Know Your Alumni: Treat Them Right and Build Your Attendance in the Process

By Ken Ferreira, National Sales Application Manager. Ken has over 20 years of experience in the tradeshow industry.

Hotels and airlines know their repeat customers and recognize them for their loyalty. I’m a million-mile flier and my card says it. Customers like recognition for their commitment to a brand and it makes them feel valued. Do you know your repeat customers, your alumni attendees, and do you demonstrate the fact that you value their loyalty?

Why are your alumni attendees so important to your event? Your alumni are far more than just repeat customers and event attendees. They are your brand ambassadors, biggest supporters, and in many cases their word-of-mouth promotion of your event can be one of your most effective forms of new attendee acquisition advertising.

Here’s how you can show your alumni that you value their loyalty:

**GATHER DATA AND DEMOGRAPHICS ON YOUR ALUMNI**

Create demographic questions to learn the following about your alumni:

- Region where they attend the most events
- How many years they have attended
- Buying power they represent for their organization
- Past spending habits at your events
- Educational sessions profile

**CREATE A TARGETED MARKETING PLAN**

Analyze and segment the data you’ve collected on your alumni to determine which benefits to market to each segment. Create your plan to include:

- Geographic marketing—for events that are on rotation or that are held in multiple regions, this information becomes vital. Sending geographical relevant information to your alumni shows that you know their attendance preferences. Additionally, if your event moves to a new region, make sure to perform a thorough search of your data history from past events to capture alumni names for this new geographic region.
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- Targeted marketing messages—base marketing emails on your alumni attendees’ past spending habits and average number of attendance days. You are more likely to get a positive response if you send event information that is important to them.

- Educational sessions profile—offer session options based on the past interests of your alumni. Provide the opportunity to purchase conference packages and a la carte choices for similar sessions that might be of interest.

OFFER ALUMNI PRICING AND INCENTIVES

Reward your alumni for their repeat attendance by offering:

- Special pricing or a promotion for a discount.
- If your sessions and special events usually sell out quickly consider giving your alumni the first chance to purchase these offerings at an alumni “soft” opening or pre-sale.
- An easier registration process—reduce the multiple steps of a typical registration process with pre-populated information so that your alumni can quickly complete their registration.
- Extra perks—integrate with your vendors to offer perks to alumni such as housing discounts.

ENHANCE THE ONSITE EXPERIENCE

Look for ways to recognize your alumni onsite and reward them:

- Create a special registration area for alumni only.
- Offer a special designation on the badge for your alumni with the number of years they’ve attended your event.
- Provide an alumni lounge with light refreshments and a recharging station. Give your alumni the chance to relax, recharge, network and connect with your event!

Remember, a little appreciation and recognition of your alumni goes a long way. Treat them well and they will be your brand ambassadors who help grow your attendance by spreading the word about their positive experience at your event.