



Case Study

Efficient Marketing Promotes New Energy Audit Program

If you want to persuade people to make a change, you have to be prepared to practice what you preach. That is why the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy specified Eventege™ components to provide exhibits for *Beyond Home Energy Audits with Energy Star*.

More than 50 representatives from across the utility industry gathered on Long Island, N.Y., last September to learn about the whole-house approach to improving energy efficiency and comfort. The workshop also introduced attendees to a “greener” way to exhibit at conferences and conventions.

Instead of space-intensive tabletop exhibits, sponsors received Eventege™ patented “billboard” displays of fabric graphics on collapsible aluminum frames. The displays served as backdrops for presentations, as meeting room decor and as signposts to guide attendees from one session to the next.

Such compact displays left no room for the reams of handouts exhibitors usually bring to conventions—and exhibitors didn’t need them. Sponsors—public and private organizations committed to energy efficiency—posted promotional brochures and conference presentations on the event Web site, and on 50 Mb thumb drives attached to each name badge lanyard. Unlike heavy hard copies, the tiny drives were easy to carry back to offices and computers where attendees could review the wealth of information at their leisure.

Freed from manning the “information flea market” of a conventional exhibit, sponsors made presentations, networked with potential clients and fully participated in *Beyond Home Energy Audits*. “This was a perfect example of using energy-efficient marketing strategies to market energy efficiency” says Jeff Baker, President of Image 4.

Sustainable Practices, Smart Business

That is Image 4’s vision for professional conferences in the 21st century. “We live in a global marketplace where people do business with companies around the world from home or a coffee shop,” Says Baker, a veteran industry leader. “Does it make sense to continue conducting networking events the old-fashioned way—by getting a bunch of bodies together in big hall with no focused input?”

In particular, groups promoting sustainable business practices need to find less time- and energy-intensive methods for getting their message in front of people, Baker points out.

"These are relatively new ideas, and the target audience needs to see the strategies in action to understand why this is a better way to do business," he explains.

And the green conference is better, in a number of ways: Imagine replacing one giant convention with several smaller events on different dates in different cities. Instead of spending the marketing budget in one place, exhibitors cover several events—or all of them—with representatives from the nearest branch offices. Each representative brings along a light, inexpensive set of fabric graphics to mount to the supplied display, and electronic copies of promotional material and presentations.

Attendees receive all the materials in electronic format that they need to attend any of the events, or to participate remotely. Those who would not have been able to go to the single conference choose one of the local events or attend online. Sponsors save a huge portion of their trade show budgets and make the most of their outreach efforts. Attendees save time and money on travel. Costs for printing, shipping, travel and labor are avoided, as are the attendant environmental costs. Now, that is sustainable.

"Green" Future is Now

The sustainable conference may sound like a distant dream, but all the pieces exist right now to make your next event greener, says Baker. "We just have to change the way we think."

Companies can invest in multiple skins imprinted with bold, graphic messages targeting different audiences. When company field offices have their own frames, the appropriate graphic can be mailed to the event location

Integrated into this concept of light-weight low-impact displays is the iShuttle, a hand-held notebook conference organizers can load with programming. Like the thumb drive at the Long Island workshop, the iShuttle is an alternative to distributing promotional handouts. "Let's be honest," Baker says. "Most of that material ends up in the dumpster. Attendees don't want to carry suitcases loaded down with marketing pieces, and exhibitors definitely are not going to pay to ship a lot of paper back to the home office. Brochures at trade shows represent a huge waste of money and resources."

Armed with genuinely portable copies of the meeting agenda and speaker presentations, attendees are freer. "They can choose to attend the event in person, access sessions streaming online or view recordings of the presentation posted on the Internet afterward," "Attendance will no longer be an 'either/or' choice, so virtual conferences have the potential to attract more participants."

A More Efficient Model

Convincing conference organizers to completely change their approach to events may be the biggest challenge to Image 4's vision, but growing concerns about the environment and energy supplies may make the sustainable model more appealing. Rising energy costs

will be reflected in the services necessary to produce conferences and events, as would an eventual carbon tax.

The sponsors of *Beyond Home Energy Audits with Energy Star* recognized other very good reasons for to embrace the “green”-style meeting right now. “Smaller venues offer more meaningful contact between attendees and exhibitors,” “Conferences are where you meet prospective clients in person, and where clients often form the strongest impression of your business.”

By using the Eventege concept’s low-energy marketing strategies at the Long Island workshop, the EPA, DOE and other sponsors reinforced their message of wise energy management. Attendees could see the home audit program not as just a product, but as part of a leaner, cleaner, smarter way to do business.

Sustainability is, ultimately, using the least amount of resources to get the job done—so you can keep doing it. And that’s good business, by any definition. Contact Image 4 to learn more about products and ideas to sustain the environment—and your bottom line.

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