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# How to Create a Proactive Event Communication Plan



Ongoing strategic communication is at the heart of launching and scaling successful events. The pressure to connect with your audience means the stakes are high, and thanks to social media and mobile phones, news about your event can spread like wildfire. That can either be a good thing — or a public relations nightmare.

You should be leading the narrative that's spreading on social media, not trying to do damage control after the fact.

If you don't want to be stuck playing catch up, you need to create a proactive event communication plan that seeks to build rapport with attendees, prepares you for unexpected circumstances, and provides a world-class attendee experience.

# Building your communication strategy

As a team, gain alignment on how you intend to speak to your attendees. What brand voice do you want to use? Do you want to talk often and in small soundbites? Is your event brand transparent and friendly? Or edgy and cool?

**To help you build your voice, ask yourself these 3 questions:**

**Who are you talking to?** Depending on your specific audience, you may want to dial your formality up or down. You may even want to slightly adjust your vocabulary.

**How are they feeling?** Say someone wants to buy tickets to your event onsite, but you've already sold out. Your message that breaks the news probably isn't the best place to use humour. Instead, use a tone that's supportive, helpful, and clear.

**Are you adding value?** Readers will click to read because they expect to get something in return for their time. Whether you're telling someone she won VIP tickets or announcing the event is canceled, your priority should be sharing helpful information.



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**Creating your content plan**

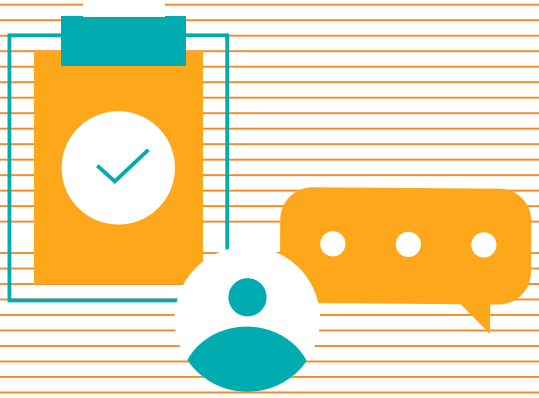
Similar to event promotion, you need a game plan for your proactive event communication. Your best bet is to create a content calendar. Visually map out how and what you want to communicate, and when you'll do so. Use this **event promotion template** and tailor it to your communication needs so you can easily put your strategy into action.

# Elements of a good proactive communications plan

- **Audience**: Identify who you're trying to reach with your news. Who do you want at your festival? Who are your potential partners or sponsors? What channels are they most likely consuming their content through?

- **Story**: What's the story you're trying to tell? What's your dream headline (or dare we say it, your nightmare headline)? How can you make your narrative compelling and attractive? And based on your target audience, where would be the best place to reach them?

- **Over-communicate**: Everyone is overwhelmed with too much information. Even if you put a lot of information on your website, attendees are still going to miss it. It's important to communicate early and communicate often, even if it might feel redundant. Train onsite staff on key messages, set an autoreply on your email with frequently asked questions and do your best to be as responsive as possible.



# Use technology to effectively communicate with attendees

As you think about your communication plan, work with your service partner to build an event app. Even a basic event app can help you communicate with your attendees in real time, like sending them alerts about changes to the event schedule, or long wait-times.

In the event of a disaster or emergency, event apps can help you distribute news quickly to your attendees, making sure they have the most important information at all times.

Some festivals have taken apps one step further, using AI (artificial intelligence) to boost communications. Learn more on how AI and the impact it is having on the events industry.



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**The benefits of using an app**

Let attendees mark their favourite activities to create a personal schedule for their day. Once they've indicated this information, you can serve them personalised notifications when a food vendor they were interested in is almost sold out. You can also monitor this data to see which elements of the event people were most excited about.

# Prepare for crisis management

Natural disasters, security concerns, horrific bathroom situations, excessive lines. Your event's reputation is built on the quality of the experience you deliver. If the experience you offer differs significantly from the vision you sold — preventably or otherwise — you'd better be prepared for crisis management.

- **Identify potential issues:** Poor ticket sales, performer or vendor drop-outs, weather, and traffic/transportation issues might all be on your list. Identify your biggest potential risks by looking at past events and drawing on the experiences of you and your team.

- **Work ahead:** Create canned email and social media messages in advance so you're not starting with a blank page. Simply tailor the message to the specific situation, and hit send faster.

- **Think about delivery:** Decide who should address the issue. Does the CEO need to make a statement? Someone from the public relations team? When? What channels should you use?

- **Draft your responses:** Have a process in mind for responding to attendees' posts on social media. You'll likely get lots of questions and comments, so be prepared on how you want to answer and address them consistently.

- **Plan to communicate early and often:** Silence is deafening and often the gap you leave by saying nothing will be filled by speculation, ridiculous rumors and attendee dissatisfaction. Even if you don't have all the answers, reassure people that you hear them, you're working on it, and always stay true to your promises. In short, do what you say you were going to do.

Keep your responses anchored in reality. Address the issue in front of you, and be prepared to scale up your response if need be. However, 100 upset tweets can very quickly turn into 1,000 if the issue reaches a tipping point, so ignoring concerns is not an option. **If you can't respond individually, address the main concerns with a statement or post that answers the majority of complaints.**

State the objective facts, but be human about it. Your attendees care, they spent money on your event, and they deserve to be treated with fairness and respect, so don't hide behind corporate or legal jargon. Whether you're delivering good news or bad news, take a cue from Boston Calling, who uses social media to provide helpful advice and talk directly to attendees.



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### Communication = Customer Services

Step up your customer service by sending out a communication right before the event. If it looks like it's going to rain, suggest attendees wear rainboots. Sunny skies all day? Remind them to bring sunscreen. Send out a venue map to get them excited about the entertainment and food.

Whether your event goes off without a hitch or your highest profile sponsor backs out at the last minute, you need to be prepared to communicate eloquently and effectively with your attendees. Build a communication strategy that pinpoints how and when you'll communicate before, during, and after your event. And don't be anxious about unforeseen circumstances — plan for them (whatever they might be) and you'll be in good shape.



## Get started

A smart communication plan can be an effective way to engage attendees before, during, and after your event. Learn how Eventbrite can help you supply attendees with the most up-to-date information about your event. Contact us here or give us a call us at 0800 652 4993.

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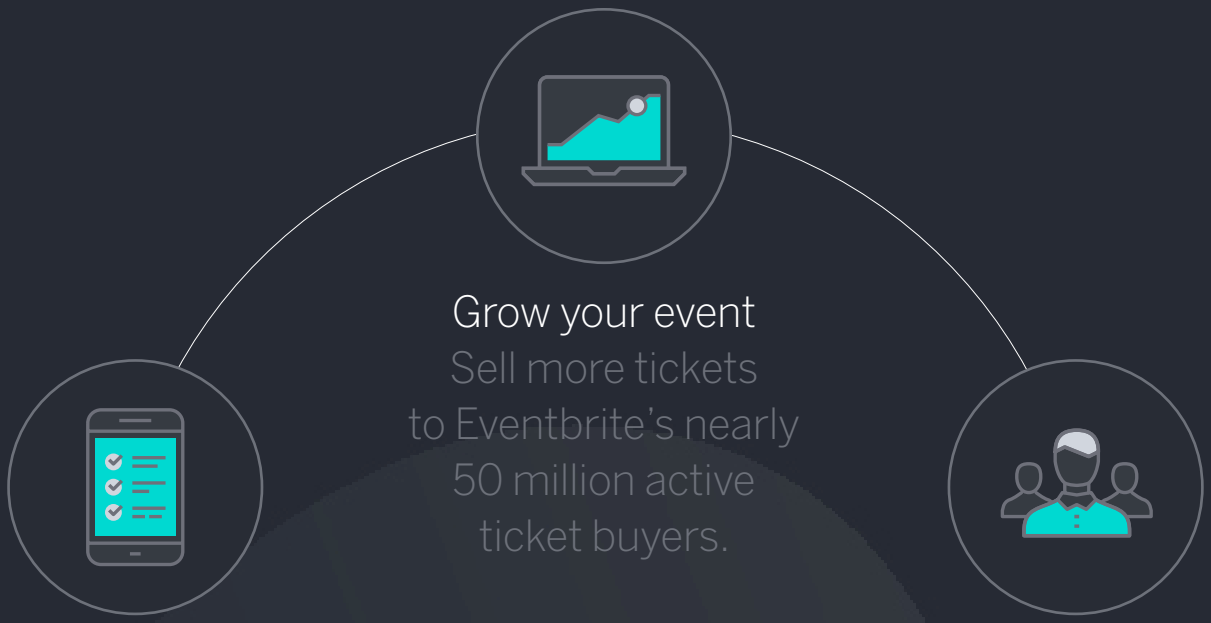

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