspective of what you need to know to achieve success in 2016. Plus, we've included a tip or two for each of the topics that you can use in your planning and implementation this year.

Advertising

An article on the ABC's of Marketing can begin with one topic: Advertising. Many folks interchange marketing with advertising and vice versa, but this should not be the case. Advertising

belongs to the marketing family, but the opposite is not always true.

Marketing is comprised of many other items such as Pricing, Product and Promotion, while those of us in the arts and festivals space add another "p" word: Programming.

Advertising has its own three "M's" to remember: Message, Media and Market. Message is what we say. Top of the list for 2016 is to tell your story through creative content. Whether guest-generated or content created by your own team, creativity remains key to successful engagement in social and traditional formats.

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The second “M” is Media. That’s where we share our stories. As everyone knows, the media landscape is as wide as ever with social (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) and traditional (radio, print, outdoor, direct mail, tv) outlets and more options than ever for potential guests to learn about events and to become engaged. Mixing a blend of your advertising between traditional and social is the key to success, with a splash of digital promotion through paid search and outlets like Google AdWords.

Of course, your overall success is dependent on the third “M” and that is the Market – the “who” we are trying to reach. Your team needs to define the main market you are attempting to reach based on your programming. Your advertising plan will hinge on whether you focus on Millennials, Gen Exers or Boomers. The good news is, once you determine who your audience is, the answers of what to say and where to say it will become much clearer.

Brand

Your brand is not what you say it is, it is what others think, say and feel about your organization and event. Brand is not your logo, although a logo represents what your guest expects and visually communicates that guarantee.

Brand is built over time with consistency and attention to detail. Everyone has a brand whether they know it or not, the key is to leverage and grow it. Be sure to never lose site of your key brand attributes, they are what make your festival unique and important to your community.

Tip: Your brand is particularly important to your sponsors. Beyond the return of investment that is now expected of many partnerships, the most successful sponsorship activations are where the two brands share the same characteristics and attributes. When evaluating your partnerships for 2016, brainstorm ideas on how can you deepen those brand relationships.

Collaboration

An ancient proverb says “If you want to go fast, go by yourself. If you want

to go far, go with others.” This theme is at the root of any collaboration and is a driving factor for successful relationships between multiple parties.

Collaborations can be found between funders, events, and public/private partnerships, but you should be warned that these come at an expense of time and energy, especially the larger the scope of the project.

Collaboration should be more than just a buzzword. The opportunity to collaborate with others to help you achieve your goals and those of others can propel us to even higher heights than we imagine.

A collaboration tip for 2016 would be to review your community for geographic or demographic similarities between yours and another event, festival or organization. Open a dialogue to see how you might be able to partner either to grow audience, control costs or other impact both parties in a mutually beneficial way.

Data Analytics - Who hasn’t heard about big data? It’s the business activity that takes the data of what you’ve bought, where you’ve visited and what you like and distills it into serving your Facebook feed, websites you view and much more.

But what about big data for small organizations? There are steps we can all take to know more about our visitors, our fans and create profiles that will help us better engage our audiences, in turn drive attendance and increase revenue. Sounds great, right? But where do we start?

For 2016, start collecting basic data on your festival-goers offline. Start a survey program executed by volunteers to gain much needed insights as to who your attendees are, where they come from and how to stay in touch. If you need help in defining what data to collect, start with the absolute basics: name, zip code, date of birth and contact info, preferably email address.

If you’re a little more sophisticated in your data plan, use the analytics provided by Google apps, Facebook, YouTube and others to create a baseline dashboard to track your success and

allow you to start making strategic decisions based on that data.

Emoji

The word of the year according to Merriam –Webster was an emoji, not a word. There are interesting trends in the marketing and communications industry that the most popular platform for millennials is Instagram, primarily a visual medium, while the fastest growing platform is Snapchat with its 10-second lifespan.

Tip: Think about what steps you are taking to shorten your communications to make the biggest impact with the fewest amount of words. Using media such as photos and graphics to tell your story is a trend to follow for 2016.

Facebook

Need more be said? The Goliath of all social media forums is now a staple of the marketing and communications plans for just about everyone.

As we all know, the world of Facebook changed for all organizations two years ago when the gatekeepers at Facebook installed a tollbooth. Gone were the days of posting and having your post instantaneously appear on your fans and friends pages. It was a wonderful world, people electing to ‘like’ and an uninterrupted way for you to communicate with those who liked you.

In retrospect, paid advertising to reach 1 billion people was inevitable given the pressure to monetize the company and create a never-ending stream of revenue. However, one might agree that it was just taking Facebook back to its roots by putting the control in the hands of the user and raise the bar for spammers to hurdle.

It’s been up to us to navigate the ever-changing labyrinth of rules and features the Facebook geniuses devise each day.

One can argue it is unfair to the smaller organizations among us who no longer can use Facebook freely, but if you are wise and can plan accordingly, you can organically grow your following until the time that paid reach becomes a reality.

Google

Whatever your stance is on Google and their work in front of and behind closed doors, they have a lock on data (with Amazon a close second).

Entities selling commodities like cars have plowed in billions how to maximize this space and marketers are falling all over themselves to reach the top of Google AdWords paid search. The little guys can take advantage of these same lessons in promoting their events and festivals. Although

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fans aren't necessarily using Google in the same way to shop for a live event as they do a washing machine or automobile, but the basics are the same.

Tip: If there's an area you should look at exploring with a minimal budget investment for 2016, leverage Google ads to give you visibility among those who find your event and are searching for your main attraction (children's, music, fine arts and crafts, wine, craft beer, food).

#Hashtags

Right along with emojis and Snapchat, the proliferation of hashtags within the world of social media has been noticeable within the past year.

Basically, hashtags are a way to categorize similar conversations around a topic i.e. #GivingTuesday, #StarWars), but it's also a way to inject commentary (i.e. #epicfail).

Tip: Use hashtags as a way for followers to monitor conversations and participate in the conversation about you and your event. Stay away from the snarky, but embrace a simple, meaningful hashtag and those on social media will find you much easier.

Instagram

As we mentioned previously, Instagram is by far the most popular social media platform for those ages 18-34. Who needs words when a photo will do? We've heard forever that a picture is worth a million words, so in this age of mobile media, photos and video are the mediums where Instagram gains its users.

Tip: Do you have an Instagram account? When was the last time you posted to it? Have you looked at the analytics to see what followers you have? Do a little research and then put a volunteer (preferably a young intern) to work on curating content for the page.

Jay-Z

Could be Jay-Z or Taylor Swift or any celebrity who has been able to successfully build a brand through the use of social media and following the same rules as big corporations.

Managing the overall look and tone of your content is imperative and

look no further than what some of the top popular culture star brands do to interact with their fans.

Tip: Think of your festival as a personality. What traits does it have? Then use those elements to help you create a conversational tone in your posts and a style in the images you choose.

Keywords

Paid search was a hot topic and all the rage just a few years ago, but has now become a standard for the marketing world to maximize website visits and usage.

Keywords in their most basic form allow you to promote the most important items about your event so there is a greater chance of your message to be seen by the person you want to see it.

Keywords have now morphed into tags, which folks identify with photos when shared with friends and family. Actually, the best way to think of keywords is that they're essentially tags for your website. Just as you would tag a friend with their name, with a keyword you would select "jazz" or "dance" or "craft beer" when selecting your paid search, Facebook or other means of communication.

Tip: Take the time to identify the handful of words that best describe your event and then use them when engaging paid search and Google AdWords so people can find your event much easier.

Logos

Logos are not your brand. They are a visual representation of what your brand delivers. A great deal of time and resources can be spent on designing a logo, and while you need to live with the design for a long time, you should also not be paralyzed by design development.

Committees take far too much time to decide on elements and colors. A great logo will communicate with you from the very instant you see it and should speak to others as well.

Tip: Take a look at your current logo and brand's visual identity. Does it convey the message you are trying to share? Or is it a remnant from decades ago that could stand to be refreshed? This is an important step in a marketing

and communications audit and by analyzing your logo at this point, you've taken care of a main component.

Millennials

As mentioned earlier, Millennials continue to be a main driver and focus in marketing circles based on their sheer numbers and potential impact on brands for decades to come.

The number one trend for Millennials is based on the fact they are digital natives and have never known a day without technology. Mobile phones are as important as water and food, and new products and platforms are being developed daily for them to take advantage of the digital universe.

With Instagram as their social media of choice, Snapchat gaining in popularity and the rise of the emoji, Millennials are changing communication from the ground up.

Interesting to think what might come of communication in the future where words are an afterthought and if the trend to Instagram photos and memes, wordless emojis and disappearing conversations are the norm.

Tip: If you haven't already addressed a strategy to reach Millennials, it would be a good time to analyze your communications strategy, (the three M's), in order to fine tune your message for this growing market segment. With the average age of a parent of a 5-year old now at 30 years of age, the Millennials not only represent themselves, but also a new generation of families that will be attending events for decades to come.

CONCLUSION

The world of event marketing is wild and ever-changing, with new apps and platforms being added daily. We hope this article can be used as a primer or as a review for your 2016 marketing plan. Before you know it, we'll be basking in the warmth of spring and summer as the fruits of our marketing planning will be on display for all to see.

Be sure to read the second installment featuring letters N-Z in the next issue of i.e. Magazine and tune into the April 28 IFEA Webinar when we bring the whole alphabet to life.

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