

USING VIRTUAL EVENT TECHNOLOGY TO UNITE YOUR AUDIENCE IN MULTIPLE LOCATIONS

A Case Study

An Industry White Paper by:



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INTRODUCTION

At Mary O'Connor and Co., we share our clients' commitment to success by being smart, strategic, values-based leaders in our field and in our communities through the innovative ways that we approach our products, concepts and the services. We gladly take responsibility for ensuring that the planning and infrastructure that supports our clients' events are seamless for the client's planning team and flawless for participants and special guests. This is well within our realm of capabilities and our 15+ years of experience; and we deliver with the utmost in professionalism, efficiency and responsible fiscal management.

CASE STUDY

OUR CLIENT'S OBJECTIVES

Our East Coast-based client had the challenge of delivering a consistent, simultaneous presentation in multiple locations to make a major announcement and accomplish new product introductions. They had never before taken on this type of project. As an added complication, the planning timeline spanned a mere eight weeks. The audience included franchisees, network partners and employees. The event had to be motivating, engaging, succinct and clearly communicated.

OUR CLIENT'S DIRECTIVES

Our client defined our assignment in this way:

- Reach at least 6,000 attendees in multiple locations across the U.S. – 28 full-service presentations and 13 simplified presentations
- Identify locations that participants could reach by car in a maximum of 90 minutes
- Deliver live video messages from a location (one of the 28) in the corporate headquarters city
- Implement a quality-controlled hot food and cold beverage tastings in 28 locations to introduce new products
- Assemble and train/orient onsite team for each of the 28 locations; provide simplified instructions to the client's leads in additional 13 locations
- Create, print and deliver a venue leader's kit, including broadcast and tasting instructions and coordinating information from various members of the corporate team
- Create and distribute pre-event and onsite communications to motivate participation and to inform

MARY O'CONNOR AND CO. APPROACH

Utilizing our vast network of meetings and events industry contacts, we began by seeking an expert in the delivery channel for our client's message. We connected with a national movie theater chain that had the technology and experience to make the multi-location event happen. At the same time, we called in our production company partner, which has experience with implementation of similar events.

After negotiating contracts, protecting the client's interests, and confirming the reliability of the technology, we analyzed the list of potential venues to find those that met the client's geographic parameters. We worked with our client to set a firm agenda for meeting day, identify key client leaders to lead the effort in each city, and assign the necessary team for each location. Our own multi-city office network was an asset in deploying our team of experts to be present in the largest venues, and we led a series of 28 conference-call training sessions to prepare the onsite team for each location.

Finally, on “game day,” our lead event managers were onsite at “command central,” the presentation origination venue. Our production partner and the theater technology team coordinated with our team and the clients’ to run the event without a hitch.

Throughout this process, we also met our client’s needs in the areas of budget management, production schedule management, collateral and signage production, and other services that are included in our comprehensive event management program.

TOOLS DEPLOYED

A carefully assembled set of virtual tools was imperative for the success of this event:

- Satellite technology – broadcast from origination site to 27 additional sites through network of movie theaters
- ConstantContact-based email distribution for pre-event communications to motivate participants and inform of important instructions
- ExpressEvent™, our proprietary online registration system, and associated website customized to client’s meeting, which gave participants a location choice and set their expectations
- Communication channels for 24/7 access to critical information – SharePoint and ExpressEvent™ meeting website, plus GoToMeeting for conference calls involving employees in several locations

COSTS

Many tactics were employed by the MOC team to ensure we protected our client’s bottom line:

- Negotiated box lunch delivery to the theatre locations, saving over \$50,000
- Created most of the documentation for the 28 lead teams in house, then compiled and shipped at 2-day air saver rate
- Located and acquired origination site with built-in satellite, saving over \$20,000

RESULTS

- *Attendance boost* – Fueled by pre-event communications and conference calls with the client’s field leadership, we were able to accomplish attendance commitments for 7,000+ – a bump-up of 17%, to the client’s delight.
- *Seamless message delivery* – Due to our careful selection of industry experts to partner with us, including our examination of their reputation and similar experience, the transmission was completed without error.
- *Adherence to client’s product quality standards* – Delivering a consistent tasting experience with the precious commodity of a client’s food and beverage product, and serving it within 15 minutes to up to 700 attendees in 28 locations is no small feat. However, our seasoned F&B managers have experience serving large crowds while maintaining the utmost in product integrity, including serving perfectly brewed hot coffee to 10,000 in less than 3 minutes, so this time it was a “piece of cake.”
- *Positive post-event momentum* – According to our client, the event was a huge success based on positive implementation of the new product launch and much-appreciated convenient access by geographically diverse participants. Very important to our client’s corporate team, the event was a major money-saver over the travel-intensive road-show format they were accustomed to running.

ADDITIONAL POSSIBILITIES

Although not part of this case study, the following elements could be employed to enhance results or fit the objectives of a different client:

- *Voicemail message blasts* – Attendees can be prompted via cell phone/BlackBerry message to arrive at the session on time, attend a special session or simply hear a special message from an executive.
- *Incentive gift to build attendance* – A client who is in a wholesale or retail sales business has the added advantage of the ability to offer a gift for attendance that is a big draw for the audience

while being economical for the client. This could be handled as a drawing for a big prize or a smaller gift to all attendees.

- *Utilizing social media* – It's becoming commonplace for businesses to use Facebook, Twitter and other social media channels to communicate about an event or reinforce more formal communications. Many attendees are accustomed to receiving prompts via these channels and respond well to them, though this should not be used as an exclusive form of audience communication.

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