



Morningstar Multimedia  
Event Marketing Guide

# Sample Event Marketing Plan

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You're having an event. Maybe it's to raise money for your organization. Maybe it's to bring members of an academic or professional community together to discuss a particular topic. Maybe it's to teach a particular skill or concept. Whatever the reason, your task is to build awareness and get people to register.

## Getting Started

The basis for any sound marketing plan includes having objectives for who you want to come to your event, how much money you want to raise, and how many people you need to register at a specific price to meet that goal.

Marketing your conference is a lot like marketing a business. The essential ingredients include:

- a. having clearly defined goals and objectives
- b. setting a course of action to achieve them
- c. creating a timeline
- d. establishing a budget

Creating an initial marketing plan gives you a blueprint for how to accomplish your conference objectives and gives you a way to measure your progress. You should create the marketing plan as early as possible in the planning stage. It is never too early to start.

## Marketing Planning Questions

Here are some key questions that are essential to your marketing communications and should be addressed in your marketing plan:

1) Who is your target audience and how can you best reach them? Which mediums are most effective to reach them? (ie many corporations now have elaborate spam filters - will

your pdf attachment or html email reach them? Should you send them a physical postcard or mailer instead?) How much will you budget for reaching each?

2) For each target audience, what are the 3 key benefits of attending your conference? (different attendees have different concerns - how does your marketing message answer "what's in it for them?" Why should they attend your conference over a competing time commitment?)

3) What is your conference's purpose? It's theme? What does that mean to you? What types of images and photos come to mind in regards to your theme? What types of messages should your marketing communications present?

4) Are there any special considerations or limitations? (For example, if something related to your topic might be offensive or stereotypical to attendees - colors, specific imagery, cultural differences, etc)

5) What are your objectives for your marketing communications? (ie to get \$X in sponsorship, for X number of business professionals to register, to remind those registered of the time/place of the conference, etc)

6) How will you attain sponsorship for your conference? How much do you hope to raise? What is your break even point? What will you do if you receive more money than anticipated? Less money?

7) Who is in charge of which task? What is your critical path?

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## Marketing Communications Plan

A typical event marketing campaign will generally include most of the following marketing communications:

1. Sponsorship letters/kits
2. Save the Date postcard or email
3. Website
4. Mailer
5. Posters/Banners
6. Advertisements in relevant publications
7. Press kits/releases
8. Flyers
9. Email announcements
10. Day of Event Brochure

## Identity

If your current organization is well known, you have the advantage of leveraging the organization's brand. If not, you can take this opportunity to build your organization's brand through the event itself. Either way, your goal is to send a clear and consistent message throughout all your marketing communications. So what does that really mean?

Start with a general theme. When people think of your event or see your marketing materials, what should come to mind? Make a list of the fundamental points and ideas that you want to communicate and another list of things you absolutely don't want your event to be associated with. If you think of images or colors associated with either, include them in your list. Now, think of anyone that may be a potential competitor - those that have held similar events as yours - and compare your event's strengths and weaknesses to theirs. What are you offering that would make people excited about coming to your event?

These two exercises will help to form the basis for your unique selling principle and your positioning statement.

Whether you want to keep your organization's logo as your event's logo or create a new one depends on your objectives and preferences. If you plan on running your event on a regular basis, you should consider creating a separate logo for it, and work towards establishing a brand. If it's a one-time event, such as a fundraiser, you may just want to go with the organization's logo or a variation of the organization's logo with your event name or theme. Either way, you should use the logo consistently throughout all your marketing materials. You should also consider getting stationary printed up for general correspondence.

## Online Marketing

### A. Website

Having a website can greatly aid in getting information out about your event and will save you lots of time answering questions about the event itself. Yes, you should set up a website even if you are only in the initial stages of planning your event. What should you include? Some possibilities include: date/location, region-specific logistics, opportunities for sponsorship, proposed topics and objectives, who should attend and how they will benefit, previous events sponsored by your organization (especially if you've held this event in the past), info on your organization itself, a press kit, an option to join a mailing list for more information, etc.

Your website is your means of informing your audience of any news about your event. That

includes not only potential attendees, but potential speakers, sponsors, and the press as well. You can even make this an interactive experience, setting up surveys to obtain initial feedback from potential attendees on possible topics and expectations, allowing visitors to join a mailing list to receive updates and to aid in referral marketing, or setting up a forum so visitors can establish a community presence before the event that will carry through the event and facilitate discussion even after the event has passed.

Another critical function of your website is to provide online registration for your event. This tends to be the quickest and easiest way to handle payments, and will make your life a lot easier than manually processing credit cards by phone or direct mail. You can set up online payment processing through a number of online vendors.

### **B. Email Campaign**

One of the cheapest and most efficient methods of marketing is email marketing. However, the newly implemented CAN-SPAM Act imposes a number of restrictions on your mailings. If your organization does not have a list of members who have chosen to 'opt in', you must include certain information in your emails. Some guidelines include:

- Don't use misleading sender information or subjects
- Include a postal address
- Include a clear method for recipients to unsubscribe
- If your list isn't 'opt-in,' include a clear notice that states the e-mail is an advertisement or solicitation

Typically, emails are sent out about 6 weeks before your conference to coincide with the mailers, and again around 2 weeks before your conference to remind those who may have put off registration. They should announce the event and drive people to your website for more information and to register. You may also want to send out a final email a day or two before the conference to those registered to provide general information such as driving directions, parking options, and opening registration times.

### **C. Online Advertising**

An online marketing campaign consists of placing banner ads (or text ads depending on criteria) on information/e-commerce sites and in e-newsletters that offer the most potential for possible attendees. The most valuable way to do this is to ask your target site for media sponsorship and offer them a free ticket(s) to the event (ie. media sponsorship for nonprofits).

The second component to online marketing is using pay for placement advertising services such as Google's Adwords Select ([www.google.com/ads/](http://www.google.com/ads/)) and Overture ([www.overture.com](http://www.overture.com)). In this model, you bid for or purchase advertising based on keywords that you pick.

## **Offline Marketing**

### **A. Save the Date**

A save the date postcard is a cheap way to let people know well in advance you are having a conference. Ideally, it should be sent out about 4-5 months before your event, and should give details like data, location, and website address.

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The second purpose for a save the date postcard is to use as propaganda to hand out at any other events or other opportunities that may take place before your event. For example, if you go to a Chamber of Commerce event, you can set these out. You can also leave copies in your organization's or your speakers'/sponsors' reception areas.

### **B. Direct Mailing**

As the day of your event gets closer, you will probably want to print and mail a basic brochure with all the details including information on who will be speaking, the types of events planned, a proposed agenda, your sponsors, and any other general information. It should also emphasize date, location, and url. This brochure should tell people who the event is for and why they should come.

The purpose of this is twofold - to build awareness of your event now that most of the details are confirmed and to have something physical to hand out to people who request more information. If you mail them, you will want to send them 6-8 weeks in advance to allow for bulk mail delivery.

### **C. Posters/Banners**

Posters and banners also aid to promote awareness of your event. You can hang posters inside your organization or by your ticket sales locations. Banners can be hung outside as reminders of your event.

## **Public Relations**

### **A. Press Kit**

Publicity is free marketing, and hey, the press has to write about something, right? Why not your event? Having a press kit filled with

company history, press releases, speaker and sponsor profiles and previous event summaries and accomplishments not only helps differentiate you by means of credibility, but also makes the jobs of journalists looking for stories a lot easier. If your event is noteworthy in any way, which it should be if you are having it, let the press know. Press kits can be distributed both online and offline.

### **B. Press Release**

Make sure the press knows about your event! When you secure a well-known keynote, lecturer, or panelist, give them some information promoting who this person is, what their area of expertise is, what they will be addressing, and how it relates to topics covered by your event.

## **The Day of the Event**

### **A. Brochure**

The day of event brochure is basically the program guide and summary of the day's events. It should include all information related to your event, which can include a welcome letter, the agenda, the location with map, keynote pictures, biographies, and quotes, panel descriptions and panelists, other events such as career fair or cocktail reception information, sponsor ads and logos, information about the organization managing the event, volunteers and committee members.

### **B. Posters**

Posters are absolutely essential to identify your location and guide attendees from one room to another if you are hosting your event in different rooms or locations. You will need them for the registration process to direct people to the sign-in table and outside each

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room to designate that a specific event will be held there and at what time. Having posters on the day of event drastically cuts down on the confusion associated with switching room locations.

### **C. Promotional Gifts**

Many events will include promotional or thank you gifts for their panelists, keynotes, or general attendees. These usually include things like clothing, jackets, travel mugs, stationary or other office accouterments that display the event and/or sponsorship logos.

### **D. Photography/ Recordings/Summaries**

You've planned and planned up to this point, now make sure you capture the events of the day. Take pictures of your event and especially your speakers. Record any key speeches via video or audio (if your speakers agree to it) to publish later on your website or to sell for additional fundraising. Assign people to summarize each panel discussion or lecture again to post on your website or to add to your press kit for upcoming events. If you can get the press to come, by all means, do so.

### **E. Feedback Surveys**

At the end of each session or at the end of the day, make sure to get feedback as to what attendees thought about the event, likes and dislikes, important topics discussed, ideas for next year. This will provide you with valuable feedback as to what to do and what not to do in any upcoming events. It will also give you a benchmark to compare the success of subsequent events you may hold. You can also remind attendees to visit your website for event proceedings, summaries, and forum discussions to continue the interactivity.

## **After the Event**

### **A. Thank You Closing Email**

You may want to send a follow up email to your mailing list a few days after the event summarizing event details and thanking attendees for their interest. This email could also drive traffic to your website where you have event proceedings posted, a forum to continue discussing topics addressed during the event, or a survey to obtain feedback on the quality of the event and suggestions for future events.

### **B. Updates to Website**

Be sure to update your website as to the status of the event with details including how many attendees came, how much money you raised, pictures, speech summaries, and any other noteworthy information. You can also use the website to address questions obtained from feedback surveys, to clarify topics, or to include speakers' PowerPoint presentations.

If you are looking for greater feedback, set up a forum for attendees to address topics that were discussed with their peers and to aid in building a community atmosphere on the web.

### **C. Event Press**

If you got the press to come and cover your event, make sure you collect all the articles and publish them on your website and add them to your press kit. If they didn't come, collect the photos and summaries from your event and send them to the press. It never hurts to seek out more publicity, especially if your event was a huge success.

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## Conclusions

This paper was designed to offer a suggested structure for an event marketing plan. With any event, you will find yourself customizing your marketing campaign to fit your brand and marketing budget. With persistent marketing and hard work you can make your event more successful and can build a strong tradition for great events in the future.

### About Morningstar

**Morningstar Multimedia LLC is a marketing communications firm established in 2000 by Krista Baker and James Balaguer in Philadelphia, PA. We specialize in strategic marketing analysis and planning for professional service firms. We also create the marketing tactics such as identity, print, and web design to put that plan into action.**

### How May We Help You?

**Wherever you are with your marketing efforts, Morningstar Multimedia provides a clear, results-driven path that can take your firm to a new level of growth. For a free, no-obligations consultation of how we can help you solve your firm's toughest marketing challenges, contact us today at (215) 546-7940 or by email at [info@morningstarmultimedia.com](mailto:info@morningstarmultimedia.com).**

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MORNINGSTAR  
MULTIMEDIA LLC

**1725 Bainbridge St, 3rd Floor**  
**Philadelphia, PA 19146**  
**(215) 546-7940**  
**[www.morningstarmultimedia.com](http://www.morningstarmultimedia.com)**  
**[info@morningstarmultimedia.com](mailto:info@morningstarmultimedia.com)**