

Convention & Exhibition Attendance Marketing Best Practices Study



SPECIAL REPORT
DEVELOPED BY:

EXPO

PHILADELPHIA[™]
CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

 **Pennsylvania
Convention Center**
PHILADELPHIA

Convention & Exhibition Attendance Marketing Best Practices Study



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Introduction

The right mix of attendance level and quality is the essential element in any successful convention, exhibition or meeting. Today the rise of social media is providing event management with more opportunities, but also challenges for audience development.

EXPO Magazine along with the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority have developed this exclusive industry study to help convention and exhibition managers analyze and benchmark their attendance marketing programs and initiatives.

The report provides results from a survey of leading convention and exhibition producers conducted in the summer of 2011. The focus of the analysis is on the most effective attendance marketing mediums, use of social media, budget size, how event producers work with cities and venues to drive attendance, and other related topics and metrics. A total of 156 event producers and planners responded to the survey.

This study is part of a series of special reports developed by *EXPO*, the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority to inform the convention and exhibition industry. The first report “The Power of Philadelphia” was released in March 2011, in conjunction with the opening of the \$787 million expansion of the Pennsylvania Convention Center.

EXPO, the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority thank all of the respondents for their invaluable contributions to this study and report.



Executive Summary

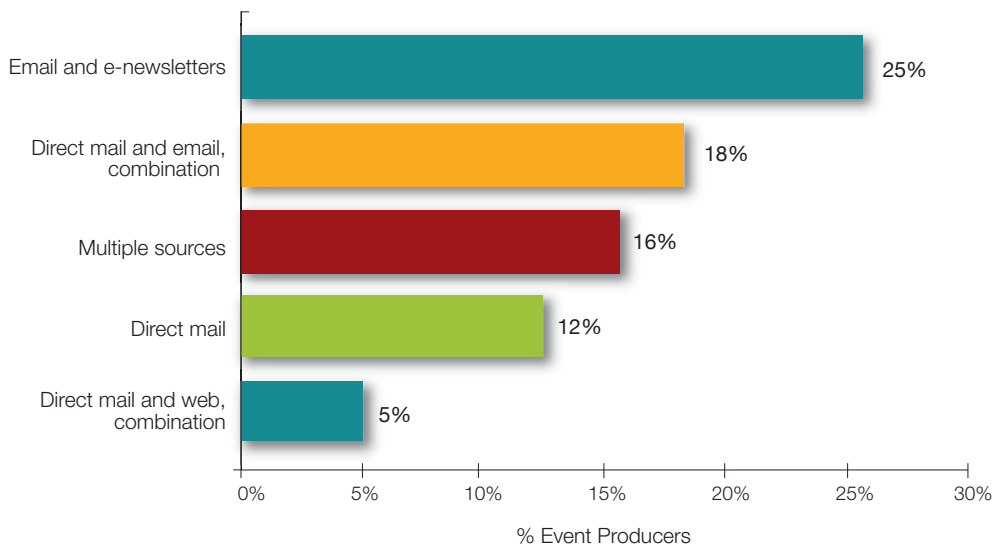
Attendance marketing has changed significantly over the past ten years. The last two years alone have seen an explosion in the use of social media to communicate event information and build an online community around events as well as to help drive attendance.

For decades direct mail and print advertising were the main methods used to promote conventions and exhibitions. Today there are many different approaches and strategies. In fact, this study has identified over 27 mediums, media and tactics used by event producers to drive attendance.

What remains the same is the need for the right themes and messages tailored to often highly targeted niche audiences. In addition, the marketing themes and messages need to be backed up by excellent educational content, the opportunity for unique networking, hosting events in a great destination and venue, and the right mix of exhibitors and sponsors.

Clearly today's attendance marketing workhorse is email. The largest percentage of event producers surveyed say that email is the most effective attendance marketing method with the highest ROI. Direct mail is still an important part of the mix. As an example, the second most effective approach is considered to be the combination of direct mail and emails, according to event producers.

MOST EFFECTIVE ATTENDANCE MARKETING MEDIUMS & MEDIA WITH THE LARGEST ROI



A key focus of the study has been to quantify what percentage of event management is using various mediums and media to drive attendance. Emails and websites, not surprisingly, are the number one and two most common mediums used for attendance marketing. The next three most common are e-newsletters, Facebook and direct mail postcards. A higher percentage of event producers send out direct mail postcards (74%) today than a full brochure direct mailer (58%).

TOP TEN MOST OFTEN UTILIZED ATTENDANCE MARKETING MEDIUMS & MEDIA

	% EVENT PRODUCERS
Emails	99%
Website with attendee-focused information and content	97%
E-newsletter(s)	81%
Facebook activity and promoting "likes"	75%
Direct mail: postcards	74%
Exhibitor efforts to promote to their clients/prospects	69%
Relationships, partnerships with other organizations	62%
Twitter postings and followers	60%
Direct mail: full brochure	58%
Banner and online ads on other "outside" websites	55%

Social media is gaining rapidly in importance. In fact, close to 90% of event producers are using at least one social media platform today, up from around 30% just a few years ago. Event producers are mainly using Facebook and Twitter to increase brand awareness and supplement their other marketing communications. While the use of social media has become very important, still only 3% of event producers say it is the most effective approach to promote attendance with the highest ROI.

A key finding from the study is that attendance marketing is getting more complex. Part of the complexity is the need to reach segments of an industry that respond differently to various mediums and methods, as well as frequency and format.

New technology and tactics are making the attendance marketing role more challenging but there is also a wide range of new opportunities. The need is to ensure the various marketing mediums, tactics and messages are more integrated. As one event producer said, their key opportunity is in "reaching more prospects through social media, adding telemarketing follow up, and taking a more integrated approach."

The survey asked for event producers' biggest opportunities for their attendee marketing efforts and initiatives. Some of the key themes are touched on in these comments:

- "Getting younger members to understand the importance of attending and participating in their annual organization's business meeting."
- "Growth in social marketing allows us to reach non-traditional audiences."
- "International attendance."
- "Mobile marketing advances."
- "More word of mouth, increased participation from exhibitors."
- "Personal invitations from peers. Peer-to-peer marketing."

Additional Key Findings Summary

The survey asked what is more important to event producers – overall attendance quality or quantity? Seventy-eight percent indicate both attendance quality and quantity are equally important.

The three most popular social media platforms used to promote attendance are Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Social media is being used to help increase brand awareness, supplement marketing campaigns, and increase event attendance, according to the survey respondents.

On average, the survey found that 84% of those that pre-register for an event actually attend the show.

Nineteen percent of the total show expenditure and marketing budget is allocated to attendance marketing, according to the survey respondents. The average attendance marketing budget is \$96,217. According to the survey results, 39% of shows have an attendance marketing budget over \$100,000 for their largest show, while 13% spend over \$200,000.

Over the past two years, show producers have changed the way they present the value of their events to attendee prospects by:

1. Enhancing the focus on educational opportunities, 67%
2. Focusing on networking opportunities, 65%
3. Promoting new products and technologies at the show, 49%

The most commonly used types of keynote speakers are well-known, industry-specific business or government leaders, according to 68% of event producers. Experts and authors are also used by 59% of shows.

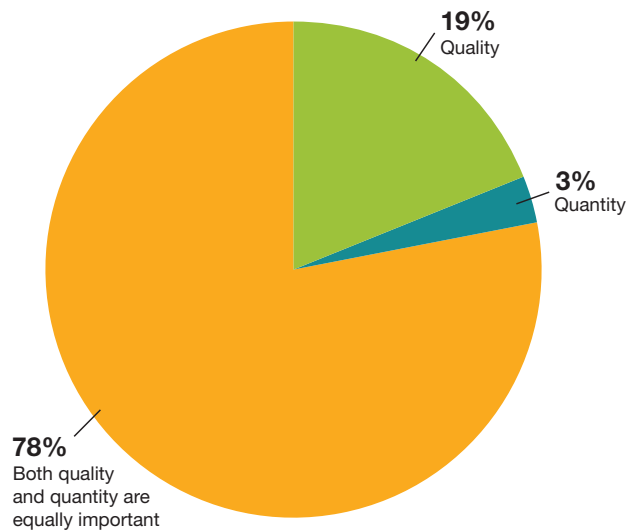
The city destination and hotel package are considered important in driving attendance to 75% of event producers. Only 14% say that the city and hotels are moderately important. The convention center is also considered important to a total of 57% of respondents.

Survey Results

The complete survey results are presented in this section of the report.

The survey asked event producers what is more important to their organization, overall attendance quality or quantity. Seventy-eight percent of convention and exhibition producers indicate both attendance quality and quantity are equally important, although 19% chose quality.

IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE QUALITY VS. QUANTITY



A key focus of the study has been to quantify what percentage of event management is using various mediums and media to drive attendance. Emails and websites are used by nearly every event producer and are the number one and two most common used mediums for attendance marketing. The next three most common media and mediums are e-newsletters, Facebook and direct mail postcards. A higher percentage of event producers send out direct mail postcards (74%) than a full brochure direct mailer (58%).

The following secondary mediums, those used by less than half of event producers, are expected to be used by more events over the next few years:

- Online search key words
- Video content
- Search Engine Optimization
- Mobile tools, including iPhone/iPad and tablet apps

PERCENTAGE OF EVENT PRODUCERS USING VARIOUS ATTENDANCE MEDIUMS & MEDIA

	% EVENTS
Emails	99%
Website with attendee-focused information and content	97%
E-newsletters	81%
Facebook activity and promoting "likes"	75%
Direct mail: postcards	74%
Exhibitor efforts to promote to their clients/prospects	69%
Relationships, partnerships with other industry organizations	62%
Twitter postings and followers	60%
Direct mail: full brochure	58%
Banner and online ads on other "outside" websites	55%
Publication advertising, in internal publications	52%
Publication advertising, in "outside" publications	51%
Top keynote speakers	49%
LinkedIn / B2B social networking, sharing contacts	47%
Public relations	44%
Direct mail: self mailers, smaller brochures	42%
Online search key words	40%
Video content promoting attendance	39%
Outside list development and rental/purchase	35%
Search Engine Optimization	31%
Mobile tools, such as iPhone or iPad app, pushing content to PDAs	26%
Webinars/webcasts/podcasts	24%
Telemarketing	23%
Social media ads	19%
Newspaper advertising	15%
TV and radio advertising	15%
Dedicated buyer or retailer support and services related to attendance marketing	14%
Other	10%

MOST EFFECTIVE ATTENDANCE MARKETING MEDIUMS & MEDIA WITH THE LARGEST ROI

The various mediums and media provided by the respondents as verbatim, write-in answers have been categorized and quantified in the table below. While it is not surprising that email and e-newsletters are the most commonly mentioned approach, there are still a number of different marketing strategies and mediums used by events. For nearly all shows multiple sources and mediums are important contributors, although this survey question asked for a focus on the most effective with the highest ROI.

	% EVENTS
Email and e-newsletters	25%
Direct mail and email	18%
Multiple sources	16%
Direct mail	12%
Direct mail and web	5%
Magazine and publications	5%
Web	5%
Email and web	3%
Social media	3%
TV and radio	3%
Magazine and web	1%
Partners	1%
Telemarketing	1%
Web and magazine	1%
Word of mouth	1%

Essentially half of event producers charge for access to their exhibit halls, and 75% charge for full conference program access.

ATTENDANCE REGISTRATION LEVELS PROVIDED

	% EVENTS
Exhibit hall access only, paid registration	52%
Exhibit hall access only, free registration	40%
Full conference program(s) access, paid	75%
Full conference program(s) access, free	29%
Individual conference session(s), "à la carte"	31%
Other	14%

ATTENDEE & CONFERENCE PARTICIPANT FEES

	AVERAGE LOWEST FEE
Exhibit hall access only, paid registration	\$80.83
Full conference program access, paid	\$433.64
Individual conference sessions, "à la carte"	\$129.70

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

The most commonly used keynote speakers are well-known, industry-specific business or government leaders. Experts and authors are also used by 59% of shows. These findings suggest that the focus of keynote presentations today is on providing information or insight more than on inspirational or motivational speeches.

	% EVENTS
Well-known business or government leaders in our industry	68%
Experts or authors	59%
Professional motivational speakers	29%
People with inspirational experiences, stories	28%
Celebrities, entertainers	27%
Well-known business or government leaders in other industries	22%
Other	18%

The three most popular social media platforms used to promote attendance are Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Forty-two percent of shows have their own online industry forum.

ONLINE & SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS USED FOR ATTENDANCE MARKETING & INFORMATION

	% EVENTS
Facebook	87%
Twitter	74%
LinkedIn	60%
Online industry forum or site maintained by our organization or event	42%
YouTube	33%
Blogs	28%
Online industry forum or site maintained by another organization	16%
SMS/Text	8%
MySpace	2%
Other	8%

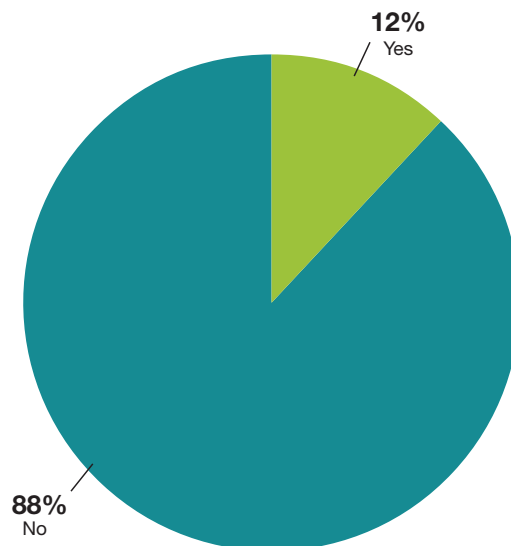
Events are using social media to help increase brand awareness, supplement marketing campaigns, and increase event attendance, according to the survey respondents. Social media is also being used for a number of other initiatives and goals.

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA HELPS ACHIEVE ATTENDANCE MARKETING GOALS

	% EVENTS
Increase brand awareness	67%
Supplement our marketing campaign	62%
Increase event attendance	56%
Send out general show updates	55%
Enhance industry/community relations	44%
Create additional media/press coverage	41%
Send out general industry updates	33%
Regularly engage in discussion with individual friends/followers	30%
Increase the number of event exhibitors	25%
Offer unique contests/giveaways or show discount specials	19%
Become the lead channel in our marketing campaign	5%
No positive impact	3%
Other	3%

Only 12% of show producers have an attendance loyalty or frequent attendee/guest incentive program.

ATTENDANCE LOYALTY OR FREQUENT ATTENDEE/GUEST INCENTIVE PROGRAMS



STRATEGY & APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL ATTENDEE MARKETING

Some of the key themes about the approach to marketing to international attendees are expressed by the verbatim, write-in responses below.

- “Email primarily; also use locally connected consultants familiar with the industry; guest invitations for non-U.S. exhibitors/sponsors.”
- “For all shows we focus our marketing activities in targeted regions based on show location. In the U.S. we are part of the U.S. Department of Commerce International Buyers Program.”
- “International advisory board asked to promote within their own countries.”
- “Start very early, due to complexity of applying for visas. Work with travel groups and third-party planners.”
- “This is primarily limited to emails to our international members. We also have offices in Mexico, India, and Brazil which help add some promotion to potential members in those areas through their established networks, translation of marketing materials developed in English, etc.”
- “We have a very large international attendance and primarily market to them via phone via multi-lingual staff and direct mailings in both English and their national language.”
- “We have worked for many years to develop relationships with trade publications, trade associations and organizations, and other media who partner with us to promote our international event.”
- “We leverage our international staff and account managers for primary outreach, and provide talking points, exchange rate information and benefits, assist with VISA letters, etc.”

On average, 84% of those that pre-register actually attend the show.

PERCENTAGE OF PRE-REGISTERED THAT ATTEND

- Average: 84.4%

Nineteen percent of the total show expenditure and marketing budget is allocated to attendance marketing, according to the survey respondents.

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL EXPENDITURES & MARKETING BUDGET ALLOCATED TO ATTENDANCE MARKETING

- Average: 19.1%

ATTENDANCE MARKETING BUDGET SIZE

- Average: \$96,217

According to the survey results, 39% of shows have an attendance marketing budget over \$100,000 for their largest show, while 13% of the industry spend over \$200,000.

Over the past two years, show producers have changed the way they present value to attendee prospects by:

1. Enhancing the focus on educational opportunities, according to 67% of event producers
2. Focusing on networking opportunities, 65%
3. Promoting new products and/or technologies at the show, 49%

IN THE PAST TWO YEARS HOW EVENT MANAGEMENT HAS CHANGED THE WAY VALUE HAS BEEN PRESENTED TO ATTENDEE PROSPECTS

	% EVENTS
Enhanced the focus on educational opportunities of events	67%
Networking opportunities	65%
Promoted new products and/or technologies exhibited at show	49%
More focus on the business value of attending	42%
Fun and entertainment value	31%
Career enhancement value	30%
Promoted the host city and area amenities more	25%
Support the industry by attending	22%
We have not changed the way we present the value of our shows	18%
Lowered cost of attending	10%
Other	7%

The city destination and hotel package are considered very important to 45% of event producers in terms of helping to drive attendance. In comparison, the convention center is considered very important by a total of 23% of respondents.

IMPORTANCE OF THE CITY DESTINATION & HOTEL PACKAGE AND CONVENTION CENTER TO DRIVING ATTENDANCE

	CITY & HOTEL PACKAGE	CONVENTION CENTER
Very important	45%	23%
Important	30%	34%
Moderately important	14%	27%
Not very important	8%	10%
Not at all important	3%	5%

HOW EVENT PRODUCERS WORK WITH DESTINATIONS, CVBS & VENUES RELATED TO ATTENDANCE MARKETING

Some of the key themes expressed by verbatim, write-in responses are presented below.

- “Collateral materials, photos and links – often for micro-sites.”
- “Create and post micro-sites on our event site to help attendees and exhibitors see what the destination has to offer. Work with the CVB to develop lists of potential attendees and exhibitors within a 300-mile radius of the destination.”
- “Customized website, local mailing lists, onsite recognition (banners/sign/buttons).”
- “Housing site, online postings, email promotions, marketing support for local information and photos.”
- “It varies from city to city. We typically use their online options but not necessarily all of their direct mail pieces.”
- “Micro sites, information in App, in-city advertisements, etc.”
- “Multifaceted approach with assistance from the Host city, CVB, for local related industries, SIC Data, local colleges and universities.”
- “Public relations and appropriate mailing lists of potential conferees.”
- “Restaurant and hotel discounts promoted online, email, registration confirmations, show guides. Registration promo discounts to our alumni attendees. Branching off sub-VIP conferences and gifts to 5-year returning attendees.”
- “We use all the services CVB have to offer to promote, promotional language, eblast, mirco-sites, maps, etc.”

Most shows (57%) mail between two and four specific direct mail campaigns per show cycle. Twenty-five percent mail two campaigns, 20% mail three and 12% mail four. Most shows launch ten or more specific email campaigns annually to promote their largest annual event. Nineteen percent launch 11 to 15, essentially one or more per month. Twelve percent launch 16 to 20 emails, and 14% launch over 21 emails.

NUMBER OF DIRECT MAILERS & EMAILS SENT/SPECIFIC CAMPAIGNS FOR LARGEST MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS

	DIRECT MAILERS	EMAILS
0	11%	2%
1	16%	0%
2	25%	2%
3	20%	6%
4	12%	3%
5	8%	9%
6	2%	13%
7	2%	1%
8	2%	6%
9	0%	0%
10	2%	13%
11 to 15	2%	19%
16 to 20	0%	12%
Over 21	0%	14%

BIGGEST OPPORTUNITIES FOR ATTENDEE MARKETING

Some of the key themes expressed by verbatim, write-in responses are presented below.

- "Addition of more categories at the show to attract more retailers and international growth."
- "Attracting members that do not attend."
- "Education, (ability to) see new products."
- "Expanding our product base to reach a wider audience."
- "Facebook."
- "Gain audience to hold events more than once a year in other cities per attendees feedback."
- "Getting younger members to understand the importance of attending and participating in their annual organization's business meeting."
- "Grow attendance from regions near the destination by promoting daily conference registrations, providing group transportation options."
- "Growth in social marketing allows us to reach non-traditional audiences."
- "Increasing senior executive awareness."
- "International Attendance."
- "Meeting apps and connections (new versions of lead retrieval)."
- "Mobile marketing advances."
- "More effective use of social media to gain additional reach."
- "More joint meetings with complimentary associations."
- "More word of mouth, increased participation from exhibitors."
- "New developments/standards in the technology where the attendees must learn new information to keep up to date."
- "New technology."
- "Offering scholarships to educators to attend our conference if their school budgets have been cut."
- "Personal invitations from peers. Peer to peer marketing."
- "Reaching more prospects through social media - adding telemarketing follow up – taking a more integrated approach."
- "Shifting member mentality that it would benefit them to personally pay to attend the conference and not rely on their employer to pay for attending."
- "Social media."
- "Social media, targeted marketing, video."
- "Virtual events."
- "Web presence (on homepage, use of video, web optimization); and potentially TV and Radio (however, this has yet to be tested)."
- "Website, Email blasts, blog and other electronic promotions."

MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS FOR MEETING PLANNERS & ATTENDEES

MOBILE WEBSITE

PhiladelphiaUSA.mobi

Includes PCVB member listings (links to hotels, restaurants, attractions, etc.), geo-location services, a calendar of events, deals from PCVB members, mapping and much more.



PHILLY'S BEST DEALS
DELIVERED TO YOUR PHONE...

FREE
Text PHL Deals
to **63638**

Always a free service. No opting-in. No spam.

SMS CAMPAIGN

Deals Directly to SmartPhones

Convention attendees can find members and retrieve special offers via text message or through MeNetwork's app for smartphones and tablets. Text PHL Deals to 63638 to try it!

PHILADELPHIA PUBLICATIONS

Official Visitors Guide & Maps

The Philadelphia Official Visitors GuideSM, published twice a year, is the most comprehensive source available for what's hot, what's happening and what not to miss in Philadelphia. Our map of Center City is used throughout the region.



DELEGATE DISCOUNT PROGRAM

Show Us Your Badge or Room Key

The PCVB offers all convention attendees this special discount program which features deals at local restaurants, attractions, shops and more, when a delegate badge (or room key) is presented.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook, Twitter, Flickr

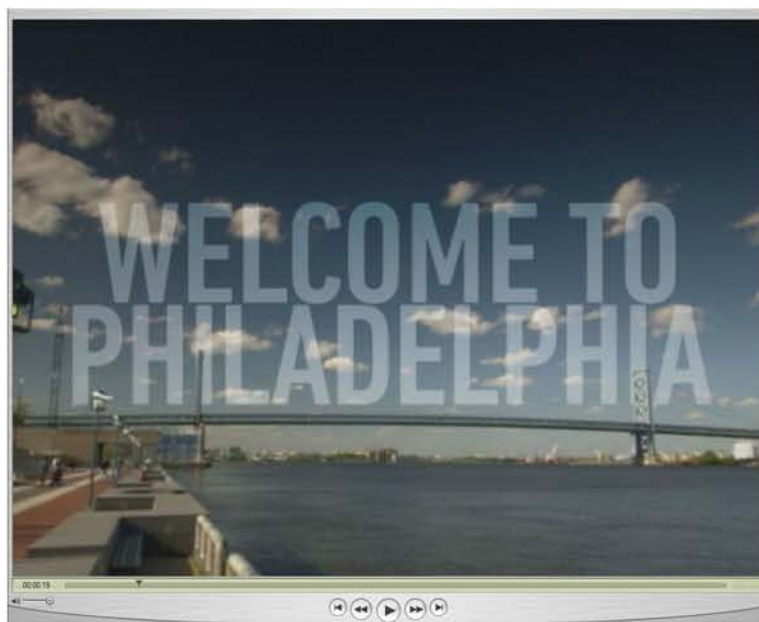
The PCVB strategically uses social media in the meetings and conventions market to share news and reach new customers. It is also used to reach out to attendees during their Philadelphia meetings to share city information and deals.



PHILADELPHIA VIDEO

Completely Philadelphia

This inspiring video highlights the many things (arts, culture, hotels, restaurants, history, diversity, meeting space) that make Philadelphia The Complete Package.



QUESTIONS? Contact your Convention Services Manager for information on what the PCVB can provide to your group.

MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS FOR MEETING PLANNERS & ATTENDEES

DIGITAL SERVICES KIT [DSK]

www.PhiladelphiaUSA.travel/dsk

Any resource a planner needs—from City Logistics to Vendors and Suppliers to Multimedia—can be found in this section of the PCVB website.



PUBLIC RELATIONS SUPPORT

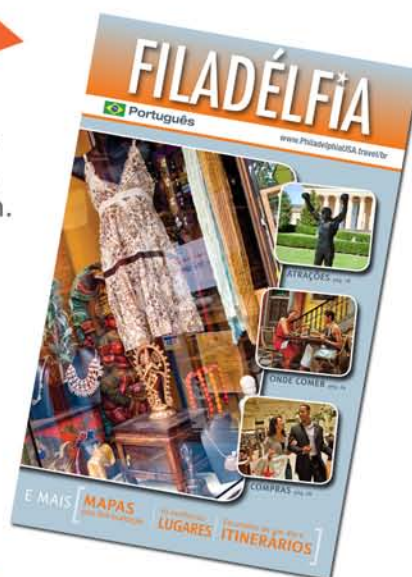
Get Stories Out with Our Help

The PCVB helps to build awareness and drive attendance to customers' Philadelphia meetings. The PCVB's PR staff distributes press releases, pitches stories to local media and provides on-site press room support.

INTERNATIONAL MATERIALS

Translated Guides & Microsites

The PCVB has created 10 international guides and microsites that feature original translated content in Chinese, Dutch, English [U.K.], French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese and Spanish.



DATAMINING

Reach New Attendees & Grow Attendance

The PCVB provides datamining services for most groups with 2,000 or more rooms on peak. Potential attendees are identified using NAICs codes and a custom promotional message is sent on your group's behalf.

CUSTOMIZED MICROSITES

Philadelphia Websites for Your Meeting

The PCVB creates customized microsites for most groups with 2,000 or more rooms on peak. They feature Philadelphia-specific content, including a welcome message from the Mayor, and exhibitor information. [Does not include links to hotels to prevent booking around the block.]

CUSTOMIZABLE E-MAIL TEMPLATES

www.PhiladelphiaUSA.travel/emailtemplates

The PCVB provides a series of customizable HTML templates that planners can use to help drive attendance to meetings in Philadelphia. Each of the templates has space to add in custom messaging and event logos.



QUESTIONS? Contact your Convention Services Manager for information on what the PCVB can provide to your group.

Methodology & About the Respondents

In June 2011, an online survey was sent to 2,877 convention and exhibition producer executives. A total of 156 responded for a 5.4% response rate.

ORGANIZATION TYPE

	%
Association with a convention	59%
For-profit tradeshow and exhibition organizer	19%
Corporate meeting planner	3%
Conference producer	3%
Consumer show producer	6%
Special event owner/planner	2%
Other	8%

SIZE OF LARGEST MOST IMPORTANT EVENT

	%
Less than 100,000 net square feet	47%
100,001 to 250,000 net square feet	33%
Over 250,000 net square feet	20%

ABOUT THE PHILADELPHIA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

The Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau (PCVB), a private non-profit membership corporation, is the official Tourism Promotion Agency for the City of Philadelphia, and the primary sales and marketing agency for the Pennsylvania Convention Center. Consistently ranked one of the top CVB's in the nation, the PCVB works worldwide to attract convention and tourism business. The customer-focused organization has departments dedicated to the multicultural, sports and life sciences markets.



Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau

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Philadelphia, PA 19103

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www.philadelphiausa.travel

ABOUT THE PENNSYLVANIA CONVENTION CENTER AUTHORITY

The Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority is a public agency that operates the Pennsylvania Convention Center. They are devoted to the success of every meeting, convention, tradeshow and event in the facility. With a hospitality focus, expansion of the Convention Center opened in March 2011 and now offers a total of 1 million sq. ft. of flexible space for customers.



Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority

1101 Arch Street

Philadelphia, PA 19107

Tel: (215) 418-4700

www.paconvention.com