

## e-Newsletters: Smart Meeting Communications?

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Corporate Meetings & Incentives, Feb 1, 2005

**THE BEAUTY OF A LIVE EVENT** is in the interactions among the attendees, speakers, exhibitors, and even sponsors. The planner's challenge is to capture that spirit and keep it alive across a longer timeline. While conference CD-ROMs and official Web sites have proven to be great tools to communicate what happened at the event, savvy event marketers need to find new ways to connect the dots across the calendar.

One promising idea is in custom e-newsletters, such as those recently introduced by iMakeNews Inc., also known as IMN, in Newton, Mass. Its "smart" electronic newsletter is essentially a content-bearing Web site that is connected to a complex database of attendees, potential attendees, or others interested in a meeting. What's especially useful is that content can be segmented by area of interest, so planners can send specific articles to specific segments of their audience.

On the reporting side, the system tracks not only who read the newsletter, but which articles were of most interest, and how much time the reader spent with the content.

Using the newsletter format, planners can send updates on the hotel or destination, news about workshops and meeting tracks, and registration links. Speakers could be introduced in advance by sending a bio or an article by the speaker to those attendees who have signed up for a certain session. Survey questions can be integrated, and attendees' responses could be reported back to speakers to help them better prepare their presentations.

To defray the costs, newsletters can be designed to include banner advertisements. Sponsors can be sent a report on the depth of interaction that readers had with their Web site, because the system tracks when readers click through.

The beauty of this tool is that the reach of a meeting can be extended to pre- and post-meeting interactions. Suddenly, all that hard work extends beyond the magic moment of the live event. A meeting community can be kept alive and interacting over the entire course of the year.

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