

EYE ON EXHIBITIONS



The tweet life...

With the sheer quantity of social media platforms, choosing the best is a daunting task.

Twitter's user-friendly style makes it a good starting point for companies seeking to engage with their audience. It is an ideal way to attract a following, and to later direct this traffic to other social media platforms.

Twitter involves 140-character messages, called tweets, which can be used to encourage visitors to an exhibition stand, create discussion in the lead-up to a show, talk about events while they are in progress and encourage dialogue after the event.

Twitter should not be used to plug products. Rather be creative and engage your audience...

- Offer tips in your area of expertise
- Provide product updates
- Share personal stories that help put a face to your organisation
- Offer opinions on topical issues related to your industry
- Provide incentives like promotional codes to reward followers on exhibition day
- Direct followers to blog posts, images or links.

Tweets can be used to contribute to conversations. Conversations are assigned a hash tag to organise them into topics. For example, it is possible to contribute to a conversation about exhibitions by including "#exhibitions" in messages.

It is also possible to direct a tweet to another user by including their user name and the @ symbol. For example, including "@eeaaupdate" in a tweet would alert EEAA that someone has tweeted to the association or about it.

There is also Search, which enables users to find relevant conversations. Contributing to conversations increases awareness and may boost a user's following.



MATTHEW PEARCE
President,
Exhibition & Event
Association of
Australasia.
www.eaaa.com.au
www.gotapassion.com.au

CENTRE POINTS

Food safety recognised from the start

By Peter Brokenshire, General Manager, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

A meal in Malaysia does not just offer a chance to refuel the body – it is a social event and a means of communication.

In fact, the universal question to a visitor in Malaysia, as in much of Asia, is "Have you eaten?". But unfortunately in tropical climates, the bacteria and pathogens that cause food poisoning multiply rapidly, and the high ambient temperatures of poorly ventilated kitchens can easily provide ideal conditions for the growth of these bugs. Malaysia is not alone in facing this kind of problem, but it is significant that steps are being formally taken to address the safety of food production, preparation and delivery.

From the start, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre recognised that formal food-safety certification is necessary to reassure foreign and domestic clients that their health and wellbeing are serious considerations. To achieve this, the centre initially chose to adopt the American HACCP (Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Point) method of managing food safety while awaiting publication of the newer ISO 22000 Food Safety Management System standard.

For HACCP, the most important aspect is that it is a preventative rather than inspection-based system of controlling food safety. As the prevention of hazards cannot be accomplished by end

inspection of products, controlling production processes offers the most effective approach.

HACCP focuses on three types of hazards: physical, chemical and biological. Physical hazards may include plastic, metal, glass and clothing material that can get into a product; biological hazards typically receive the most scrutiny in an effective HACCP program in a tropical environment because they also present the greatest risk.

Before a HACCP program is implemented, basic standards of cleanliness are introduced for food handlers. But "clean" does not necessarily mean "sanitary", which addresses invisible elements. Food-borne illnesses can be caused by micro-organisms that are not apparent.

There are seven steps to implementing a HACCP program, and continuous updates are necessary. The steps involve identifying hazards in the workplace, determining the controls needed at each critical point, setting critical limits for each control point, monitoring and recording the limits, taking corrective action when necessary, and continually verifying processes and procedures.

Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre went on to upgrade and obtain ISO certification. HACCP is a core

component of the Food Safety Management System, and both programs require chefs to review methods of food preparation to ensure that not only are processes correct but that staff understand why the processes are necessary.

At the centre, menu and recipe cards were produced to ensure high and consistent quality in food safety; the asset department worked tirelessly to ensure the building and equipment met necessary standards and maintenance; the purchasing department trained its receivers to be vigilant, and food suppliers were inspected to ensure raw materials and products were made under controlled conditions.

When the centre first started the journey toward assuring food safety, not everyone understood the value of working within a structured management system, but eventually this became evident at all levels within the organisation with even the most sceptical staff members becoming converts. Now some of the centre's suppliers are working toward certification in order to demonstrate their professionalism.

Overall, the result is the customer confidence we set out to achieve.

● Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre is a long-standing member of AIPC, www.aipc.org.

overview

Relationships key to sponsorship



By Nik Blue.

Obtaining high-level referrals from clients is the best way to reach sponsorship targets for events, says award-winning PCO Robyn Johnson, managing director of Conexion Event Management, Sydney.

A survey by the PCO Association (see page 4) has indicated that greatly reduced sponsorship levels has been one of the effects of the global financial crisis. With delegate numbers also down, a drop in expected sponsorship revenue can be potentially crippling for conferences that would usually expect to break even or post a profit.

Johnson says that having the right person approach a company can be the deciding factor in

convincing it to become a sponsor or exhibitor, especially in a tough economic climate.

"When it comes to raising sponsorship revenue, it is well recognised that an initial approach from the conference host or an associate will often deliver a better result than 'cold calling' from a PCO. I always encourage clients to work closely with our sponsorship managers to ensure that every opportunity to leverage personal connections is pursued."

There are exceptions, but generally most potential sponsor companies have significantly cut their marketing and promotional budgets this year, the PCO

Association survey finds. This is normal for an economic downturn. Persuading someone who is wavering to cross the line can often be achieved only when there is a long-term and personal relationship, says Johnson.

"It doesn't matter how good a sponsorship manager might be, some sponsors will make the commitment only if they feel a close connection to someone directly associated with the event."

Robyn Johnson is a regular presenter at Meetings & Events Australia educational seminars and has taught event management at tertiary institutions. She is also a councillor of the PCO Association.