

{TECH}

Map-N-Tour Lets Planners Create Virtual Event Tours

A Michigan-based company has developed an online tool that allows users to take virtual tours of festivals and events.

Map-N-Tour, developed by brothers Denny and Kevin Henson, of the Great Lakes Bay Region, utilizes cloud-based software to create customized, interactive, three-dimensional maps and geo-located content.

The tool allows users to experience a location or event in greater depth, enabling potential visitors to make more informed decisions about travel and event choices, and planners to enhance the experience offered to attendees.

The nonprofit International Economic Development Council gave Map-N-Tour Inc. its 2013 Silver Excellence in Economic Development Award in new media.

The tool has been used to enhance historic home and heritage site tours; to submerge users into Detroit's Eastern Market; and to showcase outdoor adventure opportunities. mapntour.com

{IT'S YOUR BUSINESS}

Telling Your Story: Tips for Effective PR

BY LYNNE MEREDITH GOLODNER

EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON STORY—who we are, what we do, our goals and dreams, and how we get there. As a public relations professional, I know well that story and relationships are the cornerstones for all success.

Public relations is relationships with key publics to grow your business. PR is more than simply getting on television or having your organization or event featured in the paper. It's about building the right relationships that are going to bring in new customers, members or supporters and expand your reach to new audiences.

The key to good PR is making every endeavor mutually beneficial. Don't just tell your story; tell it in a way that shows others how they benefit from knowing you and engaging with your brand. A two-way street garners more traffic.

Effective PR comes from knowing your story and telling it to the right people. I speak often about the importance of articulating a clear vision and mission—and higher purpose. Are you trying to improve the community? Make a difference with your work? If not, figure out how you can. And if you're already there, make sure that higher purpose is part of your strategic storytelling.

When planning your 2014 PR pursuits, keep these tips in mind. Remember: The more you're out there, the more you're out there.

Identify your audience as specifically as you can. Anytime a client says everybody could be his or her customer, I know we have a harder job ahead of us. The more specific your

potential client or supporter base, the more successful you'll be in reaching them and speaking to their needs.

Once you know your audience, understand what they need to hear. Speak to them, not about you.

Where can you tell your story? To media, on your website, in regular blogging, via social media platforms, in ads, brochures and more. Be consistent in your storytelling to build familiarity.

Don't discount the importance of relationships. Two or three key relationships can take you further than dealing out business cards at dozens of events.

Aim for a higher purpose. When you do, others will be more receptive to your story.

Remember the calendar when reaching out to media. It's easy to get exposure if you can present media folks with a timely but different story angle—think Valentine's Day, Independence Day and more. They need news—make them need you.

Don't discount the value of what you do. A race to be the cheapest is a race to the bottom. Elevate your work by emphasizing your unique value proposition. ☞



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