

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR BRAND IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Consumers move fast these days—like really fast. You can talk, text and email all at once. You can order your groceries while getting your hair cut. It may seem like with this fast-paced lifestyle that people pay less attention to the brands which they are buying from. If customers don't even have time to go to the grocery store, then how will they have time to pay attention to messaging from your festival?

As it turns out, building your brand is more important than ever, mainly due to this newfangled concept that consumers have in abundance...the element of choice. Never have people had so many options when deciding how and where to spend their money. The rise of ecommerce, and more recently mobile ecommerce, means customers are more educated and you have more competition to earn a customer's dollar. A strong brand is actually one of your best defenses to keep customers coming back. Here are a few things you can focus on:

- **Consider Your Image in EVERY Post** – Do you ever go to an Instagram account and think to yourself, “WOW these people really have it together! It's so pretty and I want to be a part of it!” THAT is what you want for your brand—you achieve that by making sure everything you post adheres to the standards you've set for yourself in terms of quality & content of your images & videos. Don't post something that has bad colors or allow your logo to be partially cut off. Don't stand for blurry pixelated images. Your brand is tied to those elements, and they tell a big part of your story online. If you don't adhere to your own brand guidelines, it's not likely that the media or your sponsors will either. If you don't have a brand guide, develop one! It's a great place to start in making yourself look good online & elsewhere.
- **Get Involved in Your Community** – Sometimes “going viral” requires getting your boots dirty on your home turf first. If you need more volunteers, consider taking time for your staff or board to donate their time around town. Pick a cause that is relevant to what you do and give back. This is especially important to millennials and Gen Z's when they are deciding where to spend their money. Younger generations tend to

support brands that “do good”. Younger customers also care about what their peers think of a brand more than older generation. If a few millennials post about how awesome you are on snapchat, you can bet you'll win the business of some of their friends.

- **Don't Be Afraid of Change** – Just as soon as you get that brand guide built, it's likely that you'll want to update it. Resist the urge to change without giving it a lot of consideration. After all, this is the brand you have worked so hard to establish! That logo that you feel is “tired” or “so last year” may be something your customers are just getting used to. It typically takes 6-7 exposures to a brand before it is really absorbed by a customer. On the other hand, change and growth is crucial to survival in the digital age. Think about Amazon—they used to only sell books and Compact Discs. Can you imagine if that was their only business plan? They would have gone the way of Blockbuster & other brands that couldn't survive the digital age. Adapt to your surroundings. One of the BEST things about your marketing campaign trending digital is you probably have more data than ever before on what's working for your brand and what's not. Use your analytics to your advantage. Listen to what your customers want and adapt to the masses.

The digital age doesn't mean all bad things for your brand. If you follow these guidelines, your digital assets will help your brand grow! Keep in mind that you can cast a wider net to more targeted followers than ever before. It may be faster than word about your brand, but don't let that allow you to treat it with any less regard. Your brand is still your strongest asset!

Cassie Roberts Dispenza is the Senior Partnership & Marketing Director at Saffire and has extensive experience with online marketing and event planning. She started working with Saffire in 2011 and since then, the company has grown from supporting a few great organizations in Texas to partnering with hundreds of events, venues and destinations across the country. Cassie lives in Austin, TX, and if you're looking to visit, can rival any tour guide in the city!