

WRANGLING A BIG IDEA GROUP INTO SOCIAL SHARING SUBMISSION



CHALLENGE

The 183 participants at the Second Annual Symposium on the Use of Social Media in the Tourism Industry (SoMeT) are “doers,” says Dave Serino, educator & strategist from Think! Social Media, the event’s producer. “They get social media. They are active, hands on, roll-up-your-sleeve social media people.” As such, the multi-generational group of newbie hipsters mixed with mature boomers was poised to saturate the symposium with ideas and inspiration that could have been lost in the ether.

Instead, Serino tasked Seven Degrees Communications with designing a system to capture the best ideas in the room every day and store them in an online repository so that by the last day (and for as long as they choose), the insight and education could be collected in a giant online catch basin for brilliance. And so, 7DC went to work blending their knowledge of social tools and adult learning principles to harness the energy of the crowd.

SOLUTION

Seven Degrees developed a three-part program for the SoMeT gathering:

CAPTURE: They created a separate Google Docs spreadsheet for every session in the symposium. Using QR Codes on the handouts and bit.ly links for easy access, they directed session participants to take notes and share ideas online using the spreadsheets. They also gathered social transcripts and analyzed feeds to collect anecdotal idea sharing.

DISCUSS: In the wrap-up session titled, “Winning Ideas: 60 Ideas in 60 Minutes,” they presented the results of having culled through all of the notes and Twitter feed from all the conference sessions. A list of 4 to 5 themes (such as, “mobile is here to stay”) emerged, which Levin and Connolly relayed back to the group (seated family-style at rectangular tables) for further discussion on how they would implement the theme in their respective destinations.

VOTE: Although a weak Wi-Fi connection wreaked havoc on the plan, the wrap-up session was designed to have the attendees vote on the “winning idea” of the meeting.





RESULTS

Breaking the compilation of ideas up into bite-sized pieces for the attendees was a hit. “What went over really well was having a Google Doc for each session and having everyone go in and post ideas. When we sent out mega documents in the past, they got little traction. Certainly there was a lot of good information and content on Twitter, but the Google Docs captured the high points and delivered information in a more digestible fashion,” Serino explains.

From an organizational perspective, the Winning Ideas program was a huge gain for Think! Social Media. Seven Degrees delivered a “super document” that was a compilation of all of the best ideas from the symposium which they can use in their promotional efforts for future conferences. “I loved the whole concept. I really think there is great opportunity for the idea generation that comes from personal interaction in small groups and people loved the Google Docs idea,” Serino says.

NEXT STEPS

Serino and Think! Social Media are already at work for the third annual symposium. As the number of attendees grows, they are challenged even more with capturing the best ideas from the group. The big takeaways—positioning the Winning Ideas session in the best possible schedule slot and making sure that the small groups are composed of a mix of different people and perspectives—are high on the list of must have conditions for future events.

Seven Degrees is also hard at work helping more event organizers utilize content from their meetings, build community through group discussion and understand what attendees are thinking. They develop programs that impact the real-time success of the conference. They also help planners design better content for future meetings by taking advantage of the rich supply of attendee ideas and suggestions—a resource that few surveys can duplicate.

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