

## Best use of Social Media



### Best Use of Social Media Award

#### Overview:

The “Must Attend” campaign was a team effort. On the client side, it was headed up by Matt McGowan, Publisher and Head of US at [Incisive Media](#), and included Christian Georgeou and Angela Man. On the agency side, it was headed up in North America by Greg Jarboe, President and co-founder of [SEO-PR](#), and included Nell Connors and Byron Gordon. In Europe, it was headed up by Andy Brown, Managing Director of [Reality PR](#).

#### Objective:

During the worst economic downturn in decades, attendance at conventions and tradeshow fell by 8% in the first quarter of 2009 and the number of exhibitors participating at tradeshow dropped 10%, according to *Tradeshow Week* magazine.

Instead of hunkering down, [Search Engine Strategies \(SES\)](#), a leading global conference and training series focused on search engine optimization and search engine marketing, [SEO-PR](#), a search engine optimization firm, public relations agency, and video production company, and [Reality PR](#), a public relations company, launched a social media campaign called “Must Attend” that integrated blogs, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

The goal was to listen to and communicate with attendees, exhibitors, speakers and bloggers in North America and Europe. The key topic of this conversation was the value of attending conferences and expos in a recession.

According to a *Tradeshow Week* survey, CEOs and other senior executives said that in a challenging economy it was even more important to keep up-to-date with industry trends, see new products and services, and maintain and build relationships – all areas where events provide significant value and efficiency. In short, attending leading conventions and tradeshow during a recession kept executives informed and competitive.

As one executive said, “If you don’t keep up with what is going on in your business, a recession can keep you going down.” As another executive added, “We still have to keep up with changes in the industry and be prepared for the upswing.”

Despite aggressive budget cuts to get out in front of weak economic trends, 89% of the survey respondents said they were going to the most important events in their industry. So, the core message of the SES campaign was: The conferences and expos in Toronto, San Jose, Berlin, Chicago, London, and New York are “must-attend events” in the search industry.

## Strategy:

SES, SEO-PR and Reality PR used [YouTube](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and blogs for the “Must Attend” campaign. According to comScore, six out of seven U.S. Internet users view online video content each month, with YouTube continuing to experience a rapid increase in viewership. Nearly four out of five Internet users visit a social networking site on a monthly basis, with Facebook and Twitter propelling much of the growth in the category. And according to other sources, LinkedIn has more than 55 million registered users and over 57 million Americans read blogs.

These social media channels were used to engage previous and potential SES attendees in discussions about how the conference helps them “keep up-to-date on trends and issues”, the expo hall lets them “see new products,” and the event enables them to “network.”

For example, [SESConferenceExpo’s Channel on YouTube](#) featured interviews with conference speakers about the “[future of SEO](#),” “[future of search advertising](#),” and “[future of search](#).” Attendees were asked to share their opinion of SES. Exhibitors were asked to demonstrate their new products. And the channel featured a comedy sketch, “[Searching for Santa at SES Chicago 2009](#),” which was shot at a networking event.

In addition, bloggers were offered interviews about the latest trends and issues with speakers who would be discussing them at upcoming SES events. When large numbers of bloggers expressed interest in interviewing keynote speakers like [Charlene Li](#), co-author, *Groundswell*, [Avinash Kaushik](#), author of *Web Analytics 2.0*, and [David Meerman Scott](#), author of *World Wide Rave*, SES held free webcasts and gave away copies of their books to the bloggers who asked the most compelling questions.

Radian6 was used to monitor the program, because it has the broadest available coverage of video sharing sites like YouTube, Facebook public discussion forums, micromedia like Twitter, and blogs.

## Results:

From April 1, 2009 to January 31, 2010, SESConferenceExpo’s Channel on YouTube had 97,856 total views of all videos. For the same 10-month period the previous year, the channel had 50,245 views. This means the outreach to the YouTube community almost doubled the views year over year.

Among the most viewed videos from the “Must Attend” campaign were “[Cecilia Tamez, XE.com on attending SES Toronto 2009](#),” “[SES Chicago 2009 from attendee Kathryn Joy, New England Journal of Medicine](#),” and “[Ryan Hupfer, HubPages, and Ren Chin, YieldBuild on exhibiting at SES San Jose 2009](#).” These candid comments by SES attendees and exhibitors were effective testimonials to the value of attending conferences and expos in a recession.

From April 1, 2009, to January 31, 2010, bloggers wrote 292 posts before SES events, including Q&As with speakers. Examples can be found at “[Twelve bloggers blogging about SES Toronto](#)”

[2009](#)” and [“Twelve bloggers blogging about SES London 2010.”](#) An additional 319 blog posts were written during and after SES events, including [“Top Stories from SES San Jose and Social Media & Video Strategies”](#) and [“Top Stories at SES Chicago 2009 on Day 1.”](#)

Finally, there are now 10,390 members of the [SES group](#) on LinkedIn, 2,034 followers of [SESConf](#) on Twitter, 1,189 fans of the [SES page](#) on Facebook, and 599 subscribers to [SESConferenceExpo’s Channel](#) on YouTube.

In 2009, the “Must Attend” program met its objectives for SES Toronto and SES San Jose, which remained flat in a down economy, and exceeded its objectives for SES Berlin and SES Chicago, which were up over the previous year’s events. And in January 2010, conference registrations for SES London and SES New York are up more than 10% over last year and space in the expo halls have sold out for these “must-attend events.”

#### **Examples:**

[“Cecilia Tamez, XE.com on attending SES Toronto 2009”](#)

[“SES Chicago 2009 from attendee Kathryn Joy, New England Journal of Medicine”](#)

[“Ryan Hupfer, HubPages, and Ren Chin, YieldBuild on exhibiting at SES San Jose 2009”](#)

*The “Must Attend” Campaign won the Best Use of Social Media award and the first Conference Awards 2010. Matt McGowan, publisher and head of U.S., Incisive Media, said, “Social media networks have enabled us to reach attendees in ways which have been difficult in the past. All measurements from first contact through to client engagement and sales via social channels have showed double digit improvement year on year. We don’t just teach the subject, we use it too!”*