

MARKETING BY CONFERENCE

The Naked Truths

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THE WHITE PAPER

This white paper touches into one of the effective marketing methods for service and product companies that want to seek for ways to build their brand and announce their products. This white paper is not a step by step guide of how to organize the conference. This only identifies what you need to concern when using this method and how to make your next conference success.

This information is written after my years as a speaker, a moderator and attendee of many conferences and seminars. I am lucky to be a part of some good ones, and luckier to be a part of some bad ones. All become good experiences to me and I hope these experiences will be yours.

If you are planning your marketing by conference, I hope that this white paper will help you to avoid key barriers and concentrate into what works. If you have not thought about this method before, I hope that this white paper will encourage you enough to put this into you plan.

No matter how: enjoy reading!

WHAT IS MARKETING BY CONFERENCE?

Theory says: *A business conference is an event organized by an association, individual, publication or company for the purpose of networking, education or to discuss a business topic with a range of speakers.*

In marketing world, conference is one type of event that can be used effectively and creatively to delivery information about company product or service to the target customers. This method is especially suit to B2B business models.

The advantages of Marketing by Conference are clearly:

- Low cost: compare to mass media, direct marketing, this is one of the low cost marketing method that you can apply right away into your business.
- Fast and easy to delivery: the well conference can be prepared in 1 month. Less is a bit rush, more is too loosy. Either way, it still can be done.
- Effective information delivery: your prospect clients sit there 2 hours, concentrate, hearing what you say about your product and service; look at your brand identity passively. Hard to find ways can increase product knowledge and brand imprint better than this.

HOW TO ORGANIZE THE CONFERENCE?

To make the successful conference, we will need to put our eyes into all aspects. *Attentiveness* is the key to success. The formal Conference will be divided into 4 sessions:

Pre-conference:

Make all required preparations to make the best conference. Choose the right topic, the right speaker, the right moderator and focus into the right attendees. Make friend with press and reporters to get your conference to the headline. Confirm the people will come and hear what you say. Book the venue that you can control the atmosphere. Find the panelists for the conference and tell them to make the speeches. Choose your moderator carefully.

The key for the preparation success is your attentiveness. Put an eye on everything like you will never have a second chance to fix if things go wrong.

The pre-brief meeting:

This is the meeting between organizer, the panelists and the moderator. In this meeting, you and your moderator go through the speeches and materials from panelists to see if their contents are deep enough and make sure they are not stepping on others' feet. The pre-conference meeting should be held 5 days before the actual day so you have time to fix thing if it goes wrong.

Conference day:

The execution team needs to be on the venue 1hr before time to go through the check list. The back drop is okay; The micro and sound can be heart in all concern of the room; The standees are in place; The receptions are up and ready; The tea break is well prepared;...

The panelist and moderator will be on the venue 30 minutes before time. All sit down together; discuss one more time about the topic. You also have to make clear with the panelists that this is *YOUR conference*, tell them not to over-introduce themselves, tell them to stay focus into the topic and tell them what should not be done during the conference. Finally, tell them that your moderator is allowed to interrupt their speech at anytime if he feels the panelist is crossing the line.

Post-conference:

Finishing your day, having a nice conference, people go home with strong handshakes and thankful faces. It is a big relief and now is time for a break. Not just yet! You are only half way there. People are coming home and forget everything about your brand and your product/service on the next day. It is you who have to remind them again, to imprint the information. The sales you generated in the conference totally depend on your post-conference activity.

There are tons of things you can do to remind the attendees about you and your company. But keep in mind that if you need to do anything, you have to do it quick. All activities which are conducted later than 3 days after the conference day is a waste. People cannot link that post-conference activity with your Brand, you product/service anymore.

The dangerous is, if you intent to send more materials about the topic by post, they will take 2 days to get to the recipients, if you want to send by email, you have to collect email of every attendee in the room. That means the post-conference activities are required to pre-prepare. Post does not mean you can do it later. Seriously!

WHAT ARE NEEDED FOR A SUCCESSFUL CONFERENCE?

Marketing by Conference & Seminar is an effective method. There is no doubt about that. But it does not mean that all Conferences & Seminars will success. To make the big day run well, you need to take extra care on:

The right target segments:

Every company has a wide range of target customers. But you cannot afford to invite 1000 of your target customers to your conference. Instead, divide them into groups and strike one group at the time. The conference with 100-200 attendees will work best and the seminar with 100 attendee is more likely to success.

The right attendees:

Identify the right target customers neither mean you can invite them to your door nor the potential customers will show up on the day. After identify which segment to concentrate in, your next step is to mine data and to make sure you have a list of the prospect attendees. Be focus on people who are decision makers. They are more likely your potential customer than technical or executive staffs that are just the messengers. There are variable methods to do this, the fastest and most hassle free way is to look into your current customer lists and find out who should come to hear you.

The right topic:

In the conference, you are marketing your product/service does not mean that you have to spend 100% of your time to talk about you. Choose topics that interest people more than interest yourself. Choose topics that pull people to the conference more than bored them. Choose topic that benefit them more than benefit you. After all, any marketing method means nothing when they cannot get attendees.

The right speakers:

After choosing the right topic, your next challenge is to choose the right speakers. The panelist's board should contain 2-4 persons to keep concentration. The right speakers are ones who have deep knowledge about the topic. More importantly, they know how to speak and how to deliver the content to attendees. The right speakers are also ones who have real life experience and passion to share. They also have to be available before and after the day for the pre-brief meeting and answer questions that could not be delivered in the conference.

The right moderator:

If someone asked me: who is more important: Speaker or Moderator? I would take the whole day to think and come up with the answer: They are both equal!

While the Speakers delivery the contents, the Moderator takes important role to maintain the atmosphere of the day. He will have to know when to stand in and when to step out. He will have to make sure the agenda is followed at the right time. He will have to cut off unspecific questions and answers. And he will have to keep the satisfy level of all attendees. When comes to moderator, you have to choose one who really knows your product/service, has expertise and professional manner to be well-prepared before the meeting. You can fix the wrong speaker, but you will lose everything with the wrong moderator.

The right translator:

In some conferences or seminars that require translation, the translator is needed to be chosen carefully. I have seen some good conferences turned bad because of the translator. He could not delivery the speech well. Sadly, it reduced 50% of the success of the conference.

THE NAKED TRUTHS

This session simply put down some facts about Marketing by Conference.

Truth #1: Vietnamese likes to go to conferences & seminars.

TRUE. When sending out invitation for the interesting conference, we gets approximately 60% response. All conferences we conducted are over registered so that we always had to turn off someone to keep the attendees not overcrowded.

Truth #2: Bad conference can un-sell your brand.

TRUE. Even that people want to be a part of the conference, it does not mean they will buy your products or use your services. More than that, bad organized conferences also raise the bad feeling from the audience and un-sell your products.

Truth #3: Marketing by Conference only suit to service or B2B companies.

FALSE. Selling consumer product does not mean you cannot use this method. One of our Client, Mega Life Science Pty. Ltd., conducts seminar quarterly with group of exclusive customers who are influencer to their major target customer. The company now has few million dollar brands.

Truth #4: Conference is marketing cost, and I will need to take all opportunity to sell my stuffs there.

FALSE. This is truly your marketing cost, but like what I said, bad marketing un-sell brand. So be careful not to overweight yourselves in the conference. After all, audiences are there to find out what good for them, not for you.

Truth #5: Conference is marketing cost, and it should be free for attendees.

FALSE. Free or not is not the matter of the cost. Pricing is a strategy. And you have to use this pricing smartly. In case you conduct a free conference, you have to be aware of your brand image and you have to make sure that you are inviting the right people.

Truth #6: This is about my company, so I should be a speaker.

FALSE. This works just like PR. You need someone to tell about you more than yourself. The most you can be is the moderator. If you want to be a speaker, then be one in the group of 3 panelists. Don't just be the only one who stay there and say good things about yourself. They just do not believe.

Truth #7: It is done when the conference end.

FALSE. People brains are likely to be wiped out right after they come back to their office. They might remember something, but something is clearly not encouraging them enough to remember you. Post-conference activities are the key to success. Send them more information about the topic.

Bring unanswered questions online. Send thank-you note to attendees. Keep the slide and send to audience after the conference. Send feedback forms asking for ideas. Make calls for personal opinions. Send them conference gifts. A little extra postage fee will imprint your brand to your audience.

Truth #8: We should keep the follow up activities short after the conference.

TRUE. All follow up activities should start one day and not later than 3 days after the conference. This is not an easy task, so you have to plan ahead and delivery on time. Remember that you need 1-2 days for the mail to reach the receivers; that means you only have 1 day to send out.

Truth #9: We should make a long conference with lunch to show our luxurious.

FALSE. Free lunch is always nice. But it does not increase the efficiency of your activity. Instead, people are likely to drop out of the track after lunch when they get tired. The best time for conference is from 9am to 12pm. Not too early so someone can pass by office to arrange work. Not too late so then can be back to office before afternoon shift.

THE END

By reading till here, you already have all information of how to make conference work for you. The next step to make the check list of what should be concern when organize your next conference and start your plan for your next activities.

If you think there is something missing, I can be reach easily at tan.le@vitamin4b.com or you can call me on (08) 3517 4462.

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