Four Empowering Digital Event Solutions

Meeting professionals now have the opportunity to rethink meeting design and content delivery to capitalize on digital solutions and engage the audience in new and exciting ways. New technologies are enabling meeting planners to:

- Improve the quality of the content delivered;
- Streamline the registration process;
- Enhance the meeting experience with the integration of mobile apps and social media; and
- Expand their audience through virtual meeting solutions.

THE FOUR SOLUTIONS:

In this section, we'll discuss the potential uses and value of four different digital meetings solutions that are increasing in their prevalence and importance around the world:

1. **Attendee Management Solutions**
2. **Event Mobile Applications**
3. **Social Media Solutions**
4. **Hybrid Meeting Solutions**

We'll also offer some insight regarding their implementation to help you make the most of your investment in digital solutions.

1. Attendee Management Solutions

POTENTIAL IMPACT

Attendee management software solutions are now offering many new features to help ensure that each participant's experience is optimized based on their unique interests and the specific goals of the meeting host. Personalized content can now be pushed to specific attendees to match their interests. Based on their profile, attendees can receive customized promotional materials by e-mail and be served relevant and useful information via the event website and/or the event mobile application. Event websites can be linked to social event networking features in order to engage participants with each other. Combined, these capabilities can help the planner deliver much more individualized experiences for each attendee.

KEY FEATURES

• Attendee registration and management in one single web platform.

• Preparation and management of personalized invitations through e-mailing campaigns.

• Promotion of the event using a branded website and social media.

• Attendee check-in using QR codes, e-badges or the mobile event application.

• Real-time data collection and consolidated event reporting.

IMPLEMENTATION ADVICE

• Design the look and feel of the event website to align with the theme of the meeting, to help evoke the appropriate response from attendees. Business meetings may be simple and to the point, while client meetings or incentives may require features that generate more excitement.

• Create an event website that is simple for attendees to navigate while giving them the necessary information for the meeting. Ensure contact information is easily found on the site in case an attendee has questions or issues during or after the registration process.

• From this one location, collect all the attendee information that is necessary to enable effective program planning. Do not ask for more than needed, to reduce any attendee discomfort around the gathering of personally identifiable information.

• Think ahead and gather information in areas such as food choices, t-shirt sizes or mobile device platforms. Not only will attendees be pleased to get what they need onsite, but the planner will be able to adjust the meeting logistics accordingly to meet the needs and availability of the attendees.

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2. Event Mobile Applications

POTENTIAL IMPACT

Event mobile applications provide numerous benefits to participants, from helping to manage event information to driving engagement with event content and other attendees. On-site attendees are now expecting a "heads-down" mobile experience. They're at the event physically, but also planning their next sessions, asking questions, sharing comments and answering polling questions all from their mobile application. Mobile apps also offer additional value by extending the lifetime of the event beyond the physical event, both before and long after the event has concluded.

KEY FEATURES

- **Event information:** Event agenda/ schedule, floor plan & maps, push notifications, speaker profiles, branding, exhibitor list, on-site registration, video player.

- **Networking:** Attendee profiles, event calendar sharing, lead retrieval, instant messaging.

- **Participation:** Polls, surveys, instant messaging, Q&A sessions, Twitter feeds and other social networks integration, gamification.

IMPLEMENTATION ADVICE

- Define what portions of the event life cycle the event mobile applications will address.

- Develop an editorial process for any app features that require content management, such as session descriptions or exhibitor information.

- Distribute and promote the event application at least a month prior to the event using print, QR codes, social media channels, websites or any other relevant marketing channel.

- Track and monitor social feeds or "activity feeds" during the event to enable planners to make onsite adjustments to better meet attendee needs or address areas of dissatisfaction where possible.

3. Social Media Solutions

POTENTIAL IMPACT

Consuming user-generated content, blog posts, videos, tweets and other posts are the norm for a large portion of today's attendees, in virtually any country. They expect to interact, learn from and create relationships with each other. Social media channels can help to drive attendance; create buzz before, during and after an event; and ensure that the event receives maximum exposure.

As the social media options and potential uses are numerous, it is critical to clarify your objectives and audience's needs. This initial assessment will help to define the key themes to develop across social media channels, such as event awareness and attendee interactions, and also identify which channels are most appropriate for the event.

Social media activity can be monitored and displayed live through social walls. Social walls are a single place where comments from all social media can be brought together for easy viewing by attendees. A good practice for these walls is to generate a curated feed of the user generated content developed during the event from all the social media channels (streams of pictures, tweets, videos and comments). Curating helps ensure that you're sharing the most relevant information to attendees, which helps maintain their interest and generate increased participation.

IMPLEMENTATION ADVICE

• Select the social media channels that are most relevant to the event.

• Prioritize simplicity, consistency and seamless integration across all digital solutions (e.g. integrate social media with online registration and mobile event applications).

• Use Facebook or LinkedIn to post about the event topics, speakers, build a community, start discussions on the event wall and groups.

• For smaller, private meetings and events, consider an activity feed via a meeting app to allow event attendees to share socially within the context of the event itself.

• Create a unique event hashtag on Twitter. Introduce the hashtag specific to the event on invitations and on the event website. Follow the conversations happening in Twitter about the conference. Engage in those conversations by answering questions and thanking participants. Re-Tweet relevant messages that use the hashtag and/or the event Twitter account.

• Produce short video teasers or a welcome video and post them on a YouTube channel and promote them through Twitter and the event website.

• Use Pinterest or Instagram to stream-line pictures and short-videos.

> Social media can drive attendance and create buzz before, during and after an event.

4. Hybrid Meetings

POTENTIAL IMPACT

Organizations can complement their face-to-face, on-site, physical meeting with simultaneous online viewing over the web, and on-demand post-event. Hybrid solutions can enhance and expand the value of in-person meetings by connecting with new audiences online giving them a taste of what the on-site event is like.

They add value by increasing interaction, reaching a broader audience with the event content and boosting event exposure. High bandwidth internet availability in venues, at the office or on-the-go and the added benefit of incorporating remote presenters are boosting adoption rates as organizations strive to extend their reach and capture a larger global audience.

KEY FEATURES

• Ability to create an online experience that mirrors the face-to-face event, complete with high-quality synchronized real-time video, audio, and content including interactive tools features.

• Replay/archive capabilities for people who are unable to be present.

• The tracking of metrics, including attendance during live and archived sessions, poll/survey/Q&As statistics.

• A cost-effective way to get the message out to your audience at the same time, regardless of their physical location.

TOP 10 TIPS FOR COORDINATING A SUCCESSFUL HYBRID EVENT

1 Run an in-studio event with live audience whenever possible

2 In the video being broadcast, incorporate close ups of presenters while giving their speeches mixed with wide views of the audience and studio.

3 Poll the webcast audience live, then push the poll results for the audience to see, and discuss the feedback live. Use polling features that display both percentages and easy-to-read pie graphs, to allow the audience a glimpse of how their fellow remote audience members are responding.

4 In addition to the live video, pre-recorded videos, downloads and information around your live content could be added to the webcast to give some background, highlighting the importance of the live event and creating excitement.

5 Track the consumption of pre-recorded content so you can analyze which attendees accessed which materials.

6 Small details, such as the name of the current or upcoming presenter and presenter biographies, add context for live viewers and anyone joining the webcast mid-event.

7 Easy sharing through social media integration can be enabled to spread event awareness and create a buzz around your content.

8 Incorporate Q&A when possible, that includes both live and remote audience questions.

9 Use animation in your PowerPoint presentation and other interactive website features.

10 Post-event, execute an email campaign to reach anyone who was unable to attend in person or unable to watch live from their computer, and provide access to the archived webcast on-demand. The campaign can help extend the reach of the in-person event to not only the full intended audience, but also a social audience through replays.

Best Practice Advice for Selecting and Implementing Digital Event Solutions

Every digital solution offers a unique opportunity to increase the overall value of an event. Here are some best practices based on the experience of American Express Meetings & Events meeting planners from around the world who have helped integrate digital solutions into a wide variety of events for our clients.

1. Define the Desired Area of Impact: Work with meeting owners to identify, by meeting type and meeting objectives, what portions of the event lifecycle you wish to improve through the use of one or more digital event solutions.

2. Assess the Audience: Before selecting a digital solution, it is important to assess how likely it is that your audience is familiar with the technologies you are considering. The results of this assessment can not only impact the choice of solutions but also the way in which they are implemented and introduced to the audience.

3. Select the Solution(s): Evaluate all solutions to understand which will, enhance the audience experience and improve business outcomes.

4. Identify Stakeholders: A key component of the process will be to identify all key stakeholder groups that are responsible for the implementation and/or are impacted by its integration. Typical internal and external stakeholders include:

• Meeting owner
• Procurement
• Compliance
• IT and Digital
• Meeting Management Company

The successful execution of digital events is a collaborative effort involving interaction among internal resources and aligned third parties. Open communication is essential.

5. Identify Tasks and Assignments: Clearly define all tasks associated with the fulfillment of digital events and meeting projects. Then assign each task to the appropriate group or individual. For each event, initial tasks include:

• A well-defined scope of work with a clearly defined event flow and content delivery road-map.
• A detailed implementation project plan and timeline for completion of tasks.
• Identification of required interactions with attendees across all digital tools.
• Plan for any required training related to the usage of the digital event solutions – both for speakers / presenters and attendees.

Digital event solutions cannot be effective without context, planning, content, promotion, staff participation, technical support, processes and integration. A clearly defined digital deployment tactic helps to unify everyone in the organization around what needs to be done and why. It is critical that the primary objectives and key timeline events are clearly understood and agreed upon by all stakeholders.

Conclusion: Meeting planners are constantly looking for opportunities to elevate their event 'to the next level' and taking advantage of one or more of these four digital solutions offers great potential for success. As with any aspect of meeting planning however, none of these solutions will deliver the results you're looking for on their own. The best results are achieved when a planner takes the time to select the right solution for an event, and effectively plan for its integration in the overall event plan.

We know meetings

American Express Meetings & Events helps transform your meetings investment working with you to create and implement a program that's right for you, bringing comprehensive, flexible solutions, actionable insight, and the expertise to design and deliver effective, exciting experiences for your attendees. We work with you side-by-side, finding opportunities to meet your specific business objectives – using meetings to keep your company a step ahead.

Responsible for more than 35,000 meetings annually, we know meetings. Our scalable solutions range from sourcing and planning to reconciliation and reporting. We can assist you end-to-end, or at any point in the meetings and event process. Our expertise is comprehensive – including in-person, digital and hybrid solutions. As your needs grow, we grow with you.

American Express Meetings & Events provides continuous insights that give you new visibility into your meetings program – helping to make your meetings program a driver of your organization's success.

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