

## Be the Master of Your Own Event

There are many benefits to holding your own conference or networking event, but it can be somewhat intimidating if it is your first. There are plenty of resources and guidance to help you through the process of putting together your first event so that it runs smooth and successful.

Organizing your own conference or networking event is great for marketing purposes. You get to share your expertise while making revenue, and you position yourself as an industry expert. Go to [www.MSlocalpartner.com](http://www.MSlocalpartner.com) and look for the Microsoft Local Engagement Team to help you get started. If you would like to organize an event, they can help you get in touch with your local Chamber of Commerce, a special industry group, or other local community organizations. You get to plan the specifics such as the agenda and attendees, and Microsoft provides you with the tools to help you execute it, allowing you to focus on the more important details.

Event materials can be accessed on a variety of topics from various how-to guides to promoting your event. Microsoft can also provide a technology van, just another tool to help you put on a successful marketing event. You also might like to hire a photographer as well as having the event video-taped. Post pictures and video to your website or blog as well on new media websites such as Facebook and Flickr. This gives people who have attended the event an opportunity to look back at highlights and give others an opportunity to see the event if they couldn't make it. It can even help generate interest for people who are thinking about attending next year. This footage can come in handy in many ways when promoting next year's event.

Whether you are attending an event or hosting one of your own, reach out and inform your network through the use of new media. Update your Facebook status, tweet to your followers, or use LinkedIn to send your connections an E-mail. Write a blog post about the upcoming event or address it briefly on the main page of your website. You can use all of these websites after the event as well to post clips and highlights so people can continue to see what occurred.

Reaching out to your network gives them the opportunity to approach you during the event and more importantly, makes them feel valued that you want to see them there. Use your blogs, E-mail lists, and social media pages to make sure attendees are getting important updates about the event such as new speakers being added to the list. Include links so that people can register ahead of time and see who else is attending. Use Twitter to tweet an important fact about the event each day until it happens. You also create hype by continuing to tweet updates throughout the event such as how many people are at the event and inspirational quotes given by speakers. If you have hosted an event a previous year, use video highlights of last years event on your website. Send attendees an E-mail showcasing some of the speakers or seminars that are going to be available.

You only have a short amount of time to capture a person's interest and convince them that they should attend your event, so you need to be sure you are being informative and creative. Using new media tools allows attendees to stay connected with everything going on leading up to the day of the event. They will feel well prepared, know what to expect, and create excitement about attending. Maybe you are hosting a keynote speaker that they have seen at other events or you are hosting a seminar that holds a level of importance to them. The more

people see what events will take place and who may be attending, the more likely they are to attend themselves.

Take a moment to get in touch with the community and check out what local businesses have to offer. It is always a good idea to work with local business because they can often provide things to help with the success of your event. Many places will donate items such as food or decorations for your event in exchange for publicity. The signage and visibility to the attendees at your event is what brings them business and could lead to new partnerships at future events. Be sure to offer attendees a map of the venue as well as directions, parking, places to eat, hotels, etc. Not everyone will be from the area, and you want to be sure that their travel is made easy and that they will enjoy the afternoon.

If you are hosting your own event, be sure to have pamphlets or some type of welcome kits available. Bags are always a good choice because they can use them throughout the day to collect goodies and will most likely use them after the event where other people will see them. When people arrive, they are going to want background information as to who you are, as well as other speakers and seminars that will be taking place throughout the day. Make sure you have staff to welcome attendees, help with directions, and answer any questions they might have. Make sure attendees are immediately directed to the check-in table where they can collect their name tags and welcome kits. It is also a good idea to give a quick speech at the beginning, give thanks to those attending, mention some highlights of the day you think people will enjoy, and make a quick note of some of the featured speakers. This will let people know that the event has officially begun.

Hosting your own event or attending one brings great exposure to you and your business. Capitalize on it even more by using resources to set it up efficiently as well as bringing awareness to the event itself through new media tools.