The Experience Maker™

TOP 10 EVENT EXPERIENCE TIPS

FOR MEETING PROFESSIONALS

BY DAN GINGISS

Summary Checklist

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Unpacking the 10 Event Experience Tips

☑ 1. Be The Experience Maker:

Events marketing and attendee experience have become one and the same. After all, the best way to market an event is by attendees sharing their positive experiences with friends and colleagues. Focus on specific moments within the event where you know you're making the biggest impact and set the tone. Fire up conversations, and try to make people feel safe. It's really important when you go to an event where you don't know anyone that you feel like, "I belong here, they've got my needs taken care of. I can let my guard down, come out of my box, learn and enjoy." Have your team become The Experience Makers every minute of the day.

☑ 2. Hire A Professional Emcee:

A great emcee will thread all ideas into a cohesive narrative and align the audience with an overarching goal. Before the event they discuss opportunities to support, complement, and reinforce the messages your speakers present. The emcee sets the tone, keeps the audience energy level high, provides transitions, moderates Q&A, and encourages audience participation. They manage the cadence of your event, fill time and cover delays, summarize key points, and use callbacks to reinforce and build on key messages.

☑ 3. Capture memorable attendee moments

An experienced photographer knows how to cover your conference in a unique and engaging way. They have been trained to capture the most memorable moments like a good laugh during a keynote, attendees networking or your most influential speaker in action. These photos will be treasured by your attendees, speakers and sponsors. Good conference photographs can provide you with content for your website, newsletters and social media, and next year you'll have a library of assets you can use to promote the next event.

☑ 4. Dedicate multiple people to social media

One person cannot possibly document and post all that's going on at your 2 day conference. You need more than 1 person to avoid missing out on unique, memorable, experiences that you may never witness again. For example: you can have a SM person following your speakers behind the scenes; some documenting the audience reactions; some catching interviews in the hallways; some following the team, breakout sessions, etc. All these assets - images, videos, reels, text, interviews, etc.- will fuel your sales and marketing fire for years to come.

☑ 5. Implement a realtime feedback loop

Many events have a post-event survey, but it's better to solicit feedback at various intervals throughout the event and across various channels. Ask about all aspects of the event and leave room for open-ended feedback with a question like, "What's one thing we should start/stop/continue doing for next year's event?" Analyze the feedback quantitatively and qualitatively to identify key insights, and then be sure to make actual changes based on those insights. (Too often insights are just delivered in a report but there is no action taken.) Pro tip: Close the "feedback loop" by showing attendees that you've listened to their feedback and incorporated specific initiatives into next year's planning.

☑ 6. Plug in everywhere

Your audience will be busy taking notes, networking, and hopefully enjoying themselves. They don't want to worry about their phone's battery life, so make sure they don't have to. This is especially true at events that ask attendees to share learnings on social media, as those apps (plus the use of the camera to share photos and video) tend to be battery hogs. Place charging stations all around the event space, including in networking areas, and if possible include power strips in breakout rooms.

☑ 7. Invest in branding

Well orchestrated branding shapes the quality of your conference in people's minds. Branding can elicit positive or negative emotions, and associations. When an attendee sees your conference name, logo, collateral, it better enhance and not deter from the overall experience.

Branding positions your event in the minds of potential sponsors and attendees as a quality product worth aligning with. It's about figuring out what makes your conference unique and conveying that clearly through every touchpoint. It gives your event an identity.

☑ 8. Keep people engaged between events.

Too often, events are "one and done" experiences. Attendees go back to work and promptly forget most of what they learned. Help them maintain momentum by being in their inbox the next day with something that continues the experience.

Maybe it's a follow-up webinar, or a live Q&A with some of the most popular speakers. Maybe it's a private Facebook Group invitation to help foster continued networking. Yes, it's a good time to mention early bird pricing for next year, but it's also an opportunity to continue delivering unexpected value.

☑ 9. Technology Integration:

Evaluate and select event technology tools such as registration platforms, event apps, and virtual event platforms. Test the chosen tools thoroughly to ensure they work seamlessly together. And have a contingency plan for the percentage of attendees who do not like to use technology.

Use technology to boost interaction and generate a buzz. Anyone who has sat through a long lecture knows that such sessions, especially back-to-back, can be tiring. Solve this problem by leveraging audience response technology. It offers participants the ability to be involved in an event right from their chairs and in real time.

There are no better ambassadors for your event than on-site participants. Make it easy for them to spread the word about their attendance, their impressions and what they've learned. Encourage attendees to blog, tweet, post or otherwise share online. Consider offering incentives, such as free event admission, for those who drive a certain amount of traffic to your conference site, or prizes for the best post-program blog.

And....ensure the Wi-Fi does work :-)

☑ 10. Choose the right keynote speaker

I know what you're thinking: Dan, you're a professional speaker and proud card-carrying member of the National Speakers Association so of course you would say this. But hear me out, because I'm also a professional customer experience expert, and in this case, the "customers" are audience members.

Like with most things in life, you get what you pay for. So if you go cheap (or free) with the most important content of your event, be prepared for that content to fall flat with many audience members.

Public speaking is a developed skill which requires the person on stage to maintain the audience's attention, educate them and hopefully entertain them at the same time.

You wouldn't want an untrained airplane pilot flying you across the country or an untrained plumber fixing your kitchen sink; why would you want an untrained speaker in front of your paying customers?

☑ BONUS TIP! Leverage LinkedIn.

LinkedIn can be a great resource for finding professionals to help with your event. You can use the LinkedIn search bar to find people who work in specific industries or who have specific skills. Once you've found someone who might be a good fit for your event, you can use an email finder tool like ContactOut to get their email address. Then, you can reach out to them directly about the opportunity.

About the Author

Dan Gingiss is an international keynote speaker and business coach who believes that a remarkable customer experience is your best competitive advantage. His 20-year professional career spanned multiple disciplines including customer experience, marketing, social media and customer service. He held leadership positions at McDonald's, Discover and Humana.

Dan is the author of The Experience Maker: How To Create Remarkable Experiences That Your Customers Can't Wait To Share and *Winning at Social Customer Care*: How Top Brands Create Engaging Experiences on Social Media. He also co-hosts the award-winning Experience This! podcast.

He earned a B.A. in psychology and communications from the University of Pennsylvania and an M.B.A. in marketing from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. Dan is also a licensed bartender, a pinball wizard, and he once delivered a pizza to Michael Jordan.

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