

HDI[®]

CONFERENCE & EXPO

CASE STUDY

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How HDI Drove Referral-Based Registrations With an Incentive Program

A modest investment yielded \$171,000 in new revenue.

When Jenny Rains, events marketing manager for UBM Tech’s HDI portfolio, which includes the HDI Conference & Expo, assumed her position in 2016, the existing attendee-acquisition channels were performing well. But as someone newly responsible for a “spotlight” event—one with a higher profile within the UBM portfolio—she was keen to find “new ideas and new approaches and new ways to reach our audience,” she says. When she implemented Gleanin’s social referral marketing solution for the 2017 event, the results were very favorable. However, before the 2018 conference, she made some changes that pushed the success metrics for the conference off the charts.

Simplifying word-of-mouth referrals

Having been a research analyst on HDI’s content team, Rains came into her new role with a deep understanding of attendees. “I was very familiar with our audience and knew that word of mouth was our number one marketing tool. So, for us to be able to find a solution like Gleanin that gives our attendees and alumni exactly what they need to make it easy to refer people [to register] was a no-brainer in my opinion,” she explains. She didn’t stop there though. She added incentives to her referral program. **Both registrants and anyone that registered based on a referral received a \$50 Amazon gift certificate.**

An easy three-pronged approach to incentivizing referrals

Rains' referral-plus-incentive program involved three components:

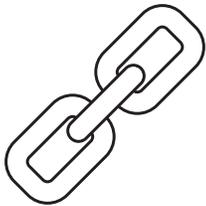
- As soon as individuals completed registration, they received a confirmation page with access to a pre-written email and social media posts enabling them to refer colleagues to register. Gleanin powered the broadcasts and analytics to determine which of the new registrants were attributed to referrals from specific individuals. In 2017, Gleanin's social referral tool was added halfway through the registration cycle. In 2018, it was available as soon as registration went live.
- For the 2018 event, Rains' team also sent registrants a three-point email several days after registration. The text read, "Invite your friends – Divide and conquer by bringing your friends! With over 80 sessions spanning so many different topics, it helps to round up your peers to cover all the bases. We've created a **unique referral tool** to help you easily spread the word. Bonus: If you refer someone who registers, both you and your friend will get a \$50 Amazon gift card!"
- A third-party gift certificate fulfillment company, Giftbit, distributed the gift cards based on Gleanin's tracking data. After the redemption period expires, Giftbit refunds the cost of any unused gift cards to HDI.

Personalizing the incentive

Pairing Gleanin's social referral marketing capabilities with an Amazon gift card was another idea born of Rains' prior experience as an analyst. Incentives have worked well for obtaining survey responses, and Amazon gift cards have a universal appeal, she explains. A personal incentive—one that the individual can use—is more effective. "You can give discounts all day long to a registration pass, and that does work, but the benefit goes to [the participant's] company. Once you personalize the incentive, that's what makes people send the referral and register based on the referral," Rains says.

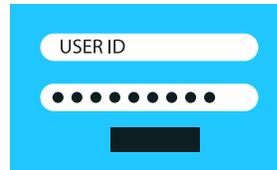
Quantifying the return on investment

The results of the 2018 incentivized referral program were “outstanding,” Rains explains:



16.22%

of all registrants sent personal invitations, broadcasted their attendance and/or shared their trackable registration link.



40.7%

of personal invites converted to registrations.



9%

of the total registrations were attributable to Gleanin-enabled referrals.



Cost per Gleanin attributable attendee was approximately

\$14.00

Revenue generated from Gleanin-attributable attendees was

\$171,000

Taking referrals plus incentives to exhibitors

Using a referral program with an incentive did add to the conference’s attendee-acquisition budget, but the return on investment using Gleanin more than compensated for it. Rains is in the process of applying what she learned from the HDI Conference & Expo to a new event taking place in the fall of 2018. She is also researching the possibility of implementing a similar Gleanin referral plus incentive program for exhibitors. “Because we’ve had so much success with the attendee side, I feel that if we can implement some sort of incentive program on the exhibitor side, we would benefit since their reach extends way beyond our reach,” she says.

For more information on using Gleanin with an incentive program, visit Gleanin.com or contact Tamar Beck at tamar@gleanin.com.