

Creating Custom Branding Opportunities for Sponsors Using the Conference Venue



Offering unique branding opportunities to exhibitors and sponsors is something that all associations should strive to accomplish with their conferences. One way to do this is to use the physical space available in the conference venue.

The American Transplant Congress (ATC), an AH client partner, creates more brand awareness options for their supporters, following the trend of using the meeting space, by getting creative with the venue.

Some examples of unique brand positioning from the 2018 ATC conference include custom lounge seating, escalator wraps, and stair clings. This comes in place of traditional sponsorship opportunities such as bag drops. It creates more non-dues revenue streams for the association and the chance to work with more sponsors and supporters.

ATC has been offering these unique branding opportunities for the last six years but Shannon Fagan, CMP, Director of Meetings & Exhibits for ATC, said there has been an uptick in interest over the last couple years. "Many sponsors are telling us they want to get their brand noticed and their message out there so we are coming up with innovative ways to do that," Fagan said. "We are able to showcase multiple brands throughout the meeting space, using items like pillowcases in lounge areas and creating images with stair wraps. Sponsors and exhibitors have been really happy with how their brand is being delivered to attendees."

Each year, the meetings team at AH is challenged with coming up with new branding opportunities, as each year, the venue changes. "One year we may have a really beautiful stair cling, but the next year, our venue doesn't have stairs, so we are tasked with coming up with new areas and ways to showcase the brands," said Fagan.

Another challenge that ATC faces, and overcomes, is making sure that sponsor branding is not diluting the actual conference brand throughout the venue. "Some board members are fearful that the brand marketing

of sponsors will overrun the conference brand, so we review floor plans in great detail when we are mapping out what brand will be where and how the conference brand will look alongside the sponsors. We want a cohesive feel for everything," said Fagan.

What's New for 2019?

In 2019, ATC is creating small meeting spaces on the show floor where sponsors and exhibitors can meet with attendees in a more private setting. These spaces will be branded for each exhibitor, while still being in the midst of the event so they aren't removing themselves completely from potential conversations with other attendees.

ATC is also creating conversation stations for their 2019 conference. These will be hubs stationed throughout the space that will be designed with lounge-type furniture. It's different than a large networking space, more inviting, and smaller so that people can have intimate conversations. "Attendees will find places to meet at any conference, but we are creating brand awareness networking spaces to elevate the attendee experience," said Fagan.

Each year is exciting as it brings new ways to showcase a sponsor brand and keeps the meeting planners at AH thinking creatively.

