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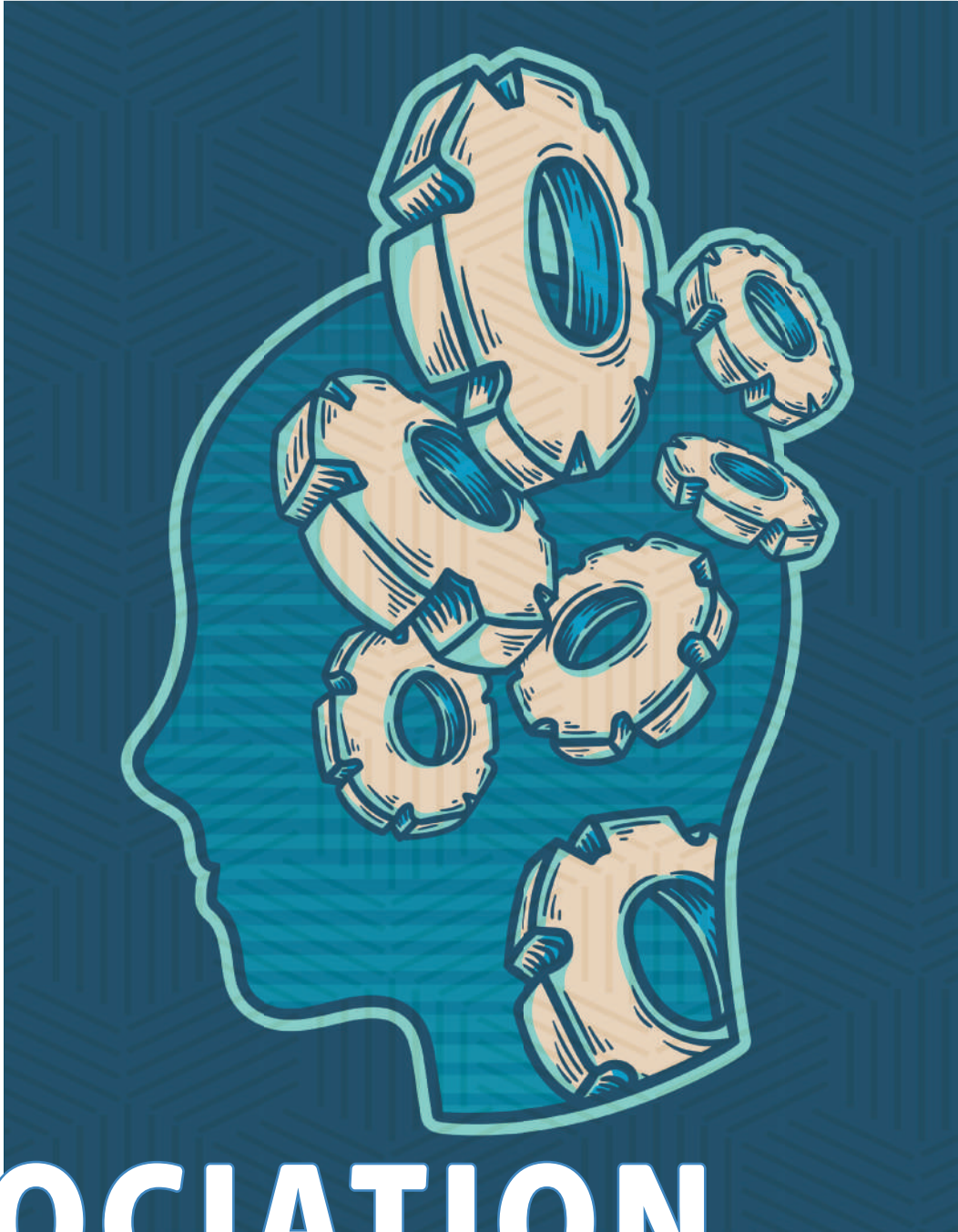
A Breath of Fresh Air From
Panama



WHERE DO WE STAND ON DIVERSITY,
EQUITY AND INCLUSION?

HQ INSIGHTS

- 33 World PCO Alliance
Event website: The must-have elements
- 36 KENES Group
DEI reflections
- 38 Congrex Americas
Associations are both subtle and powerful
- 40 ESAE
A path to inclusive excellence for all associations
- 42 IAPCO
An overview on DEI in events industry
- 44 CityDNA
Future of regenerative and inclusive tourism
- 46 AIPC
It's about values
- 47 Cvent
How to make your events accessible



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Event Websites: The Must-have Elements

While social media has increasingly become a staple in marketing an event, nothing replaces a website – social media platforms (and their algorithms) are always changing, but a website is that piece of web real estate that you own and can control. But you don’t want just *any* website, and in 2023 a sub-par website just doesn’t cut it.

In this article, some World PCO Alliance partners share their tips for optimising your event website, as they share the must and the must-nots of event website design.

Event Website Musts

Let’s begin with an overview of the key elements that make for an excellent event website design:

- Clear event details
- Compelling visuals
- User-friendly navigation
- Responsive design
- Engaging content
- Social proof
- Visible calls-to-action
- Continued learning opportunities

Clear Event Details

Make sure that you display event name, date, and location in a prominent spot to grab visitors’ attention. It’s a shame to make a visitor scroll to the bottom of the home page to get such basic information. Instead, place all these details at the very top, ideally with a visually appealing backdrop. Think: a nice banner on the altogether that even includes a photo of the host city.

Compelling Visuals

Photos and videos are so powerful that every event website should include them. These memories from past events are the social proof that will encourage potential attendees to register. Use high-quality imagery and videos that convey the event’s atmosphere and theme, and that leave a lasting impression.

Some examples include highlights from past events, unique venues, and key influencers in your national/ international community that have attended previous editions of your event or that will be attending.

User-friendly Navigation

Ensure easy navigation through intuitive menus, allowing visitors to find information effortlessly. If you have a general menu tab such as “About”, break up the information into sub-menu items, and list the sub-menu tabs so that the most vital information is at the top. For example, most people clicking on “About” are looking primarily for essential details such as the dates and location

of the event as well as the preliminary programme, so make sure this information is at the very top.

Responsive Design

Today, it can no longer be assumed that everyone is viewing your website on their computer. Many people use their smartphones, so make sure your website is responsive – meaning, it can be easily viewed across different devices and screen sizes. How to tell if your website is responsive? If your website layout looks exactly the same on a phone or tablet as it does on a computer, only much, much smaller, your website is not responsive.

Engaging Content

Provide captivating descriptions of sessions, workshops, and speakers to generate interest and anticipation. If you have booked a thought leader in your field to speak at your event, promote this. If you have a new feature in your programme, mention it. Make sure all your website copy portrays every element of your event in the best way possible.

Another thing to keep in mind is to find ways to regularly stay in touch with your potential and confirmed attendees. While social media seems to be the obvious platform for keeping your event top of mind, don't underestimate the power of a website. A blog, for example, is still an effective way to share news about your event. A “News” tab in your menu can also be a great spot to reveal the latest and must-know information.

Social Proof

While an enticing programme and a sublime venue are good draws to your event, nothing can sell your event quite like a testimonial can. Gather testimonials from past attendees, prioritising influencers and better-known figures from your community. As much as possible, include their photos (though do ask for their permission first). Along with building interest in your event, such testimonials also lend credibility to your event.

Clear Calls-to-Action

The most common actions your website visitors will want to take are, typically, registering for the event and contacting you for more information. Don't make it difficult to perform either. Strategically place registration buttons throughout the website, on different pages, to guide visitors towards taking the desired action. Make sure a “Contact” button is at the very top of your website

home page, and also featured on other pages.

Continued Learning Opportunities

Your event is important, of course, but it is also short-lived. Consider giving your attendees opportunities to extend the event experience. Provide post-event resources, such as recorded sessions, presentation slides, or curated content related to the event's themes.

Event Website Design Trends

While we have covered all the essentials of a robust event website, there is always room for going beyond. World PCO Alliance partners have noticed certain trends, including:

One-page Websites: While this might seem to contradict the main purpose of this article, there are still ways of incorporating all the features mentioned in a one-page website. Moreover, one-page websites offer certain advantages:

- Simple navigation: Without a menu sending visitors to different pages, a simple scroll allows them to see all the information they need.
- Non-cluttered information: Because one-page websites offer limited space, you will likely only include essential content, thus avoiding overwhelming your visitors with unnecessary information.

Interactive and Immersive Experiences: Websites are incorporating interactive elements like virtual tours and 360-degree videos to engage visitors and create a sense of excitement about the event.

Mobile-First Design: With the prevalence of mobile browsing, some event websites are prioritising mobile responsiveness and designing with mobile users in mind.

Bold Typography and Colour Palettes: Websites are embracing eye-catching typography and vibrant colour schemes to make a strong visual impact.

A Spotlight on Sustainability and Green Initiatives: Websites are showcasing eco-friendly practices and promoting sustainability efforts, aligned with the growing focus on environmental consciousness.

What Not to Do

Now that we have explored all the musts of a robust event website, let's take a moment to identify the things to avoid:

- Poor quality pictures
- Outdated information: Make sure your website doesn't have deadlines that have expired. If the abstract submission process is closed, it should not still be open and accessible. If you are past the early bird registration rate, delete it. If your programme has been updated, make sure to only feature the latest version.
- Non-functional links: The last thing you want is to have a vital button like “Contact” not working.

How to Make Your Website More Inclusive

When optimising your event website, keep inclusivity in mind so that your site meets the needs of a diverse membership. There are numerous ways to make your website more welcoming to all:

1. **Prioritising Accessibility:** Placing accessibility at the forefront of website design involves considering aspects such as colour contrast, font sizes, and keyboard navigation. This ensures that individuals with visual or motor impairments can access and interact with the website easily.
2. **Clear and Descriptive Headings:** Using clear and descriptive headings that accurately represent the content beneath them helps users navigate the website more efficiently. This is particularly beneficial for individuals who rely on screen readers or other assistive technologies.
3. **Alternative Text for Images:** Providing alternative text (alt text) for images, describing their content and

purpose, enables individuals with visual impairments to understand the context and meaning of the images through screen readers.

4. **Captions and Transcripts for Multimedia:** Including captions or transcripts for videos and audio files makes them accessible to individuals with hearing impairments. This ensures that the content is fully comprehensible to all users.
5. **Readability and Plain Language:** Enhancing legibility through readable fonts, appropriate font sizes, and sufficient line spacing is important. Using plain language and avoiding complex jargon helps ensure that the content is understandable to a diverse audience.
6. **Flexible Forms and Inputs:** Designing forms and input fields that are adaptable to different user needs is crucial. Allowing for input validation and providing clear and concise error messages assists users in completing forms accurately.
7. **Consistent and Predictable Navigation:** Maintaining a consistent navigation structure throughout the website and using standard design patterns, helps users predict the location of information and navigate with ease. This is especially beneficial for individuals with cognitive disabilities.
8. **Testing and User Feedback:** Regularly testing the website's accessibility with real users, including individuals with disabilities, and gathering feedback are essential steps. This allows for necessary adjustments to improve the user experience for all visitors.
9. **Using Gender-Inclusive Language:** Consider opting for neutral language on your website to ensure inclusivity and respect for individuals of all gender identities.

At the end of the day, there is no excuse for having a sub-par website for your event. By leveraging the tools and ideas that the World PCO Alliance partners share in this article, your event can boast a site that highlights the very best of your event and make it a not-to-be missed for attendees.

