

## white space

In the White Space, lofty ideas create innovative actions that lead to distinct success. It is where the science of marketing and visual communication translates into membership growth, improved retention and increased member participation. The best and latest tips and resources related to retaining, communicating with and growing your organization's membership are all right here.

### Crowdsourcing & Conferencing

#### HARNESS THE POWER OF A CROWD TO REACH YOUR ATTENDANCE GOALS.

We know it has happened to you. You can deny it if you want, but we know the truth.

We know you pour hours of work and thousands of dollars into your annual conference, and you are let down when you don't meet attendance goals.

So you look for the silver lining - the post-event surveys! Reading comments from attendees on why they LOVED the event will definitely cheer you up, and make all your hard work seem worthwhile.

But, then it happens. Surveys pour in, bringing complaints and comments of disappointment.

*“What a shame that the exhibit hall lacked a vendor to help me with...”*

*“It was a good event, but really didn't help me.”*

*“I wish the main speaker had spent more time talking about...”*

*“Why wasn't there a break-out session about...”*

*“Maybe next year you can do this differently.”*

We know you've received feedback like this, and with declining membership numbers and attendance goals you simply can't ignore it.

#### STOP HIDING IN SHAME. DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT!

The association and members can't take you shrugging off these comments any longer. It's time to retire the saying, “hindsight is 20/20,” and find a solution.

### LUCKY FOR YOU - WE'VE GOT THE SOLUTION!!

*(DRUMROLL PLEASE.....)*

### MAKING IT'S FIRST APPEARANCE IN WHITESPACE.....



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### CROWDSOURCING!

Crowdsourcing is the act of sending out a challenge or request to an unknown, undefined group. The goal is to gather as many solutions as possible in hopes that one will be the perfect solution.

Even though you don't realize it, crowdsourcing is part of your every day life.

When you get home tonight you may either ask, or be asked this question, "What would you like for dinner?"

Kids and spouses give various responses and you sift through the bad answers, like the ever-standing request for pizza, hoping for a clue on what you could fix for dinner that could work for the whole family.

That is crowdsourcing on a very small scale, but it can also work when addressing a very large, unknown community - especially when using the Internet. Crowdsourcing embodies what we truly desire from technology - to make us better at what we do.

And, we've got great news for you - crowdsourcing can help associations. Through crowdsourcing you can prevent those depressing post-event surveys, and in a way that will increase membership and conference attendance.

Alright, we know that right now you might be thinking, "Geez, I'm too busy to add one more thing to my to-do list!"

Just like you, our days move at a rapid pace and there is never enough time to get everything done. Heck, most days it seems like a miracle that the kids get to the bus stop on time - even though the bus stop is just at the end of the driveway.

We want new ways to make our job easier and help us save time - not more tasks to add to our day.

And, that is one reason why we became such big fans of crowdsourcing. Ever catch yourself thinking that if you had a bigger staff, an assistant, a clone, or a third arm, you might actually be able to get everything done? Well, crowdsourcing can't give you any of those, but it can give you a large group of (free!) volunteers to help out.

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### 4 IRRESISTIBLE REASONS WHY YOU NEED TO LEARN ABOUT CROWDSOURCING

#### 1. PROVIDES TARGETED SOLUTIONS IN LESS TIME.

Think of crowdsourcing as a great way to get a large group of skilled, intelligent people to brainstorm for you. Throw out a question to your members about conference topics, and while you are moving on with your day-to-day tasks, ideas will start pouring in. One of these ideas may work, but if not, then at least your team has a place to start when you have your internal brainstorming session.

#### 2. LOWERS COSTS AND ADDS VALUE.

Many organizations and companies who use crowdsourcing for event planning save money on market research, while also getting more bang for their buck. In addition to tapping into a broader network, crowdsourcing builds strong relationships with potential attendees because they helped set the agenda. This also results in attracting more passionate members who really want to make their mark.

#### 3. GIVES ATTENDEES A BETTER EXPERIENCE.

Attendees will be happier and more fulfilled if given the input power to set the agenda and determine the content. Through crowdsourcing, participants get to collaborate before the annual conference, which will add more value to the content shared at the event.

#### 4. RESULTS IN HIGHER ATTENDANCE.

Crowdsourcing is a simple and effective way to engage knowledgeable members, and make the event more valuable to them. Very few people would skip an event that they helped plan!



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### HOW TO GET STARTED

Now that you're interested in crowdsourcing, you might need some direction on where to get started. The beauty of crowdsourcing is that it is limitless.

All you need is imagination, and a little bit of technology. To get your headed in the right direction, ask yourself these questions:

#### WHAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP DO WE HAVE WITH OUR ATTENDEES?

**Do you provide any opportunities for them to feel the excitement of being a partner for any of your events, programs or services?**

#### WHAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP DO WE WANT WITH OUR ATTENDEES?

**Think about the skills and knowledge your members have - how could your organization benefit from them? It might also be helpful to ask yourself what type of relationship you think your attendees want with you.**

#### WHAT DO WE WANT TO LEARN FROM THE ATTENDEES?

**In addition to learning from their expertise, crowdsourcing is great for market research.**

#### WHAT KIND OF OPPORTUNITY DO WE WANT TO GIVE ATTENDEES?

**Look at your upcoming annual conference and identify at least one opportunity for opening up the conversation with attendees through crowdsourcing.**

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### FOUR EASY-TO-IMPLEMENT IDEAS FOR CROWDSOURCING & CONFERENCING

Bringing together a large, unknown group of volunteers and using their talents and imagination to come with new ideas, isn't as hard as you think.

#### 1. Q&A DURING EVENT

One easy-to-implement idea is to pose questions during the event and allow attendees to respond via text message. Those results can automatically be published on a screen in the main session to guide conversation, or saved as research for future use.

#### 2. PRE-EVENT VOTING

Allow participants to submit ideas for any aspect of the conference ranging from session topics to social activities, then allow them to vote for the ideas they like the best. This is most effective if a deadline is set for submitting ideas, then another deadline set for ending the voting. Also, it's easy to set up a RSS feed so that participants can get updates on new submissions.

#### 3. USE SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media and crowdsourcing are the perfect couple! Whether you want to share a video over YouTube, a short question over Twitter, or get expert advice in a LinkedIn forum - social media sites are designed to help you engage the audience and get valuable feedback.

#### 4. START A CONTEST

A huge motivating force behind the success of crowdsourcing is our competitive spirit. Even if there isn't a monetary prize, participants will jump on the chance to be the one with the solution. Contest ideas can range from submitting the best solution for integrating technology at the event to best theme-party idea for the big social.

Crowdsourcing is an effective, and cost-efficient way to collect a dynamic cross-section of ideas. And, even if you get several submissions, but only a few usable ideas, it is still a worthwhile venture, because it makes sense.

Just like asking the family what is for dinner each night, not every response is a winner. But, you still ask because you know they at least have the right to make a suggestion. The same is true for your members, and if you don't give them the opportunity they will go somewhere else to find it.

The term crowdsourcing was coined by Jeff Howe in a 2006 issue of Wired magazine.

