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October 2005 Article

Create Instant Fun - and Lasting Memories - with Digital Images

In the old days of photography, a meeting planner might invest in a photographer, have lots of pictures taken, get prints and then push them aside in a file. It was just too much trouble to distribute them to those who wanted them most: the meeting participants. "If the photos don't get to your guests, that is a waste of your budget," says Ben Crosby, president of Specialty Imaging International (SII). Unfortunately, he points out, this has led planners to often think of the photography line item in a budget as dispensable. Ben encourages you to think again.

Photography represents the single most tangible item that will be around long after your meeting is over. "It can occupy some really valuable real estate on a person's desk," Marc Grauer, vice president of SII points out. A good photo from an incentive or convention often gets displayed in the participant's office. There, it serves to inspire that person and his colleagues to work toward attending the next event.

And, all of this can happen instantly with quality digital imaging. The photos can be delivered on the spot at the meeting. The planner has no after-the-fact photo chores. The equipment is truly portable, Marc explains, taking only three bags to transport from conference to conference. This includes the photographic equipment and high-quality dye-sublimation printers.

Digital imaging has five key immediate and lasting benefits, Marc says. You can use it to:

1. Create buzz at events
2. Generate interaction & engagement among guests
3. Establish long lasting & tangible memories
4. Produce new branding opportunities
5. Provide memorable results & personal connections

Here are some specific examples of the utilitarian and entertainment functions of digital imaging

Name Badge. In less than one minute, a meeting participant can be handed a name badge with his or her photo on it at the registration table. The photo can be key for events requiring security. It's also just plain fun to have. And, it will be especially flattering since the bad ones can be deleted on the spot. With the name badge, consider printing the meeting schedule on the back as an added bonus. There are opportunities for multiple designs within the same event to designate guests, staff and others.

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Conference Directory. The registration photos can serve double duty. Create a directory of attendees' names, affiliations, and photos to give to participants early in the conference. This "yearbook" helps people put names to faces and serves as a resource for follow-up contacts. These images may be maintained in a database for future events. This can be done for access on the Internet as well.

Action Photos. Using an image drop technique, you can take a participant's face and superimpose it on a photo of a skier, golfer, or any other activity you chose. Add the event name, date, and location—plus your company's logo, and you have a keepsake that works two ways.

Scenic Shots. At a party or dinner, you can let your guests have fun posing in front of a "green screen", which in the end will show them in the French Quarter in New Orleans (or wherever your conference is) or in front some new product you are launching. The print-outs can be delivered in minutes and include your logo. They are great as reminders of you and the meeting's theme. Digital imaging allows for great creativity and customization for your events.

Magazine Covers. Car and Driver. Golf Week. Variety. Guests become instant celebrities as they grace the cover of an appropriate publication. Great keepsakes and party ice breakers.

Bobblehead Dolls. Imagine the office comments when a traveler returns to work with a Bobblehead doll with his or her face on it. The dolls can be custom ordered in a form appropriate to your field and be ready to personalize in minutes at your meeting.

Team Building. Give digital cameras to teams at your event and send them out into the city in search of specific scenes. Or, ask them to tell a story through photos. In a later session, create a presentation with their photos and have the audience vote for the best work.

Conference Slide Shows. Photograph the business and leisure sessions at the conference and create multimedia slide shows complete with music that run the next day as attendees file in to the meetings, meals and parties.

Pillow Gift. Place a small photo album in each guest room before the conference. Then provide daily prints to include in the photo album. A keepsake to be shared with family and friends.

Post-conference Website. Create a photo gallery on your website where attendees can go and view photos of the fun they just had at your event. Give them the opportunity to download pictures that they want for their own use at no cost to the participant.

Pre-conference Website. Use the digital images from one year to enhance the promotion for the next year's event. And you've come full circle and made good ROI use of digital imaging.

To make all of the above work, you do need professional photographers who are producing memorable photos, Marc cautions.

When considering your budget consider also "What will last and what will guests remember the next day, the next week, the next month, the next year? Connect guests before, during and after the event with digital imaging," Ben and Marc advise.

With their company, clients own the photographic images for any future use. All files are formatted on CD ROM or DVD and archived by Specialty Imaging International for future needs. For more on the process and to see examples of imaging products, check out their website at www.specialty-imaging.com.

Editors note: Much of the above is taken from a presentation that Specialty Imaging International made at the GEP Executive Summit June 16-19 in New Orleans.