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Making events a powerful, painless tool

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The right marketing partner can support your efforts to meet your business goals in many different ways – some of which you probably wouldn't expect. Take the time a client wanted to make their team's favorite annual event even bigger and better.

They're in the commercial facility services sphere, keeping vital equipment running efficiently and racing to fix it when something threatens to disrupt their customers' operations. Their success depends upon their team of highly skilled technicians – and those techs' most critical skill has nothing to do with machinery.

Since its founding, this company has recognized the importance of relationships and customer service to their success. Everyone on the team knows their stuff, but what's more important is they know how to work with people. Because they've hired carefully and focused on training, managers don't worry about how employees will respond to a panicked, crisis-laden customer.

In this beyond-competitive workforce environment, company leadership knows it has to do more than offer good wages and generous benefits to keep top-quality talent on the payroll. They make sure their team members know their efforts are appreciated through a variety of special events and outings during the year. Like hosting everyone at sporting events, but without a limit on tickets. Want to bring your aunt and cousin with you? They're part of the family.

The highlight of the year is the awards banquet, where team members get recognized in front of their peers. It's not a second-rate buffet with some cheesy decorations. Company leaders want team members to feel they're being rewarded for going well above their employer's expectations ... along with those of the companies they serve. So, they make a significant investment in everything about the event – foods, drinks, prizes, and more.

For years, they managed it internally, but as a company's number of employees grows, an event like this becomes more complicated to arrange. And because they've worked so hard to make each year's edition even better than the last, expectations are pretty high. Company leaders had no interest in becoming professional party planners. Nor did they want to turn the budget and the responsibilities over to some planner they didn't know or trust.

One of them remarked that it would be nice if somehow, they knew everything would be set up and ready to go, so they could just walk in and enjoy the evening, too. Then, when it was over, they could return home knowing someone else would oversee the cleanup.

Story Continues Below

There are times when being a marketing partner means pitching in with events. Whether that's making the most of a new facility's grand opening or giving prospects good reason to step into a tradeshow booth, many events are also an opportunity to build your brand and reputation ... and in the case of this event, to enhance your team's overall morale and help keep turnover under control.

We had helped the internal folks responsible for several previous award dinners by taking on small pieces of the process. The individual who was the main organizer retired, and nobody else was interested in taking on all the planning and coordination. Well, planning and coordination is key to any successful marketing effort, so we stepped up and offered to help. Again, having been involved previously in a smaller capacity, we understood the format and expectations.

Another benefit of involving us was that we were able to take a fresh look at the banquet and how funds had been spent in the past. We looked for ways to lower costs by approaching things differently. When we presented our plan and budget, the client eagerly agreed.

The event went off without a hitch. Just as we promised, the leadership team simply had to show up, play their part in the awards ceremony, and then head back home, secure in the knowledge it had been another memorable evening. Subsequent conversations with their employees (and significant others) confirmed widespread satisfaction.

There are two lessons companies can take away. First, when choosing a marketing partner, look for more than just someone who can create a pretty website or a clever ad. The most effective partners are those who ingratiate themselves into your business, function as an extension of your team, and react to your needs and requests by finding ways to help.

Second, even when something like an annual event is always a hit, it never hurts to have someone look at it with fresh eyes. Sometimes we get so comfortable with the way we've been doing things that we either don't recognize the opportunities for change or are unaware of better options. By looking at the event in new ways, we helped achieve their goals with less direct effort on their part.

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