**Special Events Present Exceptional Opportunities**

From rodeos and races to county fairs and music festivals, communities across the U.S. celebrate what makes them unique. While these festivals, fairs and special events create fun times and fond memories for locals and visitors alike, they also offer abundant opportunities for publications to generate both good will and great revenue. However, gone are the days when simply publishing print event guides, schedules, and maps will do. With such a wide range of promotional possibilities at their disposal, today’s publications have to go beyond the basics to shine.

Here are some tried-and-true tips for making the most of community events in markets of all sizes:

**Differentiate.** Most publications can no longer rely solely on print to promote popular events. Today’s successful event promotion requires a coordinated combination of print, online and social media announcements and information.

**Motivate.** Publications that publish community calendars and have Facebook pages should list the event several weeks in advance to build momentum. An online version of the calendar can be surrounded by ads for businesses taking part in or sponsoring the event.

**Originate.** Creating a Web site dedicated to the event is another effective way to generate excitement and revenue. In addition to housing all information about the celebration, the site can highlight sponsors and even include links to their own Web sites.

**Illustrate.** Spark excitement in advance of the event by posting photos of the previous year’s event on the Web. This is also a great venue for showcasing sponsors and advertisers.

**Communicate.** On the day of the event, send live tweets to your Twitter account to update people about happenings, offerings, and sightings. Promote the publication, a vendor or advertiser with tweets urging attendees to meet at a given location for a free treat, coupon or small prize.

**Formulate.** Many publications have bolstered their visibility — and that of their advertisers — by developing contests that tie in with a fair, festival or event — local or national. Chicago’s Sun-Times Media, for example, created a contest in honor of the Kentucky Derby that elicited thousands of responses.

**Cultivate.**  In the event that there is no local event worthy of a multipronged promotion, consider initiating one. In 2010, three Philadelphia-area publications launched an incredibly popular indoor winter flea market — whose revenue offsets the loss of yard sale ads during the winter months — as well as a small-business expo for home-based businesses.

*This article was written by Jo-Ann Johnson of Metro Creative Graphics, Inc.*