A practical guide to building your startup's community using events

How to kickstart successful events

even on a low budget!

Peatix

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> *Events are offline, and that in itself provides value beyond interacting with your community online.*

Community building has matured from being a buzzword to being a mainstay in many a startup's key priorities, even right from the get-go of a startup's launch.

Some employ online means of building a community through social media, platform features, email communication, and more, whilst others employ offline means through hosting events specific to addressing their community's needs.

Being familiar with the events scene, we have seen how many startups, venture capitalists, and accelerators, have used events to build a community.

For example, in Southeast Asia, startups like dating app Paktor hosts offline dating events where singles can meet in groups, and taxi booking service GrabTaxi hosts localized events like Grab A Durian and GrabFest for taxi drivers in Singapore.

In a resource-strapped world of startups, where time and money are precious commodities not to be squandered, you may be wondering why it is that startups invest precisely both those resources in building a community using events instead of solely relying on online channels?

One reason and obvious difference is that events are offline, and that itself provides value beyond interacting with your community online in *four ways*.

4 ways events provide value for startups

1

Create brand evangelists through a memorable shared experience

A shared experience through events builds camaraderie and provides a talking point not only amongst your community but also when they interact with others who were not there, particularly if its novel or interesting. Hence, your community's social circles can come to hear of who you are and what you're doing organically from the very people they trust and like, which lends greater credibility to your brand over that of an online ad aimed at grabbing their attention from an already ad-saturated world.

2

Create a personable brand

The physical nature of events allows your community to meet with you and put a face to your brand. You go from being a brand name, an email address or a social media account to a person they know. At events, you embody your brand's personality in the way you interact with your community.

Give your community the opportunity to provide feedback in person and reveal the challenges they face. This in turn can become a feedback loop into improving your product or creating features that will make a difference in your community's lives. It's true you can find out this information through disseminating surveys but nothing beats the warmth of face-to-face interaction and the non-verbal cues that tells you what your community truly thinks about your product.

3

Create opportunities to network

The beauty of events is that it naturally curates a crowd, in other words, those who spend the time and money to attend tend to be like-minded individuals with a shared goal or interest. Attendees can leverage the opportunity to meet with a group of similar individuals at a specific place and time that can result in meaningful interactions and even collaboration. In that same vein, events can also generate a pool of leads for your business at one go!

4

Create and strengthen valuable partnerships

They say it takes a village to raise a child. The same goes with organizing events – there are vendors to engage, partners to collaborate with, speakers to invite, and more. Yet, this provides them with an opportunity to showcase their product (where relevant to your community), expand their network, and display thought leadership, with you being the gel between all parties through hosting your event. Everybody wins.

With that, how can you too leverage events to build a community around your startup?

This ebook is your guide to kickstarting a successful event for your community, even on a low budget. In the pages that follow, we discuss five questions you should ask prior to hosting an event, give you the secret sauce to writing a killer event page that converts to registrations and ticket sales, outline five easy first steps to take in promoting your event on social media, and provide you with a must-have toolkit of web and mobile tools for events.

Ready to find out more? Let's go!

Chapter 1

Kickstart an Event: 5 questions to ask

Putting an event together is a lot more than securing a venue, place and time (albeit important details). If you want your community (i.e. target audience) to attend, you'll first need to figure out who they are.

So hold your horses, and ask yourself the next five questions before organising your startup's first event for your community.

Who would make up my startup's community?
Figure out which group of people would share similar goals or passion with that of your startups'. This would typically consist of, but not restricted to, your product's users.

Why do I want to host an event to build a community for my startup?
Defining your objectives will help to shape decisions in planning the event and to measure the success of it.

What will my community want or value?
Place yourselves in their shoes and figure out what value they will want in exchange for the time and money invested into attending your event.

When and where is the most convenient or fitting for my event?
Think about what a typical day or week is like in the life of your community and set your event at a time that would best suit their schedules. Host your event at an accessible place with a vibe that complements your community.

How can I get the word out to my community?
Create an event landing page that conveys the value your event will bring to your community, and promote it on channels that your community will seek information on be it social media, online or print media and so on.

Events when done successfully in providing value to your community can be a powerful way for your startup to build meaningful relationships offline.

Chapter 2

9 tips to writing a killer event page that converts

Having all your event details set in stone is already quite the task in coordination, but marketing it is equally (if not more) important.

Part of marketing an event is in communicating it's value effectively to entice people to want to spend the time and money to attend. Why should they care? That's precisely what you need to convey on your event landing page which will be the first thing they see as they evaluate whether or not to click "Buy Ticket".

Follow these nine tips to create the perfect landing page that converts browsers to buyers.

1. Have an event banner that says it all!

Choose a banner image that correctly depicts your event's vibe and theme, and include the key information for buyers to make a quick decision on ticket purchase – the event's name, date, and venue. In communicating this, people can decide if your event is relevant or interesting.

2. Create an event title that stands out

Keep your target audience in mind and write an event title that's unique and punchy to capture their attention, yet relevant and informative (e.g. Turn the World into a Website by Hyper Island). You could also use familiarity like including the names of well-known people, institutions or an event series (e.g. TEDx).

3. Address what your event is about in the first line of your event description

In our multi-sensory fast-paced society, people want to know what's in it for them, and quickly. Make sure you have the key details down in the first line - your event's purpose or what your target audience will get out of attending the event.

4. Use more visuals

Use images, videos, slideshows, or infographics to communicate why your target audience should attend. Given we typically have less than a second to get someone to form a good first impression and stick around a webpage, using visuals will be important in first grabbing their attention before elaborating with text.

5. Use formatting to distinguish between sections within your event description

Make your font bold, type in capitals, underline, use bullet points, or a different color! Formatting helps your reader to skim through your description and focus their attention on sections that would matter more to them.

6. Add links sparingly

You want readers to stay focused on your event page instead of clicking out to another website. So unless necessary, do not include links within your event description. If you have to, keep them towards the bottom. If a reader reads all the way to the bottom, you've probably won their interest by then anyway.

7. Create clear differences between the ticket category options available

Use differential pricing or bundling of the ticket with other goodies such as merchandise, and communicate these differences clearly. This helps your audience to easily distinguish between tickets and make a quicker decision to purchase.

8. Be clear about your event's location

This includes providing directions from familiar landmarks (e.g. 5 minute walk from City Hall MRT Station). It may seem trivial but makes it simple for attendees to visualize getting to your event and easily plan on attending it.

9. Highlight your partners and community

Doing so adds to your event's credibility. Furthermore, your event probably couldn't have happened without them. Value and showcase who they are, what they do, and how they've contributed to your event.

Armed with these nine tips, type away and fill an event landing page with information that'll convert to registrations and ticket sales to build an ever-growing community around your startup.

Chapter 3

Promoting your event using social media

Did you know 52.2% of global social media users come from the Asia Pacific region? Out of which, 97.3% access social media on the move on mobile, and spend an average of two to four hours on social media everyday (report by Go-Globe). These numbers are staggering, with social media being a key fixture in any marketer's toolkit.

Each share, like, favorite or retweet leads to potentially another hundred or more views. You need to tap into these vast social networks to get the word out about your event – but where and how can you begin?

We craft out 5 easy first steps to get you started.

Step One: Stay focused

Promote on platforms where your community spends most time

Facebook is undeniably the largest social media network in Southeast Asia but larger does not mean better for your event. It is firstly more important to know who your audience is and understand which social media platforms they spend most time on.

How can you find out? Here are five sources:

- Poll the very ***people who've registered*** for your event! Ask how they found out about your event that will give you valuable insight into how they look for information. You can easily set up a survey form on Peatix for attendees to fill as part of the ticket buying process.

- Use ***tracking links*** like Google UTM tags and bit.ly to find out how people are being referred to your event page. The organizer dashboard on Peatix also gives a detailed breakdown of site referrals.

- Monitor ***events of the same genre*** with a similar audience to yours and find out which platforms they leverage on more to market their event. Chances are, organizers of these events would already have done their research and are investing more effort into platforms that reach their audience best.

- Ask ***people you know*** whom you identify as being a part of your community or target audience for your event.

- Find out the ***primary audience of each social media platform*** and match it to that of your event's audience. For example, many business professionals are on LinkedIn, making it a great avenue for promoting events of a business nature. Lifestyle events, on the other hand, would likely be promoted on Facebook or Instagram instead.

Pro-tip: *Select the social media channels according to the time and resources you have to commit to managing them* for it's better to be more effective in engaging with one rather than being a jack of all trades and good at none.

Step Two: Understand the nature of your event before setting up a social media account

Two types you can create

Company accounts are good for organisers of events that are consistently in one genre like that of Gastrogig (i.e. food) and MAGIC (i.e. startups).

Event-specific accounts are best for independent new wave events like GameStart Asia, or an event series the likes of Creative Mornings or SheSays KL. This is for the very simple reason that attendees are more likely to be familiar with and hence search for the name of your event or event series rather than the company organizing it (e.g. Eliphant Pte Ltd, the organizing company of GameStart Asia).

Step Three: Build a relevant social media following

With curated content

Sure, you can seed your initial social media following through requesting of friends and family to follow your event's social media account but that can only get you so far in terms of building a relevant following, that is, followers who are within your event's target audience.

The best way to attract a relevant audience to become followers of your social media account is to ***provide content they will want to see on their feeds*** and be kept in the loop about. Profile your event's audience to discover the needs or issues faced and provide content that will address them. Make your posts or tweets discoverable through the use of popular hashtags amongst your target audience. By building an online community around your event, it can help you gain momentum in event publicity in the long run.

Step Four: Engage!

Four groups you should interact with to increase your event's reach

The very nature of social media demands that our posts or tweets generate a social interaction (i.e. likes, shares, retweets). If not, it'll quickly fall off the radar. Engage with these four groups to get news of your event out to more on social media.

- Involve your current **social media followers** with relevant articles, pictures, contests and any media that would inspire them to share or engage in conversation with you! In real life, you'll be more inclined to continue in conversation with someone if you're interested in what they have to say. The same goes with social media content, treat every post or tweet as an opportunity to create a two-way interaction.

- S*howcase and engage with your* ***event partners and sponsors***. Reward them with due recognition for their involvement in your event with social media shout-outs. Tag your partners or sponsors too because more likely than not, they'll return the shout-out, or in social media terms, share or re-tweet.

> *The very nature of social media demands that our posts or tweets generate a social interaction (i.e. likes, shares, retweets). If not, it'll quickly fall off the radar.*

- If you have ***speakers***, invite them to display thought leadership through writing a guest blog on a topic relevant to your upcoming event. This provides your potential attendees a snippet of what they would get through attending your event, and is material that followers can easily share online hence also promoting your event to others in their social circles.

- Think about the ***influencers*** to your target audience and whether or not they're active on the platforms you've chosen to focus promoting your event on. Engage directly with their social media accounts – introduce your event and demonstrate how it's useful to both them and their followers, invite them to come for free, ask if they could help share your event along with a discount code. Engaging with influencers can mean an amplified reach for you to your target audience.

With great engagement comes great event publicity power amongst the friends of your fans as posts or tweets start showing up on their feed.

Step Five: Increase intrigue and interest

Particularly closer to event day

Share event information like speakers, venue, food, a preview of acts, and so on. The more the better! Get your attendees excited before the event, keep them on edge with bite-sized teasers, wanting more and yearning for event day. Make it convincing that what they're going for is ***giving them value*** that's worth their time and money.

Create a ***visual countdown*** on social media to get current attendees excited and potential attendees scrambling to purchase tickets at the last minute.

Flaunt your media coverage and show your audience you've got media backing and street cred.

Try these five easy first steps to kickstart social media prowess and get more attendees to your event.

Chapter 4

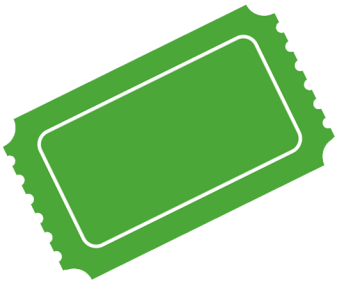
An organiser's must-have kit of 12 web and mobile tools for events

Planning an event involves so many facets that when push comes to shove, having a kit of helpful (and even free) event management tools that saves the finite commodity of time and money will be one to clamor over.

Use these **12 web and mobile tools** to make planning for your next event easier and simpler to manage.

Source for a venue. Securing a venue is essential to hosting an event yet one of the more difficult tasks at hand. Online sites like Yelp and Venuerific breaks down this task for you. Both websites enable you to sieve through a ton of venues in multiple countries worldwide.

Planning and collaborative tools. Instead of having your event notes and documents scattered all over the place, you could synchronize them all onto one platform such as Evernote or Google Drive. Both allow you to neatly organize your notes into folders, share notes with others on the team, and collaborate on the same project document.

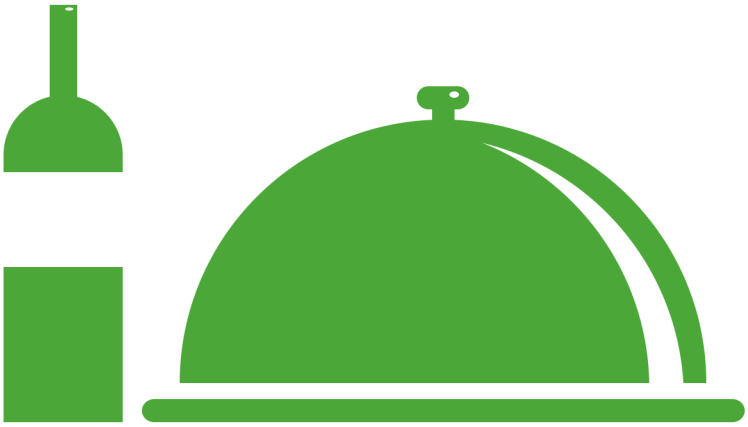


Resolve ticketing and registration. Global online and mobile event ticketing platform, Peatix (yes, that's us!), provides event organizers with powerful tools to create, promote, manage and sell out events of all sizes with considerable ease and at the lowest ticketing fees. Don't take our word for it, try it for yourself – Peatix is free for free events.

Create beautiful websites. Fret not if you've got no coding knowledge, you can still create beautiful websites for your event without the need to hire a programmer! Strikingly, a no-hassle fuss-free website builder, makes this possible with easy to maneuver and editable content blocks.

Push out event publicity. As organizers, this is sometimes overlooked but plays an important role in getting the word out beyond our immediate social circles. On the Peatix dashboard, you have access to promotional tools including sharing the event with your followers on Facebook and Twitter in one-click and sending out an email blast about your event!

Hire finger-licking catering. Catering needs and requirements can vary for different events and many a time, it's difficult to gauge how many we need to cater for in advance. Try Foodpanda, the good thing about it is you're able to search for restaurants within the vicinity of your venue simply by input of its postcode, get an estimate delivery time, more accurately order the required quantity since you're able to order just 1-2 hours before your event, and at low delivery fees.



Arrange convenient transport. Have an inconvenient venue? Not to worry! Get in touch with GrabTaxi or Uber to help attendees get to your event on time in the comfort of a cab or chauffeured ride that can be booked via free mobile apps.

Play awesome music. Music sets the ambience and mood for an event, and plays to the hearts and emotions of attendees. According to Spotify, there's songs for peace, psyched!, angst, quirky, sultry and even brainstorming! Conveniently categorized song lists has made choosing songs as easy as the click of the mouse. It's available on mobile and desktop, for free or at a premium (for smooth playing without the ads).

Engage on social media. Tracking your social media conversations gives you insight to the sentiment towards your event and enables you to engage with attendees in real time. Use hashtags to aggregate and monitor your event's clout on social media using free tools like Tweetdeck and Hootsuite.

When push comes to shove in event management, may the force be with you and these tools be ever in your event planning and execution favor.

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Conclusion and Additional resources

Now that you've gleaned through this ebook, you should be all set to kickstart your first event and grow a community around your startup using events!

Simply remember these important points covered:

- Before you kickstart an event, define who would make up your community and understand what they value. Only then can you craft an event that your community will want to attend.

- Communicate the value of your event to entice people to want to spend the time and money to attend. Why should they care? What's in it for them? That's precisely what you need to convey on your event landing page which will be the first thing people see as they evaluate whether or not to click "Buy Ticket".

- Start promoting your event on social media in five steps: Stay focused on platforms where your community spends most time on, understand the nature of your event before setting up a social media account, build a relevant following with content curated to your community's interests, engage with your current followers, partners and sponsors, speakers, and influencers to increase reach, and create intrigue or interest in your event with bite-sized previews.

- Planning events can be made simpler with web and mobile event management tools – check out the 12 in this ebook!

Community building success does not happen overnight but its benefits are far-reaching. Complementary to your online efforts at engaging your startup's community, with events you can create strong brand evangelists, a personable brand, opportunities to network, and strengthen partnerships as you provide your community with value. Good luck hosting your first event!

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Customizable event pages

Zero platform fees

Build a following with groups

Attendee Generation

Quick check-ins

Event Discovery

Peatix

Ticketing and Community Management

Get the world excited about your mission in tech! Rally a community after it through your group, at your event. Manage your community and ticketing with ease, we've simplified it for you.

Rally your community: Create a group for free, attract like-minded people to join your startup's cause. Members are automatically notified of group events, and you can message them too. Save the need to start event promotion from scratch each time.

Be mobile-optimized: Make it convenient to purchase and access tickets on mobile.

Get discovered: Have new people join your group and events through our recommendation and discovery features - it's helped to sell 25 out of every 100 tickets sold on Peatix! Gain even more visibility to your target audience with Peatix boost.

Save on fees: No platform fees, only payment processing fees. Have more money for other event essentials like marketing and venue hire.

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