

Case study: The merits of integrating social media into exhibition stands

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When Scan Display set out to create a completely unique stand for this year's Markex show, a major consideration was how social media would add value to the stand, driving foot traffic and increasing interaction with attendees.

"We've used social media as an add-on at previous years' Markex shows," explains Scan Display's Managing Director, Justin Hawes, "but this year we wanted it to be a focal point for us, something we could leverage for actual return on investment."

By planning in advance, using social media cleverly, and encouraging attendees to get involved, Scan Display saw an Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE) return of R998,727.

Attendees at the exhibition were encouraged to visit the Scan Display stand, get creative with a picture of themselves on the stand, and post it to social media using #ScanMarkex.

Hawes adds that through a simple strategy, Scan Display not only got everybody who visited the stand involved, but also reached way beyond the attendees of Markex 2016: "Tweets about our activation reached overseas, with lots of interaction coming from clients and social media users outside of Markex 2016."

Jodene Shaer, co-owner of social media agency, Chat Factory, assisted Scan Display with its activation for Markex 2016: "Monitoring the online activity of all involved in Markex 2016 showed the #ScanMarkex activation to be streets ahead. It is refreshing to see a brand use the power of social media, not only in a well-planned strategy, but also incorporated into the stand itself."

By following these simple steps, Scan Display was able to garner almost R1-million worth of social media coverage:

1. Plan in advance

It is absolutely essential that you start planning early. The team at Scan Display started four months ahead of Markex 2016 to ensure that all the elements required to integrate the social media strategy into the exhibition stand were in place.

2. Make sure you have an event or activation

You can't just expect people to tweet about you, explains Hawes. Put something fun together on your stand for people to do or enjoy to get them involved. Scan Display incorporated a 103" screen onto the stand, which displayed a live Twitter feed. Grind Mobile Coffee's delicious complimentary coffee was a big drawcard, bringing visitors to the stand. Staff members encouraged attendees to 'join the conversation' by taking a photo and sharing their experience with the team on Twitter or Instagram. Without something to talk about, there's nothing for people to say about you.

3. Include a build-up phase



It's crucial to start talking about your activation beforehand. Attendees will know something is happening on your stand and are more likely to come looking for you once they arrive at the exhibition. To get people excited beforehand, talk about what you'll be doing, who'll be there and why they should stop by your stand.

4. Competitions work

Giving away a grand prize and spot prizes is a great way to keep people popping in more than once and to incentivise them to engage with your brand on social media. This year, Scan Display's grand prize was a balloon safari and champagne breakfast for two with Bill Harrop's "Original" Balloon Safaris, and a one-night stay for two including dinner at Mokoya Lodge. The spot prizes were beautiful Shweshwe aprons and bags from Soweto Sewing Company.

5. Train your staff

Giving your staff training on how the social media activations on your stand work is imperative, stresses Hawes: "Everybody working on the stand needs to know how to clearly explain your social media activities to attendees. You don't want people walking away confused about how you're trying to engage with them on social media."

Finally, Hawes adds that choosing the correct social media platforms to use is important as not everybody has every platform, and not everybody may want to engage on your preferred platform: "Test all the audio visual equipment and software beforehand to make sure everything's working correctly and ensure the social media platforms are easy enough to use."

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