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WHAT CAN INSTAGRAM, TWITTER AND TIKTOK TEACH US ABOUT CROWDSOURCED CONTENT?

Here's why you *SHOULD* follow the crowd in your comms and virtual events.

As an events and comms professional, the chances are, you're a pretty good communicator. You'll know that one of the hardest things to do in our industry is to hand the mic over to your audience. We get it. In particular, there's been a longstanding tension between the corporate world and social media, and perhaps for good reason. Just ask those businesses who've scored an embarrassing own goal online.

Now, we're not here to advise you on social media strategy – that's not our thing. But what we *do* know, is that social platforms are entirely built by crowdsourced content. And they're undeniably successful.

So, how can you use some of the *principles* of social media to improve your virtual events and communications? Here's four ways to create collaborative, compelling crowdsourced content. As always, it's never about you. It's about your audience.

Invite personal contributions

If you contribute, you're invested. That's the basic principle behind Twitter, Instagram et al: People want to be part of the story – whether it's their own, or someone else's. So, whether you're encouraging live chat comments and GIFs during a virtual keynote or launching a digital vlogging campaign using video platform Seenit, encouraging your audience to personally contribute to the story will automatically make them more invested. Put your crowd right at the centre of your content – because that's where they want to be, and that's where you'll see real engagement.

Listen to your crowd

By encouraging dialogue in your virtual events, and by inviting conversation and collaboration in your comms campaigns, you're guaranteed to get honest, authentic insights from your audience. Use pre-event surveys to ask people what they want, sprinkle 'ask the audience' polling throughout your virtual presentations, or even try a 'reverse Q&A' where you

ask your people the questions at the end, rather than the other way round. Yes, you'll hear lots of opinions, and you might not agree with them all, but at least you'll be listening. Audiences like to be heard, so find as many ways as you can to listen.

Interconnect channels to improve your reach

One of the big successes of video app TikTok is how well it talks to other platforms. It's seamlessly integrated with Apple Music for mutual benefits – and it's so interconnected with Instagram that a quick search on the photo sharing app shows over 50 million posts are using the hashtag #tiktok.

If your comms and events aren't interconnected, you're potentially losing a captive audience of content creators, and worse, suppressing your scope for scale. Every event and piece of comms should talk to the next (and the last). If you're crowdsourcing photos on Yammer, tell people through Teams. If you're crowdsourcing ideas, broadcast them on a podcast. If you're building an army of vloggers, tell all your bloggers. Interconnected channels will increase your reach and create sustained scale.

Create challenges

Apps like TikTok gain traction by starting trends and creating crowdsourced challenges. We all remember the ice buckets and the mannequins, but have you seen the #ButHaveYouSeen trend (2.7 billion views)? How about the #HowToAdult challenge (2.5 billion views)? These hashtags are linked to memes where the crowd creates their own content based on a chosen theme. Even world famous museums like the Uffizi in Florence have taken to TikTok, so how can you embrace its principles in your comms and events?

For fun and frolics, launch a team lip-sync challenge, or develop a dance move driven by your company values. More business-like? Try a crowdsourced business skills challenge or a 'networking hacks' lunch and learn series. It's all about creating an accessible online challenge with a bit of healthy competition. Something your crowd will love contributing to. What might yours be?

Read more of our musings [here](#)