



TECHNOLOGY, SOCIAL MEDIA, & APPS GAME CHANGERS IN EVENTS PLANNING

By Sai Powers

This article is for event coordinators who consider themselves a novice, do-it yourself kind of person. If you do not have a marketing department, social media manager, or any type of IT department for your event or party– this is for you. You can manage your technology, social media, and event applications yourself... with just a few common-sense practices, a little bit of passion and a whole lot of fun. I will be discussing items that you, most likely, use every day, and show you how to use them in the right way to help make your event be the best that it can be. And...here...we...go!

Technology, Social Media and Event Applications are something you need to embrace if you want your business to be successful. Why is this so important? Do you remember the first event you were invited to? How did you hear about your first concert? You probably saw it in the Sunday newspaper Events section or on a flier on a light pole. You received an invitation in the mail for a birthday party – and you had to RSVP by CALLING them. You had to call or drive to a theatre box office to buy and pick up your tickets. Talk about inconvenience! Just kidding...kind of, those were some fun memories...and that is exactly where they should stay...as memories. In this article, I will cover certain technology, social media platforms, and applications to help make your event more successful.

TECHNOLOGY/THE CLOUD

We have so many great technological programs available to us today to help us expedite the sending of information. I'm sure you remember carrying your giant binder(s) of information with contacts, inventory,

meeting notes, etc. Today, you can have everything in the cloud. What is the cloud? In reality 'the cloud' is just an informal term for 'cloud computing', which itself just refers to the idea of using someone else's computers (usually, but not always, operated by a business) on the Internet for things we previously used our own networks for, like file sharing, storing data and running programs. Being able to have multiple people view and edit files in real time is a massive time saver not to mention a very "green" alternative to printing and re-printing page after page for every edit made. At Scottsdale Arts, we are starting to use the cloud more to share show reports, work schedules, vacation calendars, and more. The Cloud is pretty much the best thing ever for streamlining intercompany communications. Everyone is able to access all and edit most of these documents from anywhere that has a good cell signal or WIFI with almost any mobile device. As an event planner, a smart phone or tablet is a wise investment, and they are available in a variety of price points and sizes.

SOCIAL MEDIA

This is a big one – Social Media. My favorite outline to help you make the best of your social media contact is the one made by Scarlett Entertainment. Social media's use in the events industry is shifting every day and is becoming one of the most important ways to make sure that your event is a success. There are three practices to follow to help you engage with your target audience: Promote, Enhance, and Sustain.

Promote

Promote your event by creating a unique hashtag. A hashtag, or pound sign, is a great way for people to search for others posting or commenting about the same topic. When you encourage your attendees to use the hashtag – the interaction you get is amazing! A clever or memorable hashtag can redefine an entire event. Also having your sponsors and vendors using the same hashtag helps spread the word even more. You want everybody talking about your hashtag!

Promote your event by starting a countdown. Most people love anticipation. This is also a helpful way to create a reminder for your event, because let's face it, we have all missed an event because "OMG, that was last weekend??" You can create a countdown using graphics or video clips to appeal to your audience.

Be creative! Take advantage of creative apps. Our company loves Canva. I love to download creative apps just to see what all it can do. Here are some of my favorites: kirakira+, Color Pop, Afterlight, Videoleap, A Design Kit – look them up to see what they are all about and what works best for you! They are great for events and even for your own personal photos and videos as well.

Video is a very powerful medium. Use it to give your followers sneak peaks of what they can expect at the event, make a behind the scenes videos to show off all of the hard work that your crew put in to make the event a success, or share promotional material from the artist. Teaser videos and images are always exciting and are great for Instagram, as they only allow 60 second videos. Longer videos are more popular. Using YouTube, you can post longer videos that can be shared on Facebook.

Promote your event by creating a volunteer or over hire "street team". This group is a great way to help increase your media coverage, impact purchase decisions, find ways to access millennial and Gen Z consumers, increase for the trendsetting, relatability & credibility for your event.

Enhance

The next step after promoting is to **ENHANCE** your social media coverage. Keep engaging your audience throughout the event. Find opportunities to Live Stream a performance, give an exclusive behind the scenes look, or show others what they are missing out on. Get obsessed with capturing all the moments you can! Always have a camera ready, you never know when something amazing is going to happen! Take as many photos of the event as you can and upload your favorites to Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, don't forget to use that all-important hashtag.

You can use social media as an instant customer support system. Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are great platforms for you to use to respond to patron's questions, and concerns throughout the event. From simply giving directions and doing updated activity "blasts" to addressing security issues and sending out severe weather alerts. Social media creates a direct dialogue between patron and staff.

Make sure to keep the event hashtag going. The hashtag is not just a tool to promote, it is a tool to help patrons see what is happening and amplify your event to those who are not in attendance. One great use of the hashtag is to run a giveaway or a contest – and you award prizes to patrons who are the most engaged.

Create multiple social media booths throughout the event with fun activities such as a social media wall, a step and repeat or photo booth stations, where patrons can take their pictures, use your hashtag, and check in at the event.

Sustain

The last but not least piece of this...is to **SUSTAIN**. Social media is a great tool

to help prolong the hype surrounding your event long after it is over. Continued hype is basically free publicity for your next event. If someone has fun at your show once, they will return for more exciting experiences.

This is also an opportunity to connect with your community and support other events in your area to show a community presence. If you promote them, they may promote you. **TEAMWORK** makes the **DREAM WORK**. Here are some tips to help you sustain your social media presence:

- **Ask for feedback** by creating surveys with Survey Monkey or Google Docs. You can gain insight on what worked and didn't work at your event, find ways to improve your patron experience, and hear how they felt about the event. People are far more likely to give you honest feedback through a survey than to your face. Surveys give a patron to a platform to praise/criticize the event while remaining anonymous. You can also provide a survey for your vendors, sponsors, and staff to find ways to make your next event run as smooth as it can.
- **Recap the event** by writing a blog and posting it to your social media sites. This will give you a chance to talk about the event, thank your patrons, acknowledge the reason why you had the event, talk about what went great, and even what didn't go quite as expected. This is also a great time to share how successful the event was, if it was a fundraiser, did you meet your goal? Was the event sold out? Did the artist praise your event in some way?

Keep up community engagement all year round and keep posting. You can do your basic social media days like #TBT Throwback Thursday, Motivation Monday, Wacky Wednesday or show behind the scenes videos and promotional material. It could also be fun to treat your followers to exclusive videos on Facebook and Instagram. This is another time where you can showcase the hard work of your team. It shows your team that you appreciate everything that they do while also making your patrons feel like they are part of the event "family" by getting to know the staff. When people see videos of the staff and then meet them on event site, it gives a real connection between your social media image and real-life people.

Event technology trends aside, the most important thing for any event professional to remember is to let your tools work for you, rather than the other way around. The purpose of implementing advanced

technology is to make your life, and the life of those whom you plan events for, as easy as possible. Use whatever sources of technology you have at your disposal to tell a story in a new and innovative way.

EVENT APPS

Event apps are great resource for your event attendees, vendors, and sponsors. Event applications have impacted the event industry by making it easy for your guest and vendors to navigate, find information, FAQ, and a one stop information booth at their fingertips. There is an app for you no matter what kind of event you have. You just have to do research and a little bit of trial and error before you find the best fit for you. Different apps work better for different events. Maybe one app isn't going to work for all of your events. From conferences and festivals, to fairs, carnivals, and parades there is an app for that! Most websites are getting better at having mobile friendly versions and can act as an app by saving the website on your home screen. Event Apps are also great as a Green Initiative to save on printing programs and tickets. Event apps can be linked to wristbands and lanyards that can be turned into the patron's ticket, and payment at vendors so that almost everything is paperless and cashless. How can apps make you, the organizer's life, easier? Once you get it, embrace it, and educate your patrons by posting on your social media, sharing tips on how to effectively use the app. And to be honest...if you haven't used apps – it can be a real headache and learning curve at first. The transition may not be easy. You just have to breathe, be calm, and trust the process that it will work.

CONCLUSION

Whether you like or not, technology is here to stay. Technology is evolving every day. Not using any type of technology or social media would be a missed opportunity.

Here are some great ways to stay up to date on what is happening and trending in the technology, social media, and event application:

- Attend seminars at your local chambers, downtown groups, and see what personal development classes they have to offer... these are also great for networking
- Sign up for webinars – IFEA offers great webinars through the year on many topics – especially on those about technology, social media and apps.
- Read blogs and social media news sites – Mashable, Social Media Today, Social Media Examiner, and The Next Web

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- Subscribe to YouTube Channels
- Follow and make friends with those who are social-media savvy – and maybe hire them!
- Follow industry leaders on your Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook
- Learn how to be eye catching from Pinterest

There are many ways to find out information. This isn't an article for the leaders in the event industry who have the technology, social media, and event applications down. It is for those who do not have the resources or the money to hire a marketing firm to do it for them. I guess you can call it "The Poor Man's Guide" to social media.

Do not be afraid to take risks! Go for it! You'd be surprised what amazing, real life moments you can capture and help patrons turn into lasting memories.

Sources:

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Sai Powers is a graduate of Wichita State University with a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and is currently employed by Scottsdale Arts as Events Manager. In 2018, Powers received a scholarship for the Certified Festival & Events Executive (CFEE) program through International Festival & Event Association (IFEA) and this presentation brings her closer to CFEE certification. Powers shares her experience and best practices of utilizing tools on the most popular social media applications and suggests simple, helpful tips for stepping up your organization's social media game.