

## To Market to Market

### PMM5 Postscript™ Number 5

**Background Information:** In Chapter 5 of *Professional Meeting Management*®, fifth edition, Ellen Toups writes about marketing and promotion strategies. Toups discusses issues like:

- Creating an integrating marketing strategy
- Preparing a work plan and timeline
- Analyzing features and functions of meeting websites
- Identifying avenues of market research
- Incorporating integrating marketing strategies into sponsorship and fundraising
- Establishing benchmarks to measure success

**PMM5 Postscript Use:** This PMM5 Postscript™ addresses some of the specific tools that can be used in an integrated marketing strategy. It takes a slightly different perspective—delving into "less discussed" ideas about post-event marketing. The idea about post-marketing is to continue the momentum started during a meeting, conference or event. It also offers additional information on traditional pre-event marketing. Finally, the PMM5 Postscript™ includes additional group discussion or research projects to supplement the PMM5 chapter.

**Learner Outcomes:** At the completion of this reading, you should be able to:

- List at least twelve marketing tools.
- Select strategies to implement in a marketing program to enhance meeting marketing.
- List at least three strategies for creating post-event marketing.

**Related PMM5 Chapter:** Chapter 5, Marketing and Promotion: Strategy and Collaboration for Success  
Author: Ellen Toups, CMP



### Why focus on post-event marketing?

The importance of post-event marketing borrows from the adage, "Once is not enough." In other words, one single meeting is unlikely to create change or impact if everyone goes back to the same old environment.

How long will people remember your message from a meeting when they are barraged by thousands of other messages after returning from your meeting?

How long can you capture a share of your customer's mind (and wallet) after an event, if they don't have your message reinforced?

Chapter 5 provides meeting managers with the information necessary to market a meeting. This PMM Postscript™ offers ideas to further market a meeting's message before, during and after a meeting.

### Integrated Marketing

Advertisers know that it takes numerous exposures to create awareness and brand recognition. Troups discusses an integrated marketing strategy that includes various tools assembled into a coherent plan (Troups, p. 66) .

She also stresses that marketing should "hit" your participants and attendees multiple times before the meeting. For pre-event marketing, a meeting manager's arsenal should contain the following tools:

1. Telemarketing
2. Advertising
3. Fax on Demand
4. Brochures
5. Save the Date Postcards
6. Email blasts
7. Pre-event direct mail
8. On line directories and calendars
9. Electronic newsletters (look for opportunities to advertise, publish articles, or post your event on their calendar)
10. Articles written by speakers
11. Press releases
12. Bulletin boards and newsgroups
13. Websites
14. Links to other websites (convention center site, convention & visitors bureau, hotels, etc.)
15. Strategic use of sponsors (websites & other resources)
16. Discussion boards
17. Scheduled online chats
18. On line surveys
19. Listservs
20. On line registration
21. Marketing to affinity groups
22. Blogs (web logs)

## To Do's

Again, Toups provides a fabulous overview of marketing strategies. A few important points about marketing (pre- and post-) are worthwhile noting here:

### Do's:

- Develop a standard image. Often this appears in the form of a logo, fonts, colors, diverse and personable faces and message (theme, motto, mission statement). Promote the message in every method, medium, and mode possible,
- Decide who the target audience is for the event. Toups discusses various ways to categorize audiences (Toups, 2006, p. 63). Additional ways to group the audience beyond members categories are Innovators, Early Adopters, Early Majority, Late Majority and Laggards (Rogers, 1995). Within the business or association, there will be groups of people who fall into these categories.
- Understand the audience and their problems or pains. Focus on arousing their interest.
- Craft pieces with full details and benefits of attending the event. The search for "short headlines" and easy to read marketing should not diminish the importance of including all relevant details. All copy should include location, date, time, cost, how to register and how to get additional information.
- Be persistent. Hit the audience more than once with promotional messages. Test for yourself, but three times seems to be the magic number. First, well in advance. Second, two or three weeks in advance. Third, as a last-minute "last chance" reminder.
- Establish a timeline for promotion.
- Leverage other outside resources like industry calendars or destination calendars to publicize the meeting.
- Test (or at a minimum, carefully proof) marketing materials.
- Use keywords and metatags on your website to enable search engines to retrieve the website with meeting details.
- Focus on word-of-mouth as an effective method of promotion.
- Sell the event, not the company or association.
- Promoting the event too far in advance, or waiting until the last minute to promote, spells disaster. Meeting managers need to promote well in advance and to remind prospective attendees again shortly before the event

### Don'ts:

- Assume the audience knows why they should participate in the meeting, conference or event.
- Rely on only one method of communicating.
- Assume that that because the planning committee spent hours creating a program, presented the idea, and got full approval and support from the board, that people will attend.

## Post Event

How can a message be lasting? How can meeting managers create legs on which the message will continue to move?

Certainly, one meeting, one speech, one episode is not enough. The onus is on the organizers to "reach out and touch" their attendees (or at least create the structures to do that) beyond the meeting to increase the life of the message.

What are some things a meeting manager can encourage to reiterate and reinforce the messages and the value in meetings and events? They can:

- **Include a call to action (with accountability and follow-up)** during the meeting.
- **Rely on old-fashioned management.** Stakeholders are responsible to further rely and reinforce the message after the meeting is over. A meeting manager will be more "valuable" and "consultative", if they build this task into the meeting planning timeline.
- **Promote ecommerce** by offering additional books or resources through an on-line store. Or use a program like Amazon's affiliate program to send out suggested reading materials. You will be building your revenue stream and creating another touchpoint.
- **Send email messages/blasts** after the meeting to reinforce messaging.
- **Encourage the sharing of best practices** among attendees. This will not only build community but also reiterate the messaging from the meeting.
- **Further learning and exchange through peer-to-peer formats.** Meeting participants can often learn something (if not more) from their peers as well as from scheduled speakers or presenters. Meeting managers that encourage time to allow participants to exchange ideas further the likelihood of post-event communication.

## Post Event Tools

There are a myriad of ways to accomplish post event marketing including internal and external versions of these tools:

- Bulletin boards
- On-line discussion boards
- Post event surveys
- Listserv
- Blogs
- Press releases

## Summary

Marketing is a broad topic that covers a range of aspects, including advertising, public relations, sales and promotions. Meeting managers without a marketing mindset are at a disadvantage in today's world. With so many messages bombarding the consumer in the marketplace today, it is now more difficult than ever to get your product (meeting) noticed, so marketers have learned to be creative. The bottom line: meeting marketing is an important process for associations and corporations.

Strategies in marketing continue to change and evolve. A savvy meeting manager will consider their meetings and target audience in creating an integrated marketing strategy. Technology, generational differences, word of mouth marketing and guerrilla tactics will continue to evolve the look, feel and effectiveness of marketing.

### Group Discussion or Projects

1. Research the term "Guerrilla Marketing" in books or on the web and suggest three ideas that would be appropriate for meeting managers.
2. What are the pros and cons of using "wedding-type" or formal invitations and postcards?
3. Since 1995, the National Institute for Literacy has offered online discussion lists offering thousands of literacy stakeholders opportunities to discuss the literacy field's critical issues; share resources, experiences, and ideas; ask questions of subject experts; and keep up-to-date on literacy issues. How could you see employ a similar strategy for another organization?
4. Research independent providers of at least one of the these post-event marketing tools. Identify at least one supplier that a meeting manager could use for these services:
  - Bulletin boards
  - On-line discussion boards
  - Post event surveys
  - Listserv
  - Blogs
5. Explore the marketing discipline of viral marketing and discuss how it could apply to meetings. You can look to the Word of Mouth Marketing Association at [www.womma.org](http://www.womma.org) as one resource.
6. What marketing tools or strategies would you recommend for a meeting manager planning a meeting for an audience of 60% men/40% female in the age range of 45—65? How would your recommendations differ for a high tech company founded and staffed primarily by people in their 20's and 30's?

### References

1. Betzig, V. (2007, June). Core Competencies: Step 25: Marketing, Promotion, and Publicity, Part 2. *Convene*, p. 24.
2. Rogers, E. (1995). *Diffusion of Innovations* (4th ed.). New York: Free Press
3. Tinnish, S. (2001, June). To Market to Market. *Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events*. Retrieved May 2007 from <http://www.suetinnish.com>
4. Toups, E. (2006). Marketing and Promotions: Strategy and Collaboration for Success. In G. Ramsborg (Ed.), *Professional Meeting Management* (5th ed.), pp. 305-316. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

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