

Why so many ad boards fail to increase engagement in the long-term

This is what we like to call “The 364-day problem”. For much of the year, your interactions with ad board participants are administrative, save for that magical day when you are all in the meeting room together. The challenge is to make the pre-event, post-event and the space in between something that is valuable for both you **and** the KOLs. Note, the secret lies in the “and” of that statement.

If you want to get more out of your ad board, you need to ask yourself two things:

- 1) What would you like from the KOLs **throughout the year**?
- 2) What would the KOLs like **from you**?

Identifying these goals earlier in the planning process will help you establish your ad board strategy.

A lack of specificity

There is something terrifically specific about an ad board. It occurs on a specific day, for a specific duration, with specific participants, and a specific agenda. KOLs are bound by a specific contract outlining specific compensation for their involvement. During the event, specific brand and business challenges are tackled.

However, far too often the “additional” expectations around KOL ad board engagement lack specificity. For example, brands often invest in building digital tools aimed at helping KOLs “chat” with one another, or spontaneously share insights. But this type of behavior is not specific, not rewarded and not consistent with typical social interactions! So, it really shouldn’t come as much of a surprise when KOL engagement falls short.

Specificity and stated expectations guide business behaviors

Developing productive KOL platforms requires solid management principles. Consider this for a moment: when you give your direct reports specific goals with specific objectives to hit along the way, you can expect more consistent results. The same holds true for ad boards.

Docs and marketers are not designed for P2P

In order for ad boards to accomplish genuine professional engagement, you need to design them to be more than one-day conclaves of professional discussion and then hope they'll organically extend into the future.

To accomplish this, you need to:

- 1) Use digital tools to reduce time and geography constraints.
- 2) Use specificity the same way we do when meeting in person **and** leverage existing business models to create clear expectations and comfort among our friends in regulatory.

Time and space

Both of these are issues for KOLs – more so than the rest of us! A good ad board is often made up of leaders from across the country, so geographical challenges are baked in from the start – while getting physicians on a plane in this post-Sunshine Act world is increasingly difficult.

From a time standpoint, connecting KOLs across different time zones is tough – but that's actually the least of your issues. A much larger time constraint is that KOLs simply have none! When you suggest tasks that have little value, you are eroding the equity you have with one of your most valuable customers. If you want to engage with your KOLs after the ad board, consider what's in it for them and how you can make it as time-efficient as possible.

Specific results require specific requests

Far too often the requests outside the ad board meeting itself can start to feel apologetic. “Would you mind ...” is the tone, which doesn't usually drive the same degree of engagement that “We need you to ...” does. We've found the reason for this is that far too often the business model surrounding these additional requests is less clear than the specific expectations set for the meeting.

The business model that KOLs are familiar with follows a clear flow of:



Leveraging digital technology to maintain KOL engagement should follow this exact framework – and thereby allows you to provide value without having to pester, beg or explain to KOLs why additional interactions don't follow the same rules as the meeting.

KOL portals: results-based digital engagement

Tired of hunting down your KOLs and begging them for feedback? There's a better way...

Getting KOLs in line with the aims of your brand demands more than just a few follow-ups after the event wraps. You want to give them specific tasks to participate in, and you want them to have the urgency to get in while the getting in's good and enjoy the freedom of participating at any time, in any place. An online KOL portal can achieve this.

4 key components for a successful KOL portal

The following four principles are essential when developing your digital portal strategy.

Anytime, anywhere

A mobile-friendly, "anytime/anywhere" online platform for communication, collaboration and interaction allows KOLs to connect with the brand and each other more efficiently.

Pay per engagement

Paying per engagement ensures greater participation than paying an annual honorarium. This pay-to-play arrangement includes expectations for completing a specified number of online portal tasks by a set deadline. Peer content reviews are a valuable tool for refining branded content, while polls are a great way to take the pulse of a certain audience segment.

Create scarcity

You're leveraging the power of human nature here. If people think they may miss out on something, they are significantly more likely to take action. KOLs feel FOMO too! If you ensure your tasks are limited to 75% of the KOLs registered, it'll help drive higher subscriptions and faster response rates.

Specificity

By laying out specific activities and providing specific timeframes and incentives, you dramatically increase the likelihood that your KOLs will participate – and continue to engage again and again.

Marrying Physical and Digital

A successful portal launch needs to consider how you will drive registration and adoption. A great way to establish your strategy and get your portal off the ground is at ... an ad board meeting.

After you've got all your KOLs in a room (real or virtual) you can have them register and view a live demonstration. Once they are registered and trained, you are poised to keep that engagement going long after the ad board has concluded. Interested in getting a digital platform up and running for your brand?

Email kim@brightworks.ca today!

In summary

- A typical ad board is challenging because it's a sub-optimal environment for long-term and ongoing engagement.
 - Recruiting KOLs and “equipping them” isn't enough to elicit genuine engagement. You need to give them specific tasks and specific incentives.
 - You can reduce KOL engagement friction by building an online KOL portal platform that employs specificity, mobile flexibility, pay-to-play incentives and a strategic use of scarcity.
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Want to get your KOLs online and engaged? Call Neil!

Contact Brightworks' **Neil Follett** today and let him help you discover how a digital KOL platform can be the definition of convenience – for your KOLs as well as you. Real engagement, real insights, real peer-to-peer value, with the control that only a portal like this can provide.

Want to learn more? Contact Neil.

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