

Getting social media to work in meetings

Branding, engagement, attendance, loyalty... social networks work for **Rana Walker**, a Social Media Evangelist and Industry Consultant who works with ACTE on Special Projects. Social media is an evolving communication tool that is changing how we interact, giving us greater reach and efficiency, and enabling us to better engage with event attendees and travellers, before, during and after an event or trip.

Do you have a successful example of a Web 2.0 event?

There are many examples and even EIBTM is doing a fantastic job. It caught my attention a month before the event, they had a great Twitter page and their daily engagement via @EIBTMevent was excellent. They've also engaged with their audience through their Facebook page, where they capture attendees attention with user-generated content while promoting the show, its speakers and sessions. There's also a LinkedIn group to capture the professional exchange of information, and they'll be using YouTube to deliver videos of the event. They've even set up a XING page.

The immediacy of Twitter makes it a winner for meetings and events, but many still struggle with it, can you give a few tips for meeting planners to effectively use it?

The first tip is to understand the genius of Twitter – what it is (great for listening, engaging in real time, customer service, crisis communications, real-time updates), and what it is not (for videos, long commentaries, one-sided push marketing of information). Meeting planners could try using a free dashboard tool such as Hoot-

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suite or Tweetdeck to get on top of their tweets. These tools allow you to use Twitter features fully and efficiently. They allow you to listen, engage, tweet in other languages, respond in real-time, pre-plan tweets and also schedule them in advance, share responsibility through collaboration of team members, be responsive, offer customer service, answer questions, conduct polls in real-time, learn what the attendees are thinking about the event, share information with those who are not in attendance and communicate with the media.

PRE-event as part of the build up, a continuation DURING the event and as a POST-event recap. Try to engage your delegates and encourage user-generated content, through channels such as LinkedIn (via groups), Twitter (via hashtags), Facebook (via photos, posts) and YouTube (for videos).

Rana will present the "Social Media in MICE and Business Travel" in partnership with ACTE at 09:00 in Room 4.3.



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How should meeting planners be using social media?

Using social media successfully for meetings and events is incredibly rewarding, and is not rocket science. There is an initial time investment to understand the various platforms, but after that it can bring great efficiency very quickly. Social media offers global exposure and builds an event's brand, as well as fostering growth in engaged participation, attendance and loyalty.

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