

Get Social

Tips for maximizing your NACS Show presence with social media.

BY LISA PLUMMER

And to think that less than 20 years ago sending e-mails through cyber world seemed revolutionary. Today, everybody from teenagers to corporate CEOs are tweeting, inviting people to “friend” or “like” them on Facebook, forming connections on LinkedIn, posting videos on YouTube and sharing photos on Flickr.

Maybe you’re already one of those people using social networking in your personal life, or even for your business. After all, social media is a valuable, cost-effective way to promote your company, establish and maintain brand identity, reach out to clients and prospects and engage your industry.

But have you thought of using it to help maximize your ROI at the NACS Show? If not, you’re missing out on a valuable opportunity. When used strategically – from the early planning stages to event follow-up – this virtual networking and communication platform can be a highly valuable addition to any company’s event marketing mix.

Not only can leveraging social media promote your presence at the Show and create booth buzz, it also can connect you with a broader audience.

SET THE STAGE

Don’t wait until a few days before the NACS Show to leverage your social me-

dia presence. Ideally you’ll want to start your online pre-Show marketing efforts several months before the Show, advises Eric Lukazewski, director of marketing for Echelon Design, which helps exhibit clients integrate social media into their event marketing platforms.

“Bring in social media the second you lease that exhibit space and the second you start planning your exhibit marketing strategy,” said Lukazewski. “You need to get a following on Twitter and Facebook, and it’s going to take time for potential customers and clients to realize you’re even there.” On LinkedIn, make connections with those you know in a professional capacity, join the NACS group page and other groups relevant to your industry.

Social media is based on establishing relationships, so engage in dialogue, share information and interact with your audience in a friendly, conversational way – rather than trying to sell



LEARN MORE

NACS and Core-Apps will be co-hosting a special webinar, “Leveraging Social Media and the NACS Show Mobile App to Drive Attendance,” on Thursday, August 12, at 2:00 p.m. EST. For more information, go to: www1.gotomeeting.com/register/627591984.

them something. Find out who will be attending the Show, let them know where you'll be and ask your audience to spread the word.

CREATE BUZZ

Several weeks before the NACS Show, use Facebook to provide regular updates about any special events, promotions or demonstrations at your booth. Use Twitter for quick announcements, special event reminders and scheduling. Use LinkedIn for more personalized communications with prospects and clients, such as special invitations and announcements. Posting fun, short and informative videos about your product or service on YouTube is also a great way to stimulate attendee curiosity.

Although it's important to relay your pre-Show information on as many different sites as possible, remember that each one has a different audience that will want to receive information in a different way, according to Emilie Barta, professional trade show presenter, who works with exhibiting companies to promote their event presence and drive booth traffic via social media.

"I recommend sending pre-Show marketing e-mails through LinkedIn, while breaking up pre-Show marketing announcements into small, quick nuggets on your Facebook wall," Barta said. "If LinkedIn is your professional Rolodex and Facebook is your billboard, Twitter is your text message. It's great for quick little snippets of information, so you can take all your pre-Show marketing and chop it up into a lot of different tweets."

As you fine-tune your social media strategies, make sure your online messaging is in unison with the rest of your

pre-Show marketing efforts — mailers, print ads, e-mail marketing and newsletters. Having a clear, concise and consistent message across all of your marketing platforms is key.

CONSISTENCY IS KEY

Once the momentum starts, integrate your social media presence: Use Twitter to connect people to your Facebook page, use Facebook to post your YouTube videos, and link all of your pages back to your website and blog.

Twitter can be especially leveraged in several strategic ways before the event. Here are a few examples:





■ **Keep an eye out for people who re-tweet your messages.** Use those re-tweets as a way to interact and connect. This starts a conversation that could be continued in a face-to-face meeting at the expo.

■ **Join the NACS Show's Twitter presence** by tweeting its hashtag — #nacshow — which is a key word prefaced by a # symbol that identifies a Twitter "stream" or conversation. You'll get your tweets out to your own followers and to anyone who's following the NACS Show.

■ **Develop a relationship with NACS at the Show by using its Twitter handle** — @NACSONline — in your tweets and re-tweet its information. In this way, you and the NACS staff are working together to promote the Show as a whole.

"By doing this, you now have two audiences," Barta said, "the one you've al-


Join the NACS Show conversation:

-  facebook.com/nacsonline
-  linkedin.com/groups?gid=1776505
-  twitter.com/NACSONline
(hashtags: #nacshow, #nacsonline)
-  youtube.com/nacstv

ready developed, and one that doesn't necessarily know you but is following the tweet stream of the Show and will happen to find you."

A few weeks before the NACS Show, get into the creative spirit and pique attendee interest. Posting little teasers or snippets of information about fun incentives and promotions you'll be offering onsite are great ways to give your online audience a reason to pay attention, said Lukazewski.

Out-of-the-ordinary activities such as scavenger hunts or secret word games, where clues are only offered via social media and can later be redeemed at the booth for a prize, not only encourage audience participation but also help attendees recognize your brand at the event.

"It gives them a reason to participate, it's more interactive, and it's still valuable for the exhibitor and the attendee because it gives you an opportunity to have dialogue with them," Lukazewski said. "Social media is fun and people want to have fun, so give them something fun to do." 

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