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Through our experience we've learned that if you want to do something well, you have to know something about it. We would like to share some of what we have learned with you. Our newsletter is where you'll find marketing and visual communications topics related to retaining, communicating with and growing your organization's

## DIRECT MAIL + SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING = CONFERENCE MARKETING SUCCESS

### Tips for correctly integrating direct mail and online marketing to increase conference attendance

As social networking has become more popular, the science of social media marketing has evolved. In fact, if you Google **“social media marketing”**, you will be overwhelmed with tips, how-to videos, case studies and sales pitches. But, like many professionals you may wonder, with all of that information, how do you decide what is valuable and will really work?

The big secret to effective social media marketing is to view it as a new strategy to integrate into your existing marketing plan. Much like how advertising and marketing changed when homes across the nation started arranging their living rooms around a TV, you must consider how to adapt to consumers spending hours each day at their computers. It is a new avenue for communicating with your audience. And, it is more dynamic than other marketing tools because it allows consumers to talk back and share info with their friends, family and colleagues.

To demonstrate how to effectively and tastefully integrate social media marketing into existing marketing plans, we are going to break down the specifics of combining direct mail and social networking for association conference marketing. This can be tricky since direct mail tends to be a push oriented message, and most social media marketing takes the pull approach. **We are going to focus on increasing visibility and awareness by integrating social media/networking**, such as:

- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- YouTube
- Blog

Specifically, we are going to discuss integrating those channels of communication with the standard save-the-date notification and the conference overview piece.



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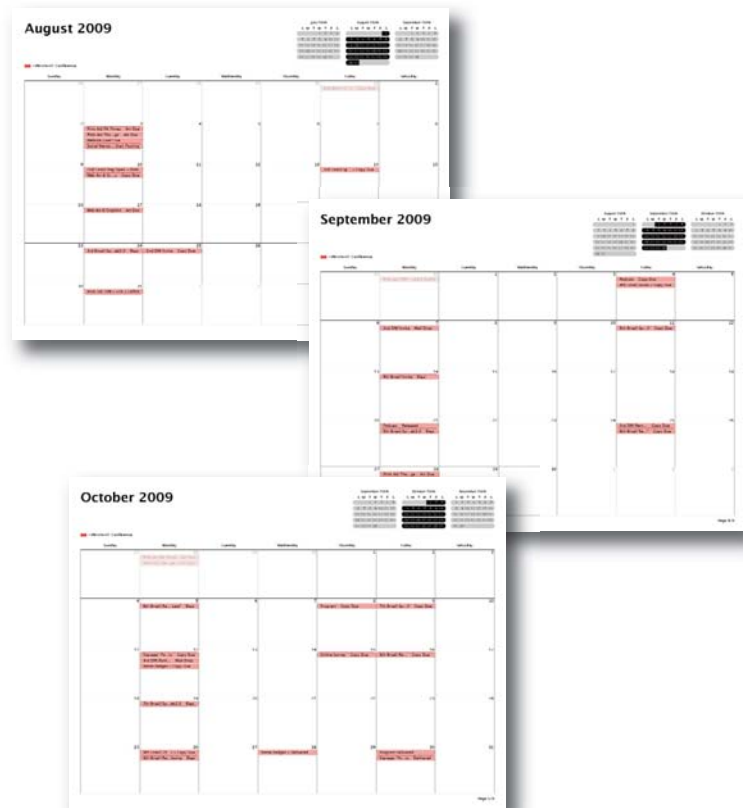
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**Plan, plan and then plan some more.**

Before we fill your head with lots of wonderful ideas, we must stress the importance of scheduling each marketing effort for integration into the overall plan. Poor planning can take a perfectly fine message and make it seem fragmented and confusing.

Tips for planning an integrated direct mail and social media marketing schedule:

- **Create a calendar that you can easily reference. It should include a date for every single marketing effort from direct mail to tweets.**
- **Plan corresponding messages for each direct mail piece and social networking effort/announcement, such as including a blurb about Twitter on the save-the-date card.**
- **Start with what you know best. If you are more familiar with how direct mail pieces should be scheduled to go out, start there and then fill in social networking.**
- **Content strategy for social networking and print pieces should be planned before anything is published to your audience.**



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### **Time to execute: Save-the-Date postcards.**

The easiest place to start with integrating direct mail and social media are the Save-the-Date notifications, whether they are a postcard or email.

#### **Before:**

A couple of days before the save-the-date notifications are sent, make postings on Facebook and LinkedIn that will be visible to association members and others who may be interested in the conference. The post can be short and sweet with a link to a video featuring highlights and testimonials from the previous year's event.

Here's an example:

*"It's conference time again.*

*Check out highlights from last year and what you can expect from us this year."*

Be sure to also put the highlight video on your YouTube stream.

#### **Day of Mailing:**

Start using Twitter for the campaign. We recommend putting up an interactive PDF file on the association website, and directing tweets to that page. (To see the advantages of using an interactive PDF, check out our newsletter on the "Five Advantages of the Interactive PDF.")

Some tweets can include:

*"What are you doing on November 10th?"*

*"VIP save-the-date postcard coming your way."*

*"Where will you be on November 10th? Hopefully with us! More info coming to your mailbox this week."*

During the planning phase keywords should be established that will be used during the campaign and actual event as Twitter hash tags. Include them in these tweets, and make mention of Twitter on the save-the-date postcard/email.

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### Time to execute: Save-the-date postcards. Continued

#### After:

One week after postcards have been mailed out, post on the association blog some background information about the save-the-date postcard. Specifically, this is a great opportunity to discuss how and why the conference theme was chosen. Besides informing members about the importance of this topic, you can build excitement by passionately explaining the reasoning behind the visual elements such as the conference landmark.

This blog post is pivotal in the overall plan because it starts the transition from announcing the date and theme, to building value in the event. Here are a few tips to remember while creating the post:

- **Create an outline for this blog post while the visual elements for the conference are being created and tweaked. Or, at least refer to your notes from those discussions while writing the post.**
- **Don't shy away from displaying excitement and emotion about the theme and why the association finds it important.**
- **Don't distract or confuse readers by listing all the options you were considering but ruled out.**

### Next up: Conference overview piece.

#### Before:

A few days before sending out the conference overview piece start dropping hints to followers on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. These can include short posts that tease the readers into guessing or wondering about what to expect at the conference. The goal is to put them on alert and peak their curiosity before receiving a direct mail piece that is longer and more intensive than previous pieces in the campaign.

These teasers can be fun riddles—include prizes for anyone who guesses correctly.

#### Day of Mailing:

Hit up Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn again to announce to potential attendees that you've just placed all the answers to the previous days' questions in the mail, and they will be receiving it soon.

#### After:

Post a couple of polls on the association blog and social networking channels asking potential attendees what interests them the most about the event. This can include polls about breakout group discussions, planned social activities or event speakers.

These polls do two things:

- 1) They encourage potential attendees to start thinking about the value of the conference;
- 2) They give you a wealth of information about what attendees are expecting.





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### Thinking on your feet.

Since this integrated plan includes communicating with your audience through dynamic, social media/networking tools, you need to prepare for receiving instant feedback from the people you contact. They may respond with questions, excitement about the conference or offer their opinion on how to improve the event.

We recommend deciding how this feedback will be handled; and if it can be used to build value in the event, then share it through other mediums.

Let's say a member who attended last year's conference leaves a comment on the association blog post about how and why this year's theme was chosen, saying that they greatly enjoyed last year's event because they left with a wealth of information and new friends. This is a great testimonial that should be shared with potential attendees on the website and printed pieces.

These tips can provide rewarding ROI for associations who take them seriously and use them correctly. But, they are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to integrating direct mail and social media. Basically, we've covered the importance of planning, given some examples of scheduling, and thrown some fun, different ideas out there. But, there is a lot more to cover. Like how do you keep a consistent message throughout these mediums, but still get the best use of them, because you can't use the same message on a direct mail piece and on Twitter and expect the same success. Why? Well for those answers, and many more, you will simply have to stay posted.

*Were some of the terms used in this newsletter new to you?*

*Check out these resource: [Top 5 Reasons You Should Twitter Your Annual Conference](#)*

