

EVENTS: BOOST YOUR BRAND BY GETTING UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

When the Canadian Living team started planning its strategy for promoting the brand's 40th anniversary, they knew events would play a key role. "The 40th anniversary has been of huge interest to our advertisers," explains Tracy Finkelstein, senior director, marketing, communications and events at TC Media, "so that sort of amped up the interest in events this year."

The increased interest didn't faze the marketing team, however. As Finkelstein points out, Canadian Living has included events in its overall marketing strategy for years. "We just took a model we already had and enhanced it," says Finkelstein. Those enhancements included opening up events beyond the print subscriber base and moving them outside of Toronto to Vancouver and Montreal, for example.

Why expand the brand's events' reach? Because getting face to face with your readers wherever they are can go a long way toward deepening their loyalty and organically promoting your brand. Small wonder that advertisers want to be part of such feel-good, positive experiences. And those experiences don't have to be big to have an impact. It's all in the way that you work your event, explains Finkelstein. Here are her tips for creating excellent events for your magazine brand.

BE PART OF THE SALES SOLUTION

Work as one with the sales team. "Know your advertisers and agencies," says Finkelstein. "Be part of the sales conversations/negotiations and understand clients' marketing priorities, and challenges." Then use that knowledge to create exceptional events. "We attend weekly sales meetings and are able to develop events proposals simultaneously as the media plans are put together," she says. "Plus, we offer a turnkey solution—we manage everything, which clients like!"

BE SMART WITH SPONSOR INTEGRATION

"Don't overwhelm your guests with an advertising sales message at a cocktail party," warns Finkelstein, "or mistake product knowledge sessions as engaging presentation content at a Q&A session." Of course you have to make your sponsors happy and their message heard, but as Finkelstein points out, people are paying to attend your event—make it worth their while. "Opt for subtle and suitable messaging," she advises.

MAKE AN ENTRANCE

"Ensure your check-in process is flawless and have extra volunteers available to greet guests," says Finkelstein. "Wow your guests and make the entrance beautiful!" And don't forget to make sure your brand and sponsor messages are obvious when guests arrive. "The entrance immediately sets the tone for the event," Finkelstein points out, "and you never want the first words out of your guests' mouths to be a complaint about the check-in process."

BROADEN YOUR REACH

It takes a village to create a good event—advertisers, sponsors, venues, caterers, AV companies and more. They all want things to go well and they all have databases, social media assets, websites, newsletters and more. So go ahead—ask them to promote the event, attract new guests and generally broaden the reach.

CHOOSE QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

A small, intimate event can pack as powerful a punch as a big, splashy event. Add a generous amount of social media by inviting bloggers and influencers to help create an in-progress buzz. "Encourage guests to post photos on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter throughout the event," says Finkelstein. "Make it an activity during the event. We actually print tent cards that say 'Please take photos!' and include all the necessary hashtags and social handles."



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GET OUT THERE

Don't lurk behind the scenes at your event. "Go introduce yourself to guests, shake some hands, and get some feedback—not only about the event, but about your brand," encourages Finkelstein. "If these guests have paid money to attend, they already have a real interest in your brand or the content you are presenting, so listen to what they have to say and learn for the next event."

MIND YOUR MANNERS

Follow-ups, says Finkelstein, are a must for all event planners. "Thank your guests for coming," she says. "Send them an email, post a slideshow on your website, run a page in the magazine, or mention something on social media." However you do it, acknowledge the event and thank your readers for joining you. And while you're at it, says Finkelstein, encourage them to buy tickets for your next shindig.



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