

A hand holding a name tag with the text "A GUIDE TO EVENT BRANDING" against a colorful, abstract background. The background features a hand holding a name tag with the text "A GUIDE TO EVENT BRANDING". The background is a vibrant, abstract composition of colors including red, orange, yellow, green, and blue, with a hand holding a name tag in the center. The name tag is white with a blue border and contains the text "A GUIDE TO EVENT BRANDING" in bold, blue, sans-serif font. The hand is positioned at the top, holding the name tag by its silver ring. The overall image has a high-quality, artistic feel with soft lighting and a focus on the hand and the name tag.

A GUIDE TO EVENT BRANDING

Turn Conferences and Meetings into Can't-Miss Happenings

WHAT'S AN EVENT BRAND?

An event brand is not unlike a product brand itself—it's more than just a name or slogan. An event brand is the **promise of an experience**—an experience that you fulfill with attendees. The most important thing an organization sponsoring an event can do is to demonstrate its ongoing value to its attendees. If you're not proving to attendees that you're valuable to their future, there are many other organizations and resources who are ready to take your place.



So how do you create ongoing loyalty and have attendees look forward to participating in your events and coming back year after year? It's not by changing what you do—it's changing the way you think. Stop looking at your event as simply a gathering of people with some common interests and start thinking of it as an actual brand.

How do you make your event a “must attend” — other than by investing more dollars on marketing? In the competitive landscape of events, branding remains one of the best ways to stand out from the crowd.


We developed a roadmap to help guide the process of creating and implementing an event-branding strategy. We call it **Event BrandBuilder™**.

To show you how this process works, let's think outside the world of events and imagine building a brand.

- 1 RESEARCH & DISCOVERY
- 2 BRAND PROMISE
- 3 MESSAGE PLATFORM
- 4 IDENTITY, LOOK & FEEL
- 5 MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS PLAN
- 6 LAUNCH & IMPLEMENT
- 7 BRAND STEWARDSHIP

A man in a dark suit and glasses is seen from the back, interacting with a futuristic, glowing blue interface. The interface consists of several rectangular panels and lines, some of which are highlighted in a bright blue. The background is dark and out of focus, with some blurred lights. The overall atmosphere is high-tech and futuristic.

START THINKING OF *your event*
AS AN ACTUAL
brand



1 RESEARCH & DISCOVERY

It's important to thoroughly understand the underlying significance of an event, the organization sponsoring the event, the industry, as well as attendees and their unique personas. Modes of discovery include stakeholder interviews, external surveys and focus groups, attendee interviews, competitor brand benchmarking, communication audits, and possibly ethnographic research.

In this process, you need to establish several foundations of understanding. These include:

- Your event differentiators—the same things you would identify when developing a brand strategy
- The most desirable features and attributes of your event
- The logical benefits—which can be identified by completing this statement:

When attendees come to our event, the benefit they receive is _____.

These logical benefits also have an effect on attendees' emotions. They will be mentally empowered to want this benefit.

Overall, this discovery process is about developing empathy for what your attendees do, say, think, and feel.

Clearly, one of your main objectives is to increase attendance at your event. In this phase, you want to talk to a range of actual attendees of current or past events. You want to directly observe what they do, understand how they think, and know what they want—ask things like 'what motivates or discourages you to explore more at our event?' or 'where do you experience frustration or confusion at the event?' The goal is to gather enough observations to allow you to really see the event through your attendees' eyes.

At the end of this discovery process, you're ready to boil down and synthesize what you've learned. Hopefully, you have enough insights to identify what attendees want most out of your event, the most desirable attributes of your event, several opportunities to make the event more attractive and engaging, and more.



What Attendees
Want

Brand Promise

What You
Offer

2 BRAND PROMISE A strong, consistent event brand has the power to **transform an ordinary event into an unforgettable experience** that attendees will always remember. Every good event brand strategy has a brand promise.

This is the single most important benefit that needs to be conveyed above all others. Distilling your event brand into a few words or a single phrase can be challenging. However, based on your synthesis of research and discovery from Step 1, you'll have a more focused understanding of what makes your event unique—and can further simplify and distill this into a brand promise. This is essentially the overlap of what the marketplace wants (your prospective attendees) and what your event offers.

This simple exercise can help guide you to the aspirational words and phrases that attendees can articulate to friends and colleagues. Ultimately, it should result in the empowered benefit that attendees receive and how this promise makes them feel.

3 MESSAGE PLATFORM To build on the brand promise, a messaging platform or playbook can provide high-level key words and/or phrases that reflect the most important aspects of your event brand. These include special characteristics of your event, unique qualities/differentiators, the values represented by the event, and the ultimate benefits it delivers to attendees, sponsors, and/or exhibitors. **While the messaging platform reveals concepts and ideas that best describe the event brand, it should also be treated as a practical messaging tool that for any of your communications channels and executions.** You should feel comfortable incorporating these words into your landing page, collateral pieces, email, social media, and other marketing tools for your event.

4 IDENTITY, LOOK & FEEL Much of event branding depends on well how the brand is defined and whether or not attendees fully trust the brand. You can establish greater trust in your event among prospective attendees by solidifying your brand with imagery and an identity which convey that you truly understand who they are and what they're looking for.

To build brand continuity, longevity, and recognition, create an evergreen identity for your event (or a sub-brand under your organization) rather than a new conference logo/identity every year.

- Yearly themes can vary from the venue location to more prosaic, industry-specific topics—there is no right or wrong approach.
- Create a micro site for the event rather than a page on the parent website.
- Make sure your identity execution is consistent throughout the event experience, all the way down to signage and exhibit design, program, email templates, nametags, and more.

Making Your Event Brand Come to Life

In this step, you pull it all together by creating a look and feel that supports your brand. Elements include a color palette, typography, copy tone and style, illustration/photography style, and more. While you have a fair amount of latitude to explore various creative options, **be sure to let your brand promise, messaging, identity, and discovery insights inform your decisions.**



TRANSFORM AN ORDINARY EVENT
INTO AN unforgettable
experience

5 MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Now that your new event brand is in

place, how do you let the world know? It's time to develop a plan that outlines both internal and external marketing communications tactics.

Your plan should consist of **both outbound and inbound marketing tactics** and combine traditional and digital media components. Below presents the universe of event marketing tactics with the event website as its cornerstone.

Event Marketing Tactics

Twitter, Facebook,
Instagram, LinkedIn

SOCIAL MEDIA EMAIL SIGNATURE

SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING EMAIL MARKETING

BANNER ADS

RETARGETING BANNER ADS

EVENT WEBSITE

YOUR EVENT

PRINT ADVERTISING DIRECT MAIL

PUBLIC RELATIONS

EVENT BUILDOUT

Exhibitor Space, Exhibitor Structures,
Name Tags, Programs

CONTENT MARKETING White Papers, Blogs, Video

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

6 LAUNCH & IMPLEMENT

This step is about **creating buzz externally** to promote the new event and draw attendees.

Once decisions are made on the marketing plan based on budget considerations and available resources, move quickly to get the event website launched with the new branding. From there, start with the basics such as getting save-the-date postcards and emails sent to your database, and make sure all internal folks have event-branded signatures on their emails. Next, implement as many inbound marketing tactics as possible, including blog posts with testimonials from prior attendees, video posts of speakers, and any whitepaper on current topics relevant to the event. We also recommend setting up a search engine marketing campaign with a retargeting banner ad component. Get your team fully engaged in the social media components as well.

We also believe traditional media components can reach certain audiences that inbound tactics cannot. A few well-placed print ads in the right publications and a few banner ads in the right online properties will attract new prospective attendees.

7 BRAND STEWARDSHIP

This last step is about ensuring your event brand is built for **consistency and longevity**,

and that your branding tools and assets are used to support your communications most effectively. A brand standards guide should include messaging parameters (such as your brand signature/tagline and messaging platform) as well as approved usage for visual elements (brand identity, color palette, typography system, and photo/imagery guidelines) and templated materials (signage, stationery, emails, PowerPoint presentations, etc.).

The guide can be printed or incorporated into a brand intranet so that your staff, marketing partners, and/or vendors can reference it to ensure that all aspects of your event communications are consistently produced in accordance to your brand.

That's the event branding process in broad steps. Throughout this journey, **it's important to build consensus** and make sure that everyone who has a stake in the success of your event has their voice heard and is on board with the new brand.

A photograph of three business professionals in a meeting. On the left, a woman with long red hair and glasses, wearing a purple sleeveless top, holds a tablet. In the center, a woman with blonde hair in a dark blazer looks at a clipboard. On the right, a man with glasses in a dark suit and tie also looks at the clipboard. The background is a warm, abstract watercolor wash of orange, red, and yellow. The bottom of the image features a blue and white abstract graphic.

create buzz EXTERNALLY TO
promote THE NEW EVENT
+ DRAW ATTENDEES



DON'T TAKE THE EASY WAY OUT

There is a school of thought which suggests that few events really need to define what they're about, what they stand for, and what makes them unique. The thinking is that people usually make up their own mind when it comes to events and that trying to impose branding on them is a waste of time. However, without a strong brand presentation, you run the risk of people being unclear on whether or not they are the right audience for your event or what benefits they'll receive by attending.

By intentionally creating an event brand image and strategy through the Event BrandBuilder process, you'll have the tools you need to not only capture the attention of prospective attendees, but to give them reason to return year after year. Make no mistake—it takes time and effort to build your event brand. But you'll experience far less hardship than what you'll have to answer for otherwise, such as low attendee turnout and interest, an unclear event purpose, un-engaging presentations, and other negative outcomes.

CREATING AN EVENT BRAND THAT CREATES EXCITEMENT

TDC has experience in helping organizations expertly identify and express the purpose, personality, and uniqueness of their events and special occasions. From your brand promise and messaging to your look and feel and ongoing brand stewardship, TDC can build a brand platform that will help position your organization as a thought leader and your event as a must-attend occasion for your industry.



AMERICAN TELEMEDICINE ASSOCIATION

The American Telemedicine Association is a non-profit organization focused on promoting access to medical care for consumers and health care professionals through telecommunications technology. We partnered with ATA to create a new sub-brand for its annual conference and tradeshow to help it stand out among other telehealth industry events and attract more attendance. We recommended that the new conference branding be expressed as an evergreen identity that would not only apply to the 2018 event, but to all future conferences. Our work included a new name, logo, theme line (“Educate. Connect. Discover.”), and look and feel that was applied to wide range of marketing and communication materials, including direct mail, a exhibitor prospectus, emails, banner ads, signage, and a new website—the home base for the redesigned conference brand.

[view case study](#)



A Woman's Journey[®]

JOHNS HOPKINS MEDICINE

Johns Hopkins Medicine (JHM) hosts *A Woman's Journey*, a highly acclaimed women's health conference. Over 10 years ago, the Channel team partnered with JHM to reenergize the event brand. We refined the event brand identity, developed a theme ("One day that could change your life"), and established a new creative approach that centered on a dramatic illustration of a woman's face. Every year we design and produce all of the event's marketing materials, including an invitation package that is the cornerstone promotional piece for the event, as well as a save-the-date postcard, emails, banner ads, website graphics, signage and more. Our work has helped expand the appeal and popularity of the conference—since we incorporated our creative approach to *A Woman's Journey*, the event has expanded from its Baltimore origins to numerous locations in Florida.

[view case study](#)



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF RADIOLOGY

The American College of Radiology (ACR) is a non-profit organization that was founded to advance the interests of radiologists and medical imaging professionals across the country. It enlisted TDC to develop an event brand identity for its inaugural annual meeting. We conducted stakeholder interviews and competitive benchmarking research of other industry associations as part of our discovery process. We saw a significant opportunity for ACR to establish an event brand strategy that was more impactful than those of competitive events. To capitalize on this, we created 1) a distinctive conference logo; 2) an annual conference tagline (The Crossroads of Radiology) that encapsulated the importance of the meeting; 3) a series of print ads and other marketing tactics to spur interest and encourage registration; and 4) assorted support materials such as a conference promotional brochure, exhibit structures, signage, and more.

[view case study](#)



Educating Leaders

THE AACOM ANNUAL CONFERENCE
WASHINGTON, DC



AACOM

American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) is an organization dedicated to providing a unified voice and wide range of support for osteopathic medical schools, faculty, and students around the U.S. It engaged TDC to develop an evergreen sub-brand identity, and look and feel, for its annual conference, which was plagued by continually changing presentations in previous years. We created a distinctive event logo as well as a fresh, inviting look and feel that was applied to numerous conference materials, including a save-the-date postcard, email templates, website site graphics, registration forms, sales prospectus, program guide, name badges, and more. Our work in this area has also become a springboard for additional assignments from AACOM to support other aspects of the association, including student recruitment for osteopathic medical schools, and a major redesign of their conference exhibit booth.

[view case study](#)



A branding and integrated marketing communications expert

The Design Channel has extensive experience in creating impactful branding solutions for events, products, and services from organizations and enterprises representing a wide range of industries. Visit thedesignchannel.com to learn more about our work, services, and team.



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