

## **Marketing Plan for NextGen Planners**

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### **Executive Summary**

#### ***Mission, Vision, Goals, and Objectives of the Event***

For this marketing plan, I will be promoting the annual conference with an expo and gala for my young event planner's association NextGen Planners. NextGen Planners is an organization dedicated to empowering the next generation of event planners through education, networking, and gaining experience with a mission of bridging the gap between young professionals and industry leaders. This conference is a space for that to take place with opportunity for networking, seminars, and workshops.

Our vision for this conference is to acquaint our association members with the knowledge, tools, and relationships necessary to be a successful and well-rounded event planner no matter their economic background. To bring that vision to fruition, we plan to host a wide, diverse variety of industry leaders, staple industry brands, and sponsors to share their knowledge with our members and create lasting professional relationships.

Many goals are in place to make this vision and mission happen. One factor we find makes all the difference in connecting our members with these prominent figures is affordability for attendees. Our first and foremost goal is to reduce our admission price, including lodging and meals, to 10% of our expenses for this break-even event in April of 2025. Additionally, we aim to host 50 different exhibitors of varying specialties at our standing exposition during the conference to keep our educational range wide.

Some objectives to consider while navigating these goals include developing and selling a variety of comprehensive sponsorship packages rich in partner benefits and opportunities.

These packages will be priced to cover 90% of our event expenses, leaving 10% to our attendees' admission costs in order to break even.

### ***Situation Analysis***

Our most prominent strength is the interesting and exciting work we do at next Gen Planners that the annual conference and expo is a host for. Our industry connections are valuable to our members looking to start their careers, and a physical space for these connections to manifest highly desirable to our audience. That being said, another strength of this event is its ease in acquiring attendees. NextGen Planners Annual Conference and Expo pulls its attendees from the NextGen Planners' member pool already and inherently subscribed to an internal network that receives email updates, has access to association website platforms, and is generally easy to reach. Finding attendees excited to participate is never an issue.

Our weaknesses mostly revolve around our financial model. For example, our dependency on sponsorships leaves our event vulnerable if sponsor interest declines. Additionally, our break-even model limits the opportunity for investing in other developments with surplus revenue. Within the break-even model and all-inclusive nature of our admission cost, we also are left with a very limited budget for amenities outside of venue, F&B, and lodging for things like marketing and entertainment/education outside of those participating through sponsorship streams.

Some opportunities our annual conference has is expanding locations the event takes place in and offering remote participation options. Choosing conference locations in our three most popular attendee locations and offering remote participation would drastically reduce the lodging cost in the budget, allow more budget for marketing and other initiatives, and increase attendee inclusivity. Another opportunity would be to include the sponsorship of an attendee's

admission in some of our sponsorship packages. This not only takes fiscal weight off a percentage of our attendees, but also allows for our highest performing members to be recognized by and build relationships with the sponsor that selected them, bridging that gap as we hoped for.

Although again, with our reliance on sponsorship, economic fluctuations and a shift in a sponsor's priorities are a severe threat to the funding of the event. Additionally, an oversaturation of content from either our conference from years past being redundant, or members cross participation in other conferences, can be a threat to interest. Without diversifying our educational content from prior conferences and our competition, we risk diluting the unique appeal and reduce our audience.

### ***Unique Market Position***

NextGen Planners exists to serve a relatively small age range of event planners of any specialty. We are unique the ways we cater to the specific the stage of life our members are experiencing, and unique in the variety of interests, specialties, and skills we provide education and connection for.

### ***Review of the Competition***

Some direct competition that NextGen Planners Annual Conference and Expo faces are other event planner associations for students that host interactive conferences. For example, Meeting Professionals International (MPI) is a very large organization that offers essentially the same service as us down to participation initiatives and educational content. Some more indirect competitors of ours like National Association for Catering and Events (NACE) and Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) also offer association membership and

conferences for students, but the focus on specific niches instead of event planning as an entire industry.

### **Target Markets**

Since our attendees inherently have an overwhelming interest in this conference, as it's the sole annual opportunity for their association participations to physically manifest, we will focus our marketing on obtaining sponsors. Our first target sponsor would be companies that a future event planner would work with. This could look like commonly used event production companies like Encore Global or technology providers like Cvent. Our second target sponsor would be major companies that employ event planners like major hotel chains with event facilities like Hyatt or MGM and global DMCs like PRA. The duality of the sponsors allows our attendees to acquaint themselves with the industry staples, get a taste of the different faucets of event planning, and see what they like. These major companies also have a wider budget for sponsorships and a wider network for talent acquisition for internships or employment, so it's likely that they would see a high ROI from sponsoring an event like this.

### **Distribution Channels**

NextGen Planners Annual Conference and Expo plans to utilize direct sales outreach via email and cold calls as the main distribution channel for this event. We will also utilize the internet in listing our event on a sponsorship listing website like Eventbrite Sponsorship Opportunities, with a link to our own sponsorship kit embedded. We plan to start with creating our sponsorship kit and listing our event on Eventbrite Sponsorship Opportunities to put the idea in sponsors' minds. This will gain the attention of sponsors actively seeking opportunities since that is what the website caters towards, and it will attract our first wave of sponsors, reducing the number of emails and cold calls to do in our next phase. About two weeks into our listing, we

will assess our needs and send out emails with our sponsorship kit attached and make cold calls to companies we feel would be good fits for our conference, companies as mentioned in our target market analysis. We chose this direct method because we feel that it aligns with our emphasis on connection and relationships and allows us to hand pick our sponsors. In this timeline, initial emails would be sent out first, then cold calls to those who haven't taken action since the emails. Finally, follow up emails would be sent out if we still haven't reached our sponsorship goal.

## **Timeline**

### ***Pre-Campaign Preparation***

- Week 1 (Preparation)
  - Create a sponsorship kit
  - Prepare email templates
  - Create cold call script
  - Create/ upload event listing on Eventbrite Sponsorship Opportunities

### ***Phase 1: Raise Initial Awareness and Attraction***

- Week 2 (Event Listing Launch)
  - Launch the event on Eventbrite Sponsorship Opportunities
  - Track engagement
- Week 3 (Assess and Monitor)
  - Review response data
  - Follow up on early leads
  - Announce the sponsorship opportunities via email

### ***Phase 2: Direct Outreach and Relationship Building***

- Week 4 (Cold Calls)
  - Make cold calls to non-responders
  - Track responses
- Week 5 (Assess Progress and Pivot)
  - Review Sponsor Commitment
  - (If applicable) send second email wave

### ***Phase 3: Final Push and Follow Up***

- Week 6 (Follow Up emails and Calls)
  - Send final reminder emails
  - Cold call last wave
- Week 7 (Final Assessment and Confirmation)
  - Confirm sponsorships
  - Close deals
  - Update Event listing and email recipients

### ***Phase 4: Ongoing Communication and Nurturing***

- Week 8 (Thank You and Onboarding)
  - Send confirmation and thank you emails
  - Send out post-sponsorship engagement (e.g., event teasers, helpful content, updates)
- Week 9-10 (Pre-Event Preparation and Reminders)
  - Send event reminders
  - Integrate sponsorship recognition to attendee marketing
  - Engage sponsors pre-event via private briefing on what to expect at the expo

**Evaluation**

To evaluate the effectiveness of our marketing plan at the end of the event, we will monitor the key metrics and engagement indicators such as website traffic, email open, clickthrough, and response rate, and cold call outcomes. We will analyze the mix of leads generated from each distribution channel and assess which method was most effective in reaching our 50-sponsor goal. This can take place in the time between deals closed and the event launch. Additionally, after the event we can issue a sponsor satisfaction survey assessing the overall experience, sponsor visibility, lead generation and ROI, and overall event logistics. There will also be space for extra comments for qualitative feedback opportunities. This proactively battles our threat of sponsorship disinterest, allows us to improve our sponsorship experience, and retain sponsors for years to follow. Most important of all, we will finalize our revenues to assess if we met our goal of sponsorships covering 90% of our expenses.