



BY TRACEY THOMAS

## Conference Promotion Challenges

**INFORMATION OVERLOAD!** We are overwhelmed with screeds of advertising, from the minute we wake each day. This means that for the conference planner getting the message out there about your meeting, conference or event is as challenging as ever. It also means your potential event attendees are being overwhelmed with even more information and advertising relevant to their industry as well.

Getting the right numbers of the right people requires a creative, co-ordinated and effective approach. Consider original, quirky campaigns, internet promotion and advertising, and stand out brochures and mail-outs. Whether your target audience is association, corporate or even in-house, you as the planner need to be proactive in your marketing approach.

Too often there is an assumption by the organiser, or the committee, that people will just come because they do every year. Not any longer! A competitive business environment, competing events or conferences and other economic factors mean that even usually die-hard attendees have more options to consider so they may need more encouragement than ever to attend your event. You need to be creative and exhaust every promotional opportunity. Consider the following:

1. Have the conference details been placed on the organisation website? Is it in the right place on the website? Is there a need for the event to have its own website? The site needs to be regularly updated – who will do this? "Google" it regularly.
2. When will the mail-outs commence? Set dates for the first, second and third announcements. Will any further mail-outs be required? Have a contingency plan. Don't scrimp on the budget!
3. Who will be responsible for the mail-out? If you are operating with a committee, ensure you get the right person for the job.
4. Is your mailing database for potential delegates current? Ask this question or find this out very early on. If not, include an allowance in your budget to have it updated – quickly. Do you have all the e-mail addresses of potential delegates?
5. Is a warm up campaign required? If it is how long before the first announcement should it start?
6. Ensure your media contact list is current. Seek as much "free" publicity as you can.
7. Check with your keynote speakers or high profile delegates that they are comfortable speaking with the media before sending out press releases. Consider a press conference.

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