



Create an Event Community

To Increase Attendee Loyalty and Engagement

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Why It's Important to Build an Engaged Event Community	4
How to Build an Engaged Event Community	5
Before the Event	6
Best Practice: Build Community Via Public Social Networks	6
Ignite Conversations on Social	6
Push Out Promotional Content	6
Design and Deploy Targeted Marketing Campaigns	6
Best Practice: Build Community Via Internal Channels	7
Spark Internal Social Conversations	7
Share Content Related to Event Speakers and Sessions	8
Kick-Start Event Engagement	8/9
At the Event	10
Best Practice: Build Community Through Event Design	10
Develop a Balanced Schedule	10
Enable Speakers to Deliver Engaging, Interactive Presentations	11
Make Time for Networking	12
Get Influencers to Mingle with Attendees	13
Best Practice: Continue Nurturing Networking	13
Catalyze Group Conversations	13
Bring Online Conversations to Life	13
Show Attendees There's a Conversation to Join	14
Keep the Conversation Going	14/15
After the Event	16
Best Practice: Staying Top of Mind With Attendees	16
Send Personalized Emails	16
Create a Post-Event Survey	16/17
Create a Social Media Calendar for the Rest of the Year	18
Conclusion	19



Introduction

There's nothing like the buzz of an event to make attendees feel excited, engaged, and ready to take on the world. But how do you start that buzz, and once it's started how do you keep it growing? There are a variety of ways to get the word out about your event and promote registration through online and offline channels, but the most successful brands understand what has the biggest impact and yields the greatest results - the influence of event communities.

With our increasingly digitalized lifestyle, the importance of community is becoming more widespread as individuals see the value of creating, learning, and sharing together - both online and offline. But more than any other marketing channel, face-to-face experiences solidify these communities and help sustain them in the long run. In-person events connect like-minded people, providing opportunities for moments of inspiration that encourage people to personally engage and commit. In the process, engaged event community members deliver added value back to fellow attendees, event sponsors and partners, and the event organizers. Amazing things can happen when you bring people together.

This ebook will provide ideas and best practices on how to create event communities year round. Do your event goals include any or all of the following?

- *Creating excitement leading up to your event that encourages attendee registration.*
- *Increasing attendee engagement and community building during your event.*
- *Continuing to develop your event community post-event to build loyalty from attendees.*

You will take away useful insights to integrate into your event marketing strategy, and easy-to-implement tactics that ensure your event creates loyal and engaged attendees who keep coming back year after year. The most successful brands integrate event technology into their experience design, so throughout the ebook, you'll find tips on how to use event technology to help build your community.

Now let's get started!



Why It's Important to Build an Engaged Event Community

Building a community around your event helps you get more value out of your event as a marketing touchpoint, increases attendees' enjoyment of the event, and makes it easier to demonstrate measurable audience engagement when it's time to report on the ROI of your event.

Catalyzing and supporting the creation of a community around your event can:



1. Increase Attendee Engagement Pre-, During and Post-Event

Helping attendees break the ice with each other before the event and connect through their common interests opens the gates to spending time in person. Creating spaces at the event for attendees to meet up, share thoughts, ideas and common challenges through discussion can foster meaningful connections that people will value long after the event. And you'll know you've successfully engaged your audience when your attendees choose to keep in touch, and share learnings throughout the rest of the year.



2. Decrease Attendee Disengagement

You know that some delegates are just there for the freebies, drifting in and out of speaker sessions. Putting some extra work into giving attendees a variety of options for breaking the ice and connecting with each other - for example, group discussion channels through an event app - is a great way to decrease attendee disengagement and help everyone feel part of a tight-knit group.



3. Build the Event Brand

Most important for recurring events, building a brand around your event is only possible when you have a community of ambassadors to evangelize the ethos. TED is a perfect example of an event brand that has expanded beyond the physical walls of the event space. A strong brand won't fade away after the event but can be kept alive for the rest of the year in the hearts and minds of a tight-knit community.



4. Strengthen Your Marketing Strategy

Leveraging the event theme, updates and reminders throughout your marketing channels over the course of the year contributes to a stronger marketing strategy for your event and your overall organization. Leading up to the event, you can produce and promote content thematically linked to the event; for example, webinars run by upcoming speakers or blog interviews with high-profile attendees or speakers.





5. Improve Attendee Retention

Happy, engaged attendees who felt that your event was a valuable experience will not only want to attend next month or next year's event, but will ideally spread the word within their network, and bring a friend or two next time. Fostering a comfortable, community-oriented environment means that attendees will begin to treat your event as a meeting space to reconnect and network with their peers and colleagues, and it may even become an annual priority to work into their schedules.



6. Quantify ROI Through Measurable Engagement Channels

It used to be quite challenging to measure and prove to senior management that attendees were engaging and networking at your event. But with developments in event technology, this has become much easier. Now, you can measure and quantify attendee engagement by looking at numbers such as:

- Attendees who participate in discussion forums, in-app group discussion channels, LinkedIn groups related to the event.
- Social media posts (shares, hashtags usage) from event community before/during/after the event.
- Responses to pre/post- event polls and surveys.

How to Build an Engaged Event Community

Your event might kick off months from now, but the experience can start today. In fact, it should start as soon as possible and continue year round to ensure the most success and longevity of your event community. To ensure you make a lasting, memorable impression on your attendees, they need to connect to your event theme and with each other. They have many things in common and will have lots to talk about when they finally connect. As an event organizer, your role is to catalyze these connections. You can do this by providing online and offline spaces for your audience to engage.

In this next section, we'll go through easy-to-implement ideas on how to create, nurture and grow your community before, during and after your event.



Before the Event

Prior to your event, your main goal as an event organizer is to put in place the foundation for attendees to break the ice and start putting out feelers to connect with others, speakers and sponsors.

You should aim to:

- **Gradually ramp up excitement** by sharing juicy event details with attendees through private and public channels.
- **Share marketing content** that will not only resonate with your registered attendees, but may also draw the attention of your broader target audience.
- **Break ice between attendees** to help them get more out of their experience. Catalyze digital discussions that will help attendees maximize opportunities for meeting people at the event.
- **Connect first-timers** with more experienced event-goers to give an opportunity to ask questions.
- **Involve attendees in planning** the event experience- by asking pointed and specific questions. You'll also access the information you need to create an event that best caters to their interests and needs.
- **Help attendees find others** interested in meeting up in the days leading up to the event to see nearby sights and attractions in the city where the event is taking place.
- **Give speakers an opportunity to start a discussion** with attendees about their upcoming topics.

Best Practice: Build Community Via Public Social Networks



1. Ignite Conversations on Social

Start conversations on your external social networks like LinkedIn Groups, online forums, Facebook Page, Twitter or Instagram (or all the above) to build excitement about the upcoming event.



2. Push Out Promotional Content

Content can include assets such as videos from past events, blog posts from speakers, and the event hashtag. Seeing a video clip from a former event can stimulate good memories in the minds of your community members (as well as whet curiosity for first-timers), and drive anticipation for your upcoming event.



3. Design and Deploy Targeted Marketing Campaigns

Use segment-specific messaging that brings audience members together around a common topic or concern. This works especially well with a broad audience who can be broken out into distinctive groups with specialized interests. For example, if you have a list of registered attendees who can be cleanly broken out into different groups by profession or title, you could run a drip marketing campaign for each stream to gradually build excitement.

Best Practice: Build Community Via Internal Channels



1. Spark Internal Social Conversations

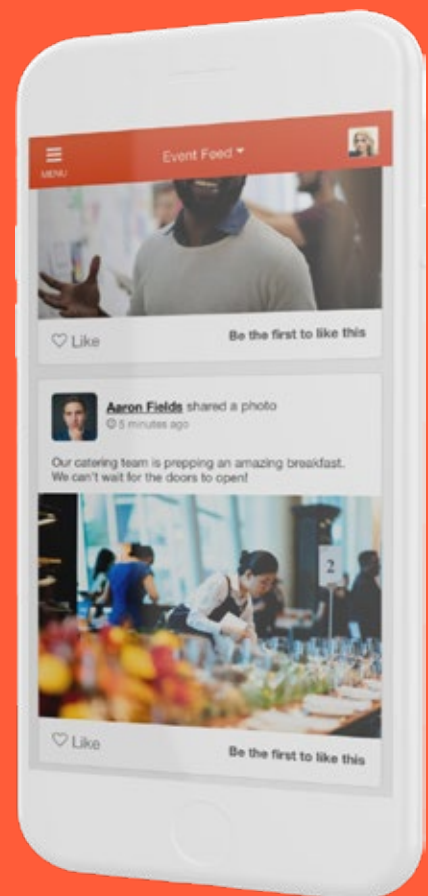
Build and nurture internal social platforms like member-only online forums, website-hosted communities, event app group discussion channels, or an event app activity feed. Private channels are ideal for certain types of event-related discussions that may not be as relevant to the public sphere. It also creates a sense of exclusivity that encourages attendees to engage with each other leading up to the event to find out the latest news.

EVENT TECHNOLOGY TIP

Build an Event App and Encourage Attendees to Download It Before the Event

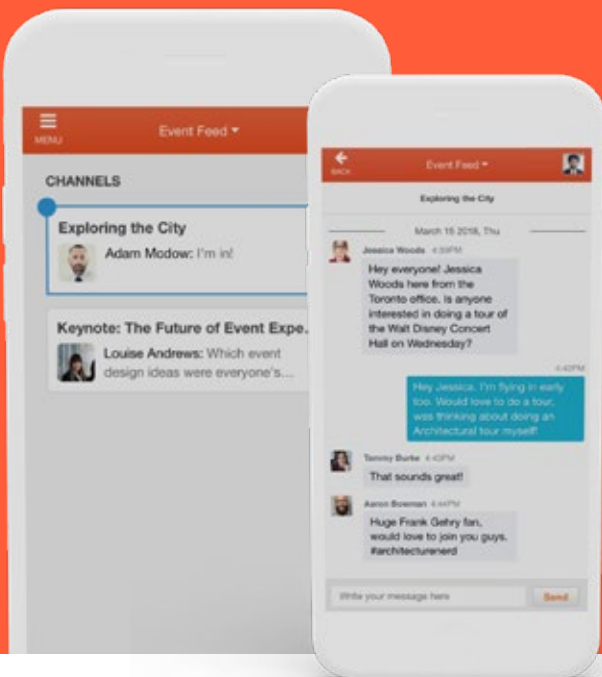
An event app is a great way to help build the excitement leading up to your event, and provides many opportunities for attendees to network with each other. Advertise downloading the app in your promo material a few weeks ahead of the event. To encourage adoption, position the app as a way to get up-to-date info on event details, and receive exclusive content only available through the app.

Here are a couple of creative ideas on how to take advantage of your app to build excitement and networking opportunities leading up to your event:



In the group discussion channel, attendees can start engaging in conversation around topics of interest, such as arranging meet ups to see the local sights before the event for early arrivers.

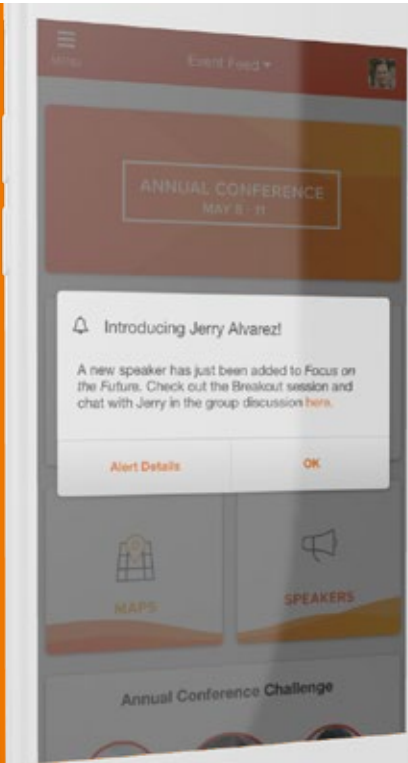
Update the activity feed with images of your team preparing for the event, and new speakers who will be at your event to get attendees excited and spreading the word.





2. Share Content Related to Event Speakers and Sessions

Post and share links to longer-form content such as blog posts and articles written by your event speakers and/or content team as a way to get attendees excited and learning more about the event sessions.



EVENT TECHNOLOGY TIP

Use the Event App to Communicate to Attendees When New Information is Available

Alert notifications are a great way to keep attendees informed of any updates to the agenda. For example, whenever new sessions and speakers are added to the lineup, you can send out a notification and create a discussion group so that attendees can engage with the speakers and ask them questions beforehand. Speaker documents and handouts can also be uploaded to a documents manager within the event app for attendees to review ahead of time.



3. Kick-Start Event Engagement

Event app discussion channels are a great tool to catalyze group chat around specific topics and can help your audience get to know those with common interests or values. Attendees can use this platform to start connecting with the event theme and each other.

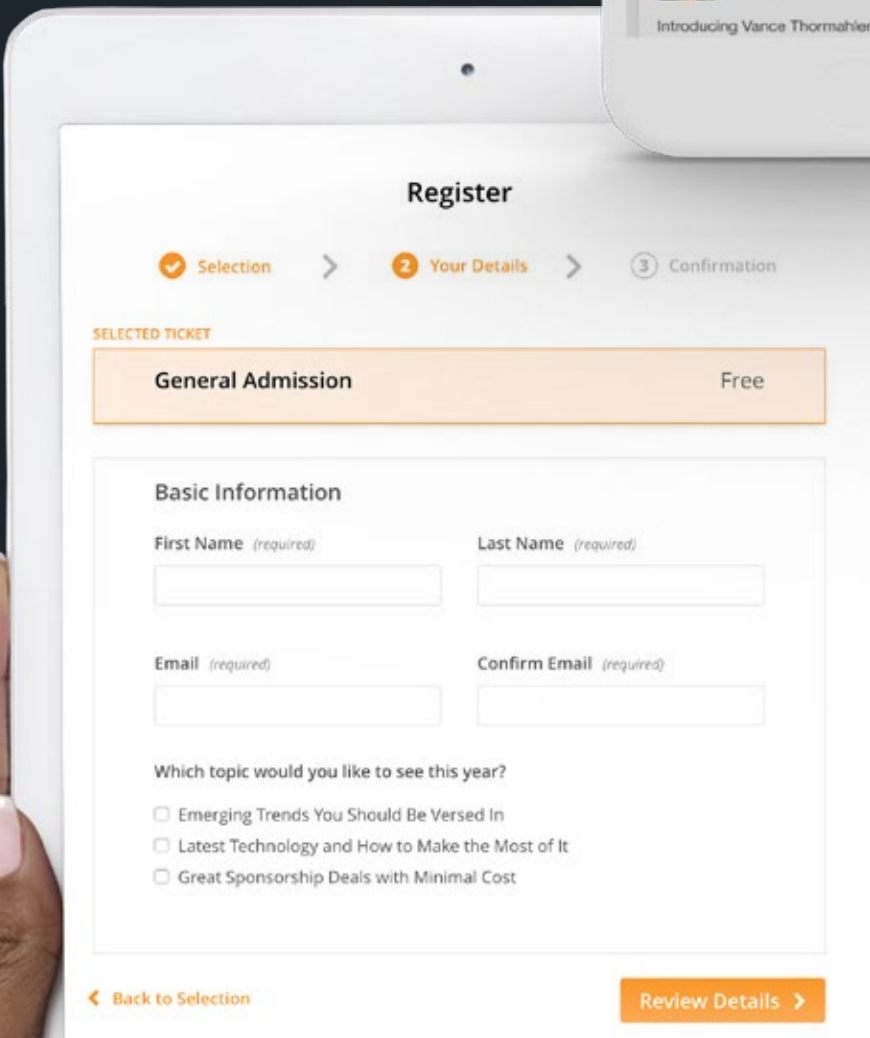
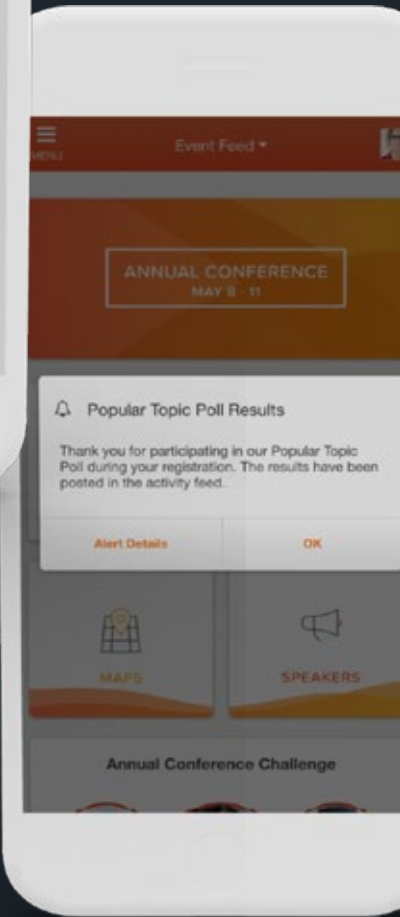
EVENT TECHNOLOGY TIP

Gather Attendee Insights Through Registration Surveys

During the registration stage, use this opportunity to collect data that can be used to build out your audience segmentations and help you with the event design. To gauge what topics your attendees are most interested in learning about or activities they might be interested in participating in before and during the event, you can use your event app to send out a survey to gather feedback.



In addition to helping your team design the event experience and agenda, you can also share the results of the survey on the activity feed and send an alert notification to notify attendees who are curious to see the results. The benefits are twofold - not only are attendees given the opportunity to engage with one another and contribute their input, but you also get valuable information that will help guide the design of your agenda and overall event. It's a win-win situation!



At the Event

It's game day! At the event, you should be focused on enabling face-to-face connections between attendees and hosting memorable, shared experiences within your community.

You should aim to:

- **Encourage attendees to bring digital discussions to life** and meet up in person.
- **Amp up onsite excitement** by encouraging attendees to share favorite content captured during the event on private or public social networks.
- **Facilitate lots of time and space** for organic networking.

Best Practice: Build Community Through Event Design



1. Develop a Balanced Schedule

Variation is the key. It's wise to alternate theoretical talks with interactive experiences like workshops or networking to keep attendees moving and engaged. You should also be sure to include at least 30-min breaks between longer activities for guests to stretch their legs and chat with their peers.

Segmented Content Tracks to Build Sub-Communities

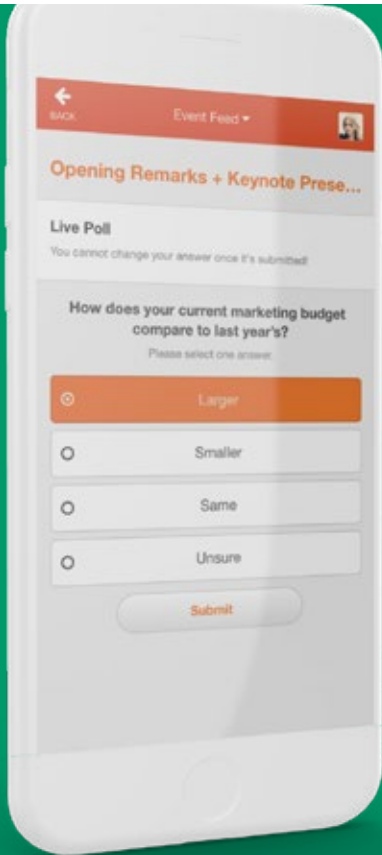
Content Marketing World, a conference for content marketers is an example of a large professional community with subsegments. While all attendees are responsible for developing or executing a content marketing strategy, they can be from diverse industries and company sizes. Given the nuances of each segment, the conference organizes its sessions into specific tracks that speak to each smaller group. For example, tracks include social media, content creation, and data analytics.





2. Enable Speakers to Deliver Engaging, Interactive Presentations

Would you prefer an hour long presentation versus a snappy twenty minute TED-style talk? While not every type of content is conducive to a short presentation, you can always provide speakers with guidelines on presentation length and slide design. You should also encourage speakers to leverage your event app to elicit audience participation through live polling, Q & A, and other interactive features.

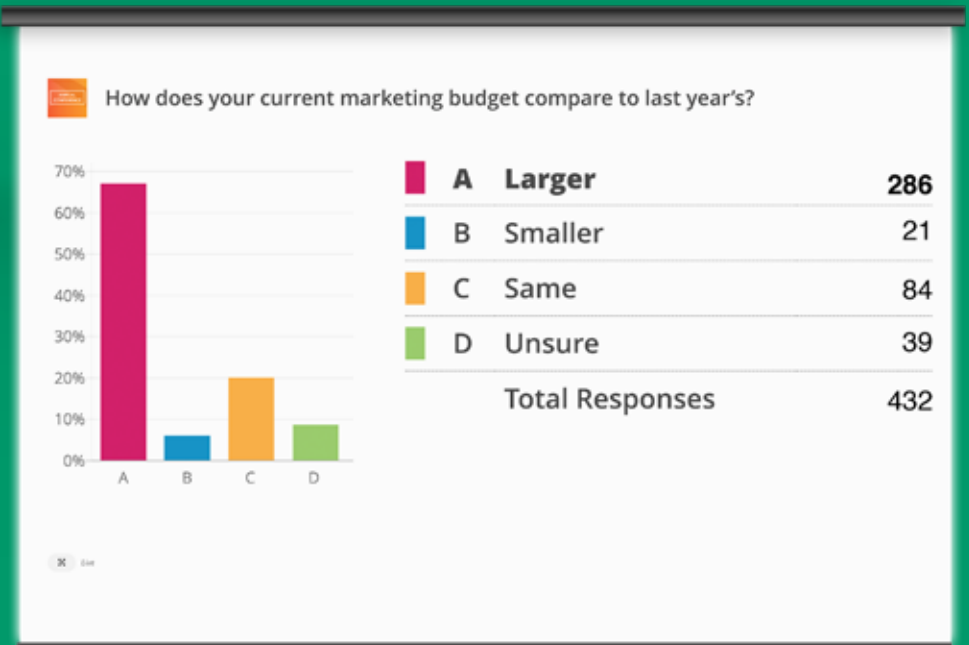


Poll results tallied on a large presentation screen are great attention grabbers. Provide ample time for group discussion during the session to get audience members interacting with each other.

EVENT TECHNOLOGY TIP

Liven Up Speaker Sessions with Live Polling

Attendees are always fascinated to see each other's opinions' translated into stats on the big screen. If a live audience response system is integrated with your event app, you have a golden opportunity to use it for attendee engagement. Poll results tallied on a large presentation screen are great attention grabbers. Provide ample time for group discussion during the session to get audience members interacting with each other.





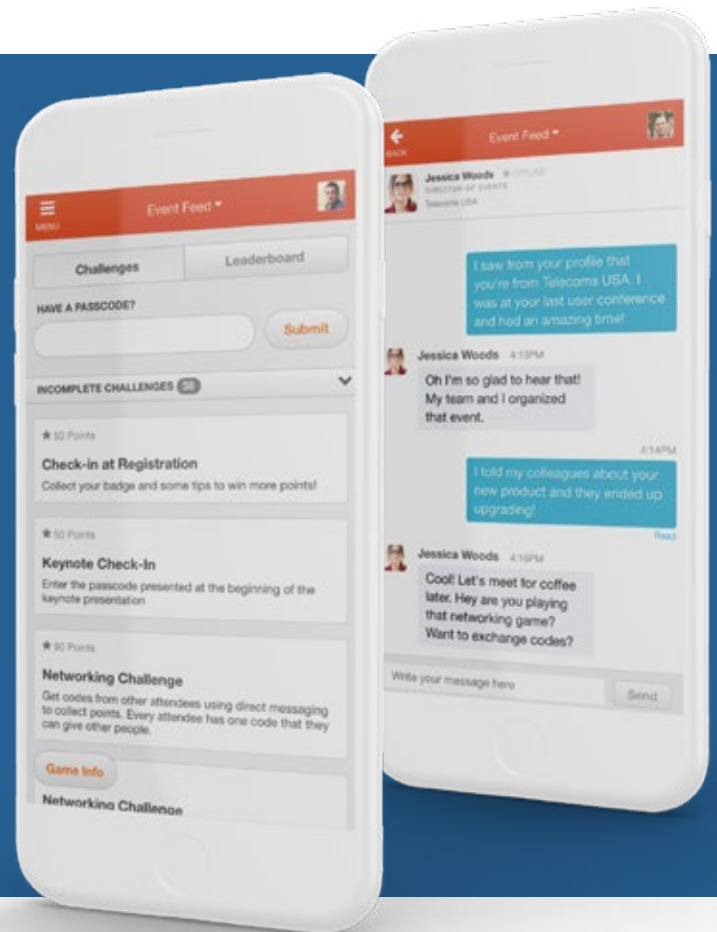
3. Make Time for Networking

Make sure to include ample time in the event schedule for networking opportunities. It can be intimidating for attendees to break the ice and introduce themselves to each other, so providing the space and programming that enables these connections is greatly appreciated by attendees. These could occur pre-event, during long breaks, or at after-parties, just to name a few examples.

EVENT TECHNOLOGY TIP

Use Gamification to Encourage Attendees to Break the Ice

Networking can be a tough activity to engage in at an event, especially if you get nervous when starting conversations with strangers. Help your attendees get over this hurdle by incentivizing them to network in a fun way through gamification. A popular way to implement gamification is by creating challenges that include a variety of tasks. Attendees then complete these tasks in order to collect points. Here is an example of what a gamification challenge could look like, and how you can use direct messaging to encourage one-to-one conversations between attendees.



Recommended Read:

[The Ultimate Guide to Gamification](#)

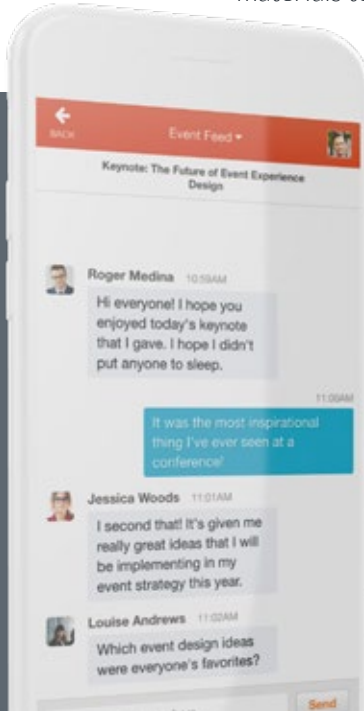
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4. Get Influencers to Mingle with Attendees

Encouraging high profile speakers or event delegates to host a meetup or happy hour can be a great opportunity for people to meet and network in a more intimate environment. It's always wise to make sure you provide influencers with the official event and company materials to represent your brand.



EVENT TECHNOLOGY TIP

Use Group Discussions as a Way to Enable Meetups

At any point before, during, or after the event, group discussions can be taken advantage of as a place for attendees to engage with each other and speakers. As the event organizer, you can encourage your speakers to start a group discussion about their session and organize a coffee meetup or dinner with interested attendees to continue the conversation.

Best Practice: Continue Nurturing Networking



1. Catalyze Group Conversations

Use event app group discussion channels to encourage attendee conversations. You can use these more intimate spaces to bring up questions and discussion around attendee-specific topics or to pose open-ended questions that you feel attendees are more likely to share with their event-going peers. For example, you could ask attendees about their professional goals for the next year. Creating a safe, open space to share can help spark genuine, authentic connections between attendees.



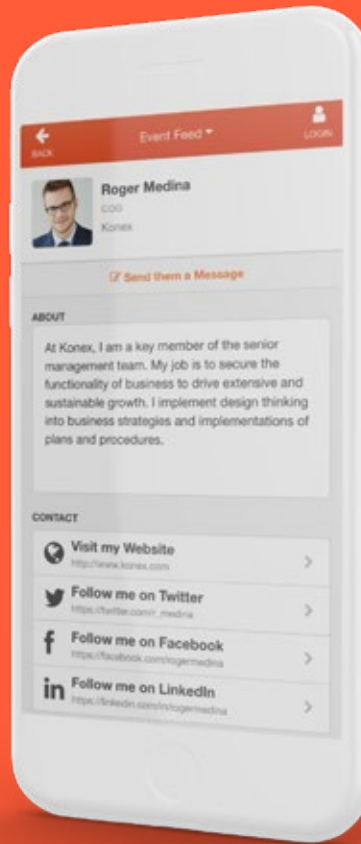
2. Bring Online Conversations to Life

In-person networking can be a challenge for some, but giving attendees an opportunity to start online conversations on a topic they're passionate about can reduce the barriers to engagement. For attendees who may find it a bit awkward to reach out in person, sometimes connecting digitally first can help break the ice.

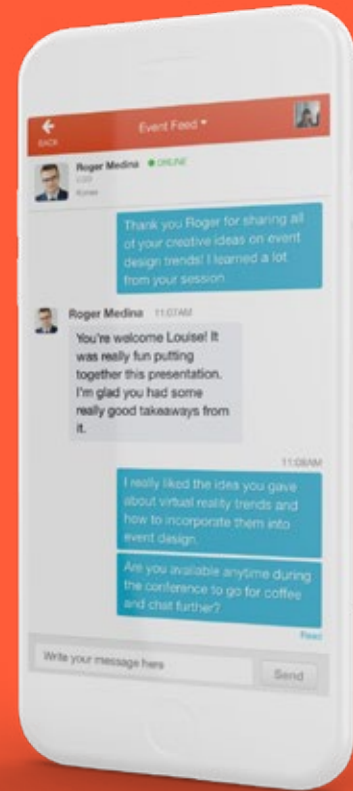
EVENT TECHNOLOGY TIP

Encourage Attendees to Connect Through Direct Messaging

Sometimes in-person interaction right off the bat can be really intimidating, but even if attendees are comfortable with this type of approach it can be a challenge to find the types of people they are specifically looking to network among audience members interacting with each other.



Checking out attendee and speaker profiles on the event app is a great way to find specific people.



Direct messaging can then be taken advantage of to connect with the desired people.



3. Show Attendees There's a Conversation to Join

Using a live social media feed on a digital display wall is an easy/effective way to make attendees aware of the online discussion. There are many different tools to create a live display, but even a simple social media feed will immediately show attendees that there's an online conversation is going on, and how they can join in.



4. Keep the Conversation Going

As the event organizer, you should ensure that you're regularly pushing out fresh content through your social platforms and through the event app or other private channels throughout the event. On your private networks (in-app) you can ask questions and share practical updates on the event schedule. On your public networks, you can share photos, memorable quotes and other relevant event content in real-time.



EVENT TECHNOLOGY TIP

Use Digital Signage to Display Engagement Activities of Attendees

Encourage attendees to share photos, ideas, quotes, videos, and any other type of relevant content to your event app's activity feed and social networks. You can then share all the updates with attendees in real-time through a live display. When attendees see their content on the big screen, they'll more inclined to continue sharing and giving shout-outs to fellow attendees.

Attendees sharing fun event moments on the event app's activity feed.



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An attendee tweeted on social media and the post got picked up on the event app's live display.



After the Event

You lived through it! Post-event, your goal should be to keep the feeling of the event alive throughout the rest of the year. This can happen by sharing photos and memories of the event on social media, inciting casual conversations on social media and by engaging attendees in planning next year.

You should aim to:

- **Leverage the enthusiasm** of your most engaged event-goers and offer an incentive if they'd like to help promote the event year-round as ambassadors.
- **Share event photos, video content, memorable quotes** to remind attendees how much fun it was, and why they should join you again next year.
- **Ask your attendees for feedback** on speaker quality, session topics, content depth, food, venue and more to help you better plan next year's event.
- **Facilitate networking beyond the four-walls of the venue** by reminding attendees that they can keep in touch via public and private event platforms.
- **Show your attendees you value and appreciate them** by thanking them for attending.

Best Practice: Staying Top of Mind With Attendees



1. Send Personalized Emails

Sending personalized communication in which you use the person's first name is the most efficient way to show your appreciation for their attendance. Here are some message ideas you can include in that email:

- Thanks for coming!
- We hope that you'll also attend our next event.
- Keep on networking – our online platforms are still available!



2. Create a Post-Event Survey

Use your event app to collect feedback and ideas for next year by sending out a survey.

Some questions you can ask:

- Which sessions did you like?
- Were there any sessions you didn't like? If so, which ones?
- Did you learn a lot?
- Would you attend again?
- Would you recommend this event?
- What would you change or improve?





Recommended Read: CASE STUDY

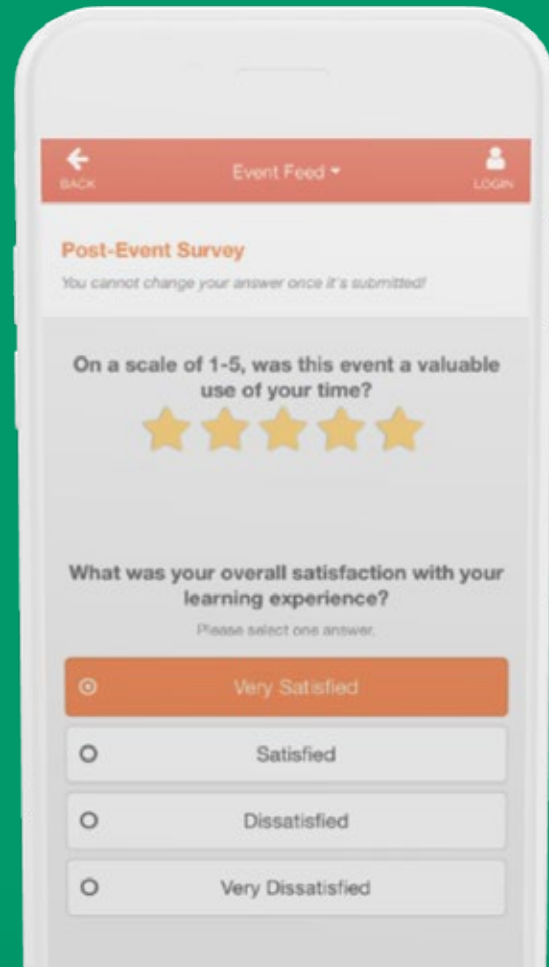
CSAE Achieves 90% Mobile App Engagement with Attendees

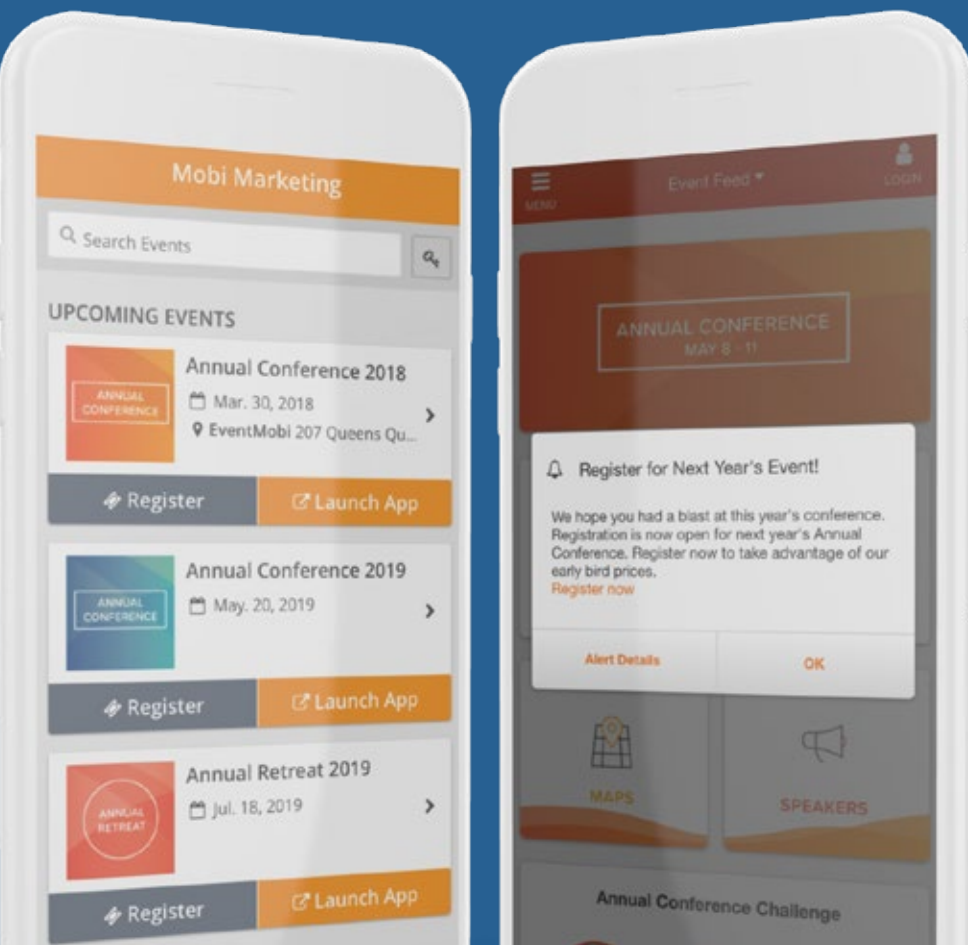
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EVENT TECHNOLOGY TIP

Sending a Post-Event Survey Yields Great Attendee Insights

Following an event, one of the most important things to do is collect feedback to learn about the needs and expectations of your attendees. Post-event surveys often provide the most meaningful feedback for event organizers. Attendees get the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of various aspects of your events such as speakers, topics, exhibitors and sponsors, accommodations, as well as rate their overall experience. Be sure to provide the feedback results to your attendees as this will build excitement for the next event. It can also be great content for your post-event email. Be sure to make it as personalized as possible.





EVENT TECHNOLOGY TIP

Use a Multi-Event App to Keep Attendees Up-to-Date With Your Other Events

Keep the conversation and momentum going year round. By using a multi-event app, you can push out notifications for your next event to help drive excitement and registrations.



3. Create a Social Media Calendar for the Rest of the Year

Communicate regular updates through event app notifications and other marketing channels to help build up excitement for the next event. Anything goes, as long as it's fun. The goal is to remind people of the previous event and encourage them to start dreaming about the next one!

Here are a few ideas you can implement:

- Share post-event recap blog/ video content for event attendees and speakers.
- Drip feed updates/announcements for speakers for the next event.
- Get potential attendees excited about the venue/location/city by sharing tourism articles like "5 Things to Do in the City".
- Get in touch mid-year with a surprise--maybe discounted or early-bird rates on ticket to the next event, to a small, fun gift.
- Launch a mid-year contest: Ask attendees suggest a speaker for the next event, for example, to win free tickets for the next event.
- Finding creative ways to build up your event community before the event will give attendees new ways to engage with each other, spurring deeper conversations and enabling them to form genuine, lasting connections they won't soon forget.



Conclusion

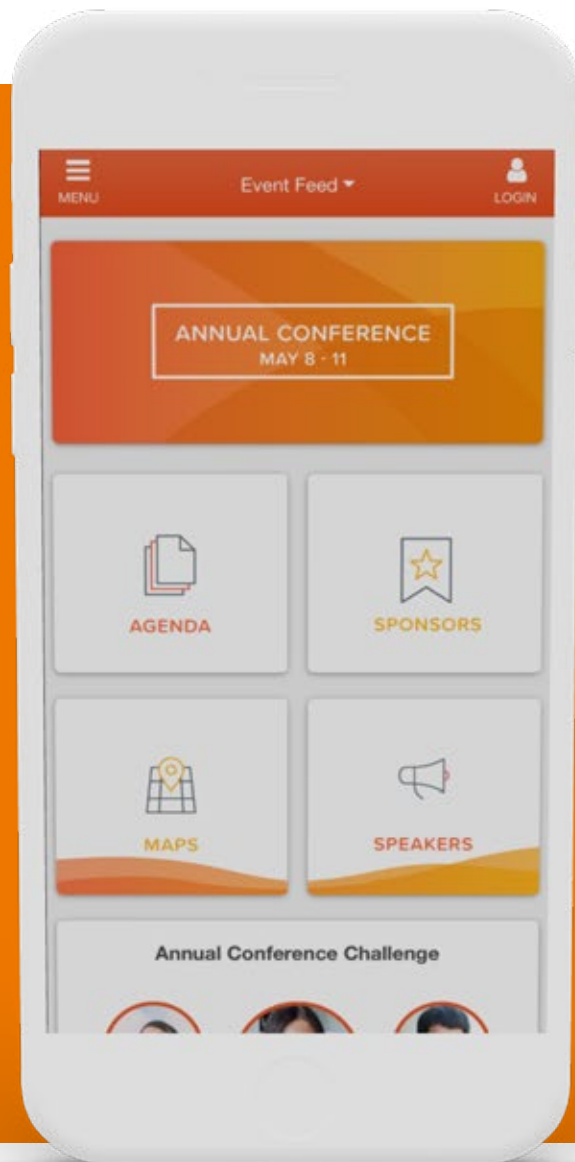
Finding creative ways to build up your event community before, during and after your event gives attendees new ways to engage with each other, helping to deepen conversations and enabling them to form genuine, lasting connections they won't soon forget. In the ideal scenario, your event becomes something they think of and look forward to year round.

Feeling part of a community makes people feel connected and supported, a tribe to share news and special occasions with. While feeling part of a community is incredibly important on an individual level, it's critical for organizations and associations to engage their attendees and members, inspiring loyalty and camaraderie. These are incredible effects that event organizers can only dream of eliciting through their event and only possible through building an engaged community.

Keep Them Coming Back to Your Events

Need more ideas on how to build an event community that engages attendees? Book a demo with an EventMobi event technology consultant now.

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EventMobi provides technology that empowers event marketers and planners to create incredible event experiences.

Founded in 2010 EventMobi has been the trusted event technology of over 10,000 clients in 72 countries. One of the fastest growing companies in North America, EventMobi has received worldwide praise for our people and platform. From planning to marketing, management to measurement — at every stage of the event life cycle — we're there when you need us.

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