

## Crowdsourcing Designed to Meet New Attendee-Centric Event Demands

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What is crowdsourcing? Crowdsourcing is the process of defining a problem or task, putting out an open call to your community of attendees, and providing them with an opportunity to participate in the creative problem solving in exchange for some level of incentive or recognition. Crowdsourcing leverages mass collaboration enabled by Web 2.0 technologies.

When applied to events crowdsourcing enables you to harness your attendee's passions, common interests, successes and collective knowledge to solve problems, guide creative processes, influence future outcomes and ultimately create a more attendee-centric event, meeting or conference.

**Origins of Crowdsourcing:** The origins of crowdsourcing are tied to the open source movement in software development. Author Jeff Howe in his book, "Crowdsourcing: Why the power of the crowd is driving the future of business," describes how a connected and impassioned group of developers transformed the software landscape forever. He states, "the development of the Linux operating system proved that a community of like-minded peers was capable of creating a better product than a corporate behemoth like Microsoft."

Forward thinking marketers in software, design, clothing and automotive industries have been using crowdsourcing to develop new product ideas, guide product design and engage consumers with their brand.

### **Crowdsourcing for Events: Using FaceBook**

A cause-related nonprofit had a passionate base of supporters and members. They asked those groups to assist with ideas and design for a graphic that would be used on signage, t-shirts, the web and in promotional materials for a series of media events to be held in several cities across the U.S. They asked the groups to

submit their concepts, design ideas and graphics via the organization's FaceBook Fan Page. After an initial screening, the 10 best ideas and designs were posted on the organization's web site for voting by all visitors. The winner received a trip to Washington D.C. to meet the organization's executive team, have lunch with celebrity supporters of the cause and tour the capital.

### **Crowdsourcing for Events: Pre-Event Engagement**

The 2008 Governor's Conference on Small Business and Entrepreneurship sought to harness the ideas and input from over 400 of the state's small business leaders and entrepreneurs. Over a six-month period before the conference, staff from Governor Schwarzenegger's Office of Research and Planning organized 12 policy caucus groups lead by small business owners and entrepreneurs representing several regions of the state. These caucus groups made initial drafts of policy recommendations on issues including health care, access to capital, greenhouse gas reductions (Assembly Bill AB32) and taxation. A wiki was set up to share the caucus groups' ongoing work and communicate their progress with conference invitees.

On-site at the conference, the caucus groups met to refine the recommendations. Attendees who were not able to participate in the pre-conference caucus groups were invited to join in the policy conversations and vote (via live audience voting) during a general session on which recommendations would be presented to Governor Schwarzenegger. These recommendations are helping to shape California's small business agenda.

In a new world focused on results-driven events and meetings, an understanding of crowdsourcing gives planners yet another tool to develop audience engagement.

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