



Events & Social Media

How events are using social networks

Extend event value by networking attendees

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1. Introduction

Event attendees take time off work, fly or drive considerable distance, spend days listening, learning and networking. They hang out at the bar meeting old friends and making a few new ones, yet invariably come away having interacted with only a fraction of the people they could have.

Events are often a catalogue of missed opportunities because people simply don't know who is there that they need to connect with. An event specific social network can change the dynamic of an event for your attendees.

2. Why events are using social networks

Successful organisers are creating vibrant communities around their events, allowing for post event interaction, feedback for organisers and promotion of next event. A dedicated event social network allows this by facilitating extensive online networking opportunities for attendees before, during and after events, which dramatically increases the value of the event.

Whether they are a business exhibition, industry convention or even an entertainment or sporting event, dedicated social networks can now be quickly created at low cost from a software supplier like [SocialGO.com](https://socialgo.com). If needed a social network website can be integrated with existing event websites.

The dedicated social network then acts as a central hub of activity leading up to the event, during the event and after the event. This increases attendee awareness and engagement, facilitates extensive networking possibilities for attendees and acts as a repository of contacts and memories after the event.

3. How events are using social networks

Let's look at exactly how events are using social networks. To do this we are best to break an event into the stages of before, during and after.

a. Before an event

The ideal way to integrate an event specific network is to require all event attendees to register their attendance by signing up to the network. As most event tickets are purchased online it is an easy additional step to offer (or even require) that event participants register for the event and in so doing join the online network. Questions on sign up can ask for special interest keywords that are then searchable by other attendees.

Upon signing up to the network attendees then have the opportunity to search for other attendees whom they may want to meet, or even promote their own event attendance to other attendees.

Searching other attendees: Attendees have an array of networking tools that enable them to search for other attendees or businesses, communicate with them and make arrangements to meet with them at the event.

These include:

- search by attendee name, business name, business category, location
- send emails within the network, which alert the attendees external email
- comment on profile walls and blogs
- engage people in forum discussions
- chat live with attendees with video & audio chat
- join chat rooms for group discussions

Promoting attendance: Attendees have several ways to promote themselves to others coming to the event.

These include:

- create a profile, which is akin to an online business card
- create a business page if they represent a company, which is akin to a webpage
- create their own informal events, eg a lunch presentation or after hours drinks.
- create their own special interest groups with the event, eg attendees from Australia or Female attendees
- write a blog announcement about a business's event attendance

Critically, a dedicated social network for an event can seed viral event attendance where attendees become motivated to "invite a friend" using standard network functionality, thus expanding the reach of an event and the number of attendees.

The event organiser is rewarded with its attendees being corralled into a controlled online environment where efficient and effective marketing messages, plus events news or updates can be delivered over extended periods of time.

b. During an event

During the event the online network largely takes a back seat as the event brings attendees together to interact in real life as intended by the event. Of course attendees can search and communicate with other attendees during the event if needed, often to make arrangements to meet.

c. After an event

After the event an online network becomes a very useful way for attendees to get details of people that met or contact those they missed. It also becomes a repository for photography, videos and articles on the event.

Following the event the organiser is left with a rich database of attendees, their businesses and also all data that relates to the interactions between attendees. This can be very useful data for targeting attendees and businesses for marketing of subsequent events.

4. Creating your own event social network

Thanks to online software like [SocialGO.com](http://www.socialgo.com) anyone can create an online social network with relative ease, at a low cost and with no development skills needed. An online social network website for an event can be easily integrated with an events existing website or be stand-alone replacing an old event website.

[SocialGO](http://www.socialgo.com) specialises in providing fully a featured social network website for \$25 (£17, €20) per month for the Premium DIY plan, or \$150 (£100, €120) per month for the Concierge plan where [SocialGO](http://www.socialgo.com) does all the design, setup & management work for the client.

The networks are fully hosted so the client does not have to worry about servers. Plus there is unlimited bandwidth and storage on all paying plans so the client has no surprise or hidden costs.

For more information please visit <http://www.socialgo.com>, or email support@socialgo.com or **click here** to speak to a [SocialGO](http://www.socialgo.com) agent (USA/Europe business hours).

The SocialGO Team