

## Turn Up The Heat On Event Marketing With 5 Easy Steps

By **Trisha Gallagher Boisvert**

Now is a great time to heat up your marketing efforts at the local level through a highly strategic yet cost-effective event? For starters, in much of the country, your customers and prospects are coming off a long, hard winter and are open to events that fend off cabin fever and promote good information sharing in a non-intrusive way. On a broader level, the flat economy of the last three years has paralyzed most small and mid-sized businesses in terms of propelling their marketing efforts forward. Your competitors have spent very little money to position themselves effectively through local marketing.

As a result, the field is wide open for any forum that gets people talking to one another about their lifestyle needs and choices.

What's more, you can create good synergy in the midst of what has been a couple of seasons of profit doldrums for most industries, by partnering with another like-minded alliance to add depth to your offering and reach a broader audience. And, if that isn't enough to convince you not to delay in taking steps, remember that editors—now more than ever—are looking for positive stories to write about which means there is a good chance you will get the local press to cover your event.

For these reasons, the time has never been better to warm things up by carving out an event or campaign that will give you the prominent reputation that you so richly deserve! Start by asking yourself a couple of simple questions:

1. From what audience am I going to receive the greatest gain in the shortest amount of time—existing clients, new prospects, or a combination of both?

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Write down your goals and share them with anyone that is involved in making your event a success

2. Based on this group's time constraints and priorities, what subject would most interest this audience? (For example, if my local network is mostly made up of suburban parents, can I offer an event that is tied to their children's after-school activities, like sponsoring soccer

3. Once the audience and the offering have been sketched out, I need to decide with whom will I collaborate to lend credibility to the event and drive more exposure. (In the soccer clinic example above, it might be useful to approach a local donut franchise.)

4. How will I draw more people to my event and make it easy and interesting for them to participate? (Maybe I'll approach the local professional soccer franchise and see if I can arrange for a professional player to stop by the clinic, sign a few autographs and take a few photos with the kids...)

5. How will I leverage every aspect of the event—especially the aftermath—to turn this investment into long-term relationships and, ultimately, sales?

Once the answers to the above are thought out, you are well on your way! However, before your planning gets into full swing and you get steeped in the details, take the time to ask yourself another vitally important and strategic question: What has to happen to make this event a critical success?

Do you need to have "X" number of people attend? Will you be satisfied if 50% of those people schedule a follow-up appointment with you? How

### 5 Steps to Event Marketing

- > Identify your target audience.
- > Appeal to lifestyle interests and tie in your area of expertise.
- > Strategically align yourself with local companies or well-known brands to support your event.
- > Offer an interesting "pull" that will generate interest in your event.
- > Make a commitment to follow through.

cer clinics for would-be coaches that allows for a soft tie-in to my area of expertise?) How will I add value to this group?

important is it that the story is covered in the press? How many referrals will make the event worthwhile?



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Maybe you just want to have an enjoyable time and ensure that your clients and prospects do too. Whether your goals are tight or loose, take the time to write them out and share them with any one that is involved in making your event a success.

To ensure that your investment of time and money truly does help you reap the reputation that you desire and deserve, think through all of the ways throughout the year that you will leverage your event. Would a follow up survey bring in more information from your audience and provide another touch point? How will you refine your networking approach or "first talk" to incorporate the value you provided in this latest event? Is there a desire for more events, or more collaborative opportunities with strategic alliances? Are there other audiences or communities that you could target with a similar approach?

If you're serious about applying some heat to your marketing efforts, these thought processes are all you need to know to pull together a strong local event that will serve to reconnect you with your clients, and build your prospecting base for the next year.

By following these five simple steps you will create a terrific story—at very little cost—and will present a positive pitch for your services in what may be an otherwise untapped market. ♦