SOCIAL MEDIA TIP OF THE MONTH

In this regular series, EM brings you tips and tricks from pros and experts who've been eating social media marketing for breakfast. So eat up, and check us out on Twitter @eventmarketer and Facebook.com/eventmarketer for more.

THIS MONTH, EM takes a dive into "the cloud." Not the first thing that comes to mind when you think "social media?" Yeah, we get it. But consider this, dear readers: if the very essence of social technology is its ability to bring people together in a spirit of online and in-person collaboration, the ultimate social medium may just be the amorphous, ever present "cloud" that stores, powers and pervades so much of our business and personal lives these days. If you use any Google service, you use the cloud. Basecamp? Cloud. Salesforce? Cloud. Twitter? Come on… it's a bird for cryin' out loud. So cloud. You get it. To help us wrap our heads around this idea, and decipher whether there's merit to rethinking what social media really is, EM turned to Kurt Miller, vp-strategy and planning at George P. Johnson. He's worked for two decades in the technology marketing world with all the biggies: IBM, Cisco, HP, Intel and SAP to name a few, and these days he designs strategy and creative for digital and hybrid event programs all over the world. So read on, as we outline the top ways that treating the cloud like a social media can make all the difference in your experiential strategy.

1 **Content management.** This is where the cloud keeps its wheelhouse, and the power of decentralized, secure and access-anywhere content cannot be overestimated. Think about this: a hypothetical trade show manager for a U.S.-based multinational brand is in Singapore for a key show. She needs to get access to the latest issue corporate content, product demos, videos, brochures and sales goals. Old information is useless, especially when applied to the b-to-b world, and all of that content needs to be loaded into the event for staffers to leverage, and attendees to access on tablets, smartphones and touch-screen interactives. How does the cmo ensure that the content on the floor is the latest and greatest, and get it integrated across multiple touch points while keeping it all fully in line with the rest of the organization's branding and direction? By storing it and updating it all from the cloud, that's how. It's not just about warehousing, it's also about delivery. Real-time communication. That's social media, and that's a gold-plated best practice.

2 **Crowdsourcing.** You position your brand as the best and brightest in your industry (we hope), and your current users and customers probably think of you that way, too. What about the consumers you hope to steal away from your competitors, or those who aren't using any service like yours yet, but should

be? To get to them, you need to find the unaffiliated experts and brand evangelists who don't work for you. A recommendation or tip from an expert perceived as independent from your brand is much more powerful than your own messaging, especially online. To find those people, the social cloud will allow you to work with those industry gurus to bring them into your fold by helping you to reach them on a neutral footing, and provide them with platforms that are available to all parties looking to address a pain point. You could establish a tips forum or community help center, people to help one another solve problems, and help them remember your brand next time they need more professional help. In that way, you establish your brand as not just a provider, but also a friend and thought leader.

3 **Data Capture.** This is almost a no-brainer. Facebook does it better than almost any player in the social media world right now, and if your brand leverages the tools available in the cloud properly, you can do the same. Here's how it works: First, ask for data at login/registration, or collect it via RFID. That data gets automatically fed into your cloud-based data software, which looks for patterns, positive and negative impressions, and anything else you tell it to look for in order to determine which consumers are valuable leads. The data is accessible to every-

one in your organization who needs it, and is encrypted for the security of the consumers and the brands. Remember folks, the goal is to be fluid and fast moving and if you plan to do that, the power of infinite computing is pretty useful.

4 **Reporting and ROI.** Straight down the line from data collection is ROI. The data collection software looks for and automatically delivers the pre-programmed metrics that the marketer is looking to use for reporting purposes. Meanwhile, it will also automatically deliver relevant reports to all the people who want or need to know what's going on. Procurement gets the expense reports, the lawyers get negative responses from the surveys, event managers get reports that take consumer feedback on the activations and compare it to staff end-of-day reports and, if desired, combines those data points to recommend changes in activities or policies. Now we get to the trigger moment, because when it comes to ROI, working in the cloud can give your brand a real competitive advantage by giving marketers instant data. The cloud allows brand activations to be ever-new and fresh, constantly adapting to the changing needs of your brand and consumers. Working in the cloud can close the gap between asset availability and the hunger of target markets for full immersion in brand experiences. **EM**
–Kenneth Briodagh