

HOW TO: Plan and Promote Events With Social Media

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This guide will help you understand how social media can power and drive an event, step-by-step:

Step 1. Plan with social media tools



As with any event, the first step is to plan. This goes beyond the simple logistics – it’s about locations, agendas, and the people that will help you make it happen. Whether you’re inviting people over for a small BBQ or you’re planning a conference, here are some useful social media tools to get the planning started:

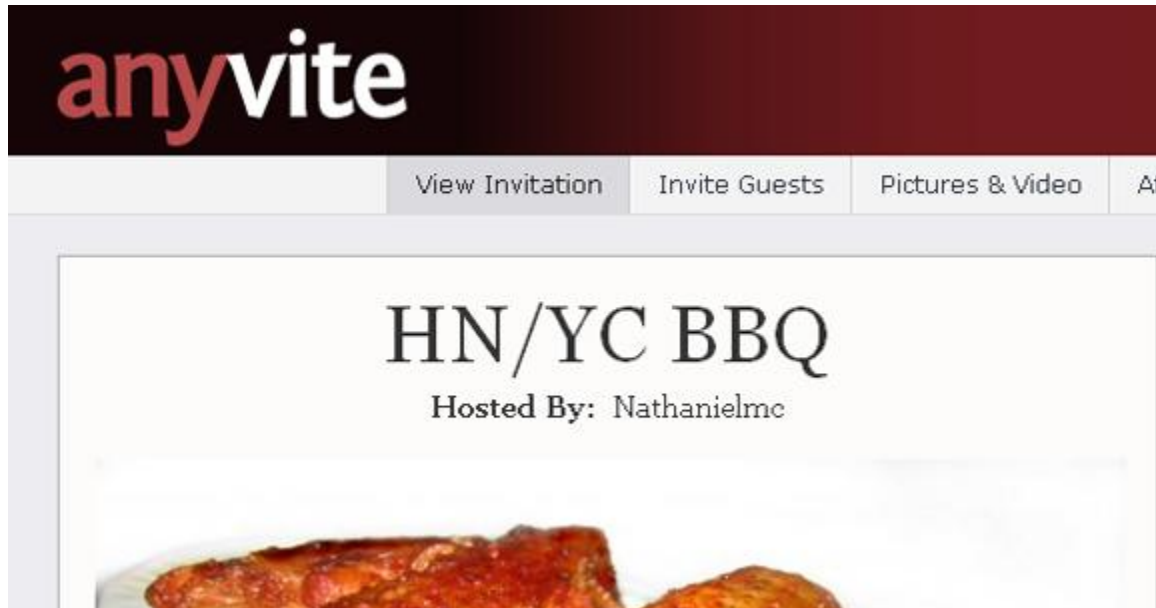
Skype: Use Skype for conference calls and chats about event planning. Bouncing ideas back and forth via video or audio can make the brainstorming process move much faster. Gchat and [Tokbox](#) are also fast and easy ways to engage audio and video conversations.

PBworks: The wiki is an ideal platform for planning events – it’s easy to add notes, edit information, and organize content. Both [mediawiki](#) (the software that runs Wikipedia) and PBworks (formerly PBwiki) are good choices, but PBworks has been a favorite of organizers because of its business features, better document-sharing features, and RSS notifications.

Google Calendar [?](#) and **Google Docs:** Assign tasks and meetings using a collaborative calendar like Google Calendar and work together on your event information using a software like Google Docs.

If you need a more detailed file collaboration and calendar system, consider [Basecamp](#), a business project management solution. [CalendarHub](#) is also a good calendar tool with event feeds and scheduling.

Step 2. Organizing and inviting



Once you have the basic plan in the pipeline, it's time to get your ducks in a row and start inviting some people. This is different than promotion – you're making sure to invite key guests, speakers, family, and whoever else is important to the success of your gathering, conference, or party.

PBworks is once again a great tool for keeping information on the event organized – you can publish guest lists, speaker lists, and more with PBworks. But if you're going for a more professional feel, we suggest actually **setting up a blog**: Creating and posting updates to a [WordPress](#) or [Drupal](#) blog is generally worth your while.

For inviting and organizing guests lists, always be sure to set up a Facebook event – this will be one of the first places your guests will look for event information. You can go beyond a simple Facebook invite for added emphasis: [Anyvite](#) and [Eventbrite](#) are two solid solutions for inviting guests that include RSVPing and customization features.

Step 3. Promotion and distribution



Promotion is the key to any successful gathering. Without it, you will not attract the interesting people that you're looking to bring in. There are several levels of promotion and dozens of social media tools available, enough to write another full article about, but we will only highlight some of the most important details.

First, be sure to have as many distribution channels available as possible. Your potential guests or attendees must be able to easily find you on Facebook, [Twitter](#), [Flickr](#), [YouTube](#), and for business events, [LinkedIn](#).

Twitter and Facebook should be your primary promotional tools – they are built for spreading a message. On Facebook, be sure to set up a Facebook Page – they are better than groups because you can appear in News Feeds every time you update the Page's status. Creating a Facebook Event is also key, as well as having guests and members update their own status with links to the shindig. Twitter's key is retweeting and hashtags: be sure to have an event hashtag and promote it, and ask for retweets of the most important information.

If possible, all of these accounts need to link to one central blog, PBworks, or event page. If you're using an Anyvite or Facebook event as your main distribution method, be sure that's where every one of these social media websites links to.

Here are some more advanced promotional tools to consider:

Ning: Some organizers create their own social networks to build up hype and to keep connections even after the event has occurred.

Upcoming and Gary's Guide: Add yourself to major event websites. If it's a nightlife event, [Going](#) may be a good choice. For technology, Gary's Guide is a smart place to be listed. Upcoming by Yahoo is a good listing of events all across the spectrum.

If your event is social media-related, don't forget Mashable's [Social Media Events Guide](#) as well.

Step 4. Optimize the event for social media sharing



webgrafix: [@shelly_palmer](#) I wanted to just send a shout to say THANKS! I really enjoyed listening to you at [@adtech](#) [#adtech](#) Everyone should go!

1 day ago from *web* · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)



ryanmilani: [@yourmagz](#): RT [@weblaunches](#) Online Media Report from [#AdTech](#) 09 - Great Info - <http://bit.ly/OnlineMedia> (expand) [#socialmedia](#)

1 day ago from *twhirl* · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)



joshjaffe: I went to [#adtech](#) and all I got was this stuffed giraffe <http://twitpic.com/3xkux>

1 day ago from *TwitterFon* · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)

When the day comes and everyone is arriving, be sure that you keep people happy and that you've optimized your event to create additional buzz. You didn't do all of this work just to have people complain over Twitter, did you?

Have high-speed wireless available – this allows people to tweet and converse more easily. Promote following the event's Twitter account for event updates. Don't forget to have a unique hashtag for the event. Have a web page or even a giant whiteboard where people can share their social media contact information too.

For people who cannot attend the event, consider setting up a live stream. Live video services like [Ustream](#) and [Mogulus](#) make it possible to stream out key portions of events. You don't have to stream everything – just the good stuff. If you can't stream, upload videos to YouTube afterwards.

Step 5. Post-event social media communication



Mashable and Blurb Bash at...
254 photos



DATAROCK Rocks SXSWi
23 photos



SXSWi 2009 Day 4 - Monday
43 photos



SXSW Interactive Awards Night...



SXSWi 2009 by night
219 photos



Pre-Registration Day @ 2009...
189 photos

First, be sure to continue communication with all the attendees. The web page where users can add their social media contact information is vital towards this end, as are the emails you probably have access to. Send them thank yous, updates, and information. Be sure to promote friending or following your social media accounts.

Next, do not forget to share all the media generated by the event. Upload photos to the Flickr account and post videos on YouTube ([Vimeo](#) and [Viddler](#) are also good alternatives). Post recordings of your live video streams as well (you did have a live video stream or two, right?).

Keep communicating

Good communication is central to the success of any gathering. Even if it's just a one-time event, keeping in contact with everyone who attended could result in invaluable contacts or lifelong friendships. Promote social media and good communication whenever you're planning and executing an event and your extravaganza will turn out to be more engaging and more popular than you may have ever realized possible.