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This Month: Pinterest

SOCIAL MEDIA TIP OF THE MONTH

In this monthly 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 one of the hottest new platforms in social media: Pinterest. Pinterest is an online bulletin board that allows users to organize and share their favorite things from all over the web. Most users have been making Pinterest a place to share and curate content like project tips and images. They browse other users' "pinboards" to discover new bits of content and get inspiration from other users who have the same interests. Recently, brands are getting more and more active on the site, posting new products, tips for using them and fun ways to get involved with brand activations. The user demographics are very attractive; more than half of all users are 25 to 44 years old, 80 percent are women and half make between \$50,000 and \$99,000 in annual income. Most tellingly, the average user spends more than an hour at a time on the site, as compared with 36 minutes on Twitter and about 45 minutes on Facebook. For South by Southwest this March, Pinterest was all abuzz about bands, films and activations, and CBS Interactive's technology experts at CNET were among the best, pinning live from the streets of Austin. CNET has 900 followers for its main page (that's a lot for a new platform) and more than 1,200 on its SXSW-specific pinboard. EM sat down with Nathan Bransford, social media manager for CNET, to pick his brain about how to bring the rising tide of Pinterest to bear on your next event.

1 Go live. Even though most users and brands see the platform as a static repository of interesting content, CNET's SXSW board demonstrated it actually can be a great way to keep tabs on a live event, too. CNET used its SXSW board as a way to share some of the great content it was producing in Austin and also to promote the CNET party. What ultimately makes a successful news or event post is the same criteria as any other suc-

cessful pin: it needs to be highly visual and high concept enough to attract enough interest that it will earn the "repin," which is what it's called when a user sees a post and re-posts it to her own pinboard. For example, CNET got its highest number of repins from a story posted on its pinboard about protecting people from WiFi honeypots, which impersonate real networks to steal information, a major concern in Austin that week.



2 Timing isn't everything. With some social media platforms, a smart brand starts building excitement well before an event, but Bransford says that Pinterest is too user-driven for that. CNET let the content drive the timing and began the pinboard by simply posting a link to its SXSW party. The key, once again, is having content that people might find interesting and letting that guide your brand's posting rather than trying to force the pinners to follow your schedule.

3 Content. Again. I hope you folks are catching this. Content matters, and Pinterest is no exception. CNET has a great following on Pinterest and the reason is because it's all about the content. CNET produces very Pinterest-friendly material, especially product reviews and how-tos that people like to repin. It's also important to have a human touch with Pinterest sharing, and CNET's how-to maven Sharon Vaknin does most of the brand's curation and helps give the boards flavor and personality by building thematically linked boards about hot-button items like technology industry rumors and soon-to-be released gadgets.

4 Experiment. Traditional social media strategies like contests and new product promos are coming into play on Pinterest, much like they do on Facebook and Twitter, and Bransford says the experimentation is healthy, and still in its infancy. It's far too early to draw conclusions about what works and what doesn't, but that's what makes it an exciting platform for brands to get in on. So don't stop trying things. The ways people use Pinterest will continue to evolve and brands should be looking forward to trying out new things.

5 Have Fun. The secret sauce for being a successful early adopter is the same as with any new approach—have fun with it. If you love what you're pinning and are excited about what you're doing, chances are the people who are following you will enjoy it as well. "It's a blast to be on Pinterest," Bransford says, "And we always try to share things that are fun and useful." So should you. **EM** —*Kenneth Briodagh*



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