

BEST PRACTICES: SPONSORING AN ADVISOR CONFERENCE

DISTRIBUTION
ACTIVITY



Marketing can be expensive and sometimes it is difficult to see the direct benefits, especially if there are upfront costs involved. Northern Lights Distributors, LLC (NLD), understands the potential constraints within a marketing budget and aims to assist you in getting the most from your marketing dollars. There are many marketing options to consider, spanning content creation, public relations, conference participation and sales representative support. These are all key contributors to driving Distribution Activity. NLD advocates participating in industry conferences to maximize your Distribution Activity. Sponsoring a financial conference event is a distinctive opportunity to share your story, highlight your Competitive Edge and meet peers and potential prospects to raise your firm's profile and brand recognition.

While conference sponsorships can generate potential opportunities, they can also be a costly endeavor. Attendance and travel fees, entertainment expenses and booth material can all add up quickly. Therefore, it's important to properly plan for conferences to ensure you have a meaningful and worthwhile experience.

READY OR NOT?

NLD believes there are items to consider before deciding to make an investment in sponsoring a conference. The investment field has a plethora of local, regional and national conferences that provide educational forums for investment managers and clients. Thoroughly research event engagements that speak to your target audience. This will help eliminate conferences that may not be a good investment of time and budget. Additionally, consider speaking with trusted peers and partners for more details or best practice suggestions.



SPONSORSHIP CONSIDERATIONS:

WHAT SPEAKING OPPORTUNITIES ARE OFFERED FOR SPONSORS?

Speaking opportunities are coveted sessions. They allow investment managers to highlight their expertise and provide credibility in front of potential prospects as well as industry peers. Additionally, speaking engagements offer brand awareness and endorsement for your firm and strategy. Most conferences seek speakers who deliver topics that are relevant and impactful to both investment advisors and their clients. If you are interested in delivering a value add presentation, consider acquiring Continuing Education (CE) credit for your session, as CE is a draw for conference attendee participation.

Speaking opportunities may be offered at a higher sponsorship level, so ensure you select the conferences where it makes sense for you to pay such a premium. Should you decide to invest in a speaking sponsorship, maximize this opportunity by driving attendance to your session. Handing out print pieces or paying for push notification on the conference mobile app is another way to inform your audience of your speaking engagement.

WHAT OTHER OPPORTUNITIES COULD BE LEVERAGED DURING OR AROUND THE EVENT?

Further maximize your time by sponsoring or co-sponsoring a dine-around. Dine-arounds allow you to plan and select the client/prospect invitation list. This dine-around can include individuals in the area, as long as the dine-around location is not at the conference venue or competing with conference events. For example, if the conference is in Chicago, you could consider selecting a nearby Chicago restaurant or venue to host a dine-around opportunity.

You should also take advantage of city visits to schedule other meetings before or after an event. Ask yourself, who might you know in the area that could be worthwhile to visit: prospects, current clients, industry partners, etc.? Remember, you don't want to schedule meetings at the same time as the conference.

WHAT OTHER OPPORTUNITIES ARE OFFERED WITH THE SPONSORSHIP AGREEMENT?

Research additional brand awareness opportunities. Events can include, but are not limited to cocktail hour, lunch or dinner, and Wi-Fi for the event. At times, these can be coupled with push notifications for a conference app, or speaking and panel opportunities. Additionally, many conferences provide an attendee list before and after the event. This list is key in preparing for a successful event and follow up.

HOW MANY CONFERENCES SHOULD BE SPONSORED EACH YEAR?

Conferences vary in size, audience and venue, and are subject to the investment manager's target audience and marketing budget. If you have a limited marketing budget, you may want to consider one or two events per year. This will help you provide maximum exposure in a single location and will broaden your sponsorship selections. If your budget allows, consider more local targeted events. It is important to remember, it isn't the number of events you attend each year, but rather the amount of engagement you commit within each event.

WHAT LEVELS OF SPONSORSHIP ARE AVAILABLE?

There are many levels of conference sponsorship, ranging from basic meeting attendance and others that present to a more robust sponsor offering. When researching which events to attend, determine exactly what benefits you will receive for sponsoring a conference. While some events may only provide you a booth, others may provide follow-up engagement opportunities like webinars throughout the year or featuring your white papers on the firm's website. Your Strategic Relationship Manager will help determine what type of conference and level of sponsorship would best suit your sales and marketing efforts.

HOW DO I BEST PRESENT MY COMPANY AT A CONFERENCE?

Creating a memorable brand begins with your distinct Competitive Edge. The defining characteristic may be an individual or multiple combination of culture, process and execution. It should magnify your organization's Competitive Edge as a differentiator amongst its peers. Consistency is key. Your booth should clearly represent your brand. Work to design an impressive backdrop, pull banners, tablecloths, etc. If you are sponsoring a booth at a conference, obtain booth specifics, such as dimensions, table size for a tablecloth and what type of setup you are allowed to bring (floor or tabletop). Additionally, consider investing in branded trinkets to give away. This could be pens, hand sanitizers, mints, etc. Keep in mind, you are competing with all other booths at the conference. How will you make your booth stand out?

[Learn more about how to uncover your Competitive Edge here.](#)

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR A CONFERENCE?

Planning is crucial for amplifying your conference experience. There are several items you can address to maximize your resources before, during and after the event:

- What are your goals and expectations for the event?
- Are you leveraging your brand and getting the maximum exposure?
- Did you send trinkets and promotional materials?
- Have you sent an email to the attendee list informing them about your sponsorship or additional activities?

NLD has prepared a Conference Checklist, complete with items that you can accomplish before, during and after a conference to gain the best possible return for your investment.

[Check out our "Best Practices: Sponsoring an Advisor Conference Check List"](#)

WHO SHOULD I SEND TO A CONFERENCE?

Brand awareness is not only built through brand materials, but is projected by the individuals representing your organization at the event. Select a representative who will serve as your brand ambassador. Consider individuals who are outgoing, friendly and are comfortable networking. It is not in your best interest to send individuals who will not participate, and thrive in a conference environment. This can be potentially detrimental to your firm's reputation. Your representative should exemplify the firm's core beliefs and can be able to articulate your story to potential investors. He or she should have a clear goal and understand the importance of his or her role in relation to representing the brand.

NEXT STEPS



DISCOVER - Utilize your network to uncover the best conference opportunities that meet your firm goals and needs.



PLAN - Determine the number of conferences you will participate in and what level of sponsorship best suits your firm's marketing strategy.



PREPARE - Review your conference checklist to help select what will be needed to maximize brand presence and overall conference opportunity success.



ACT - During the conference, amplify your brand, be present, engaged and focused on your goals. This will only further your sales opportunities.



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