



HOW WE DID SWAG DIFFERENTLY? AT COMNET 23

(and how you can too!)

Conferences create **A LOT** of waste
approximately 40% of conference swag becomes waste

How could ComNet be a more sustainable gathering?


To reduce Swag we let folks choose an item vs. everyone getting everything

- ◆ To do that, **we created a [Swag Store](#)**

UNDERSTAND AUDIENCE

- ◆ Traditional approach to conference SWAG was not serving us
 - Goal was more sustainable – and more meaningful for attendees
- ◆ “Swag Store” = attendees have the ability to select what was impactful for them
 - Explored existing organizations that manage this process but our needs were specific and we created exactly what matched our goals and values

CONNECT TO VALUES

- ◆ Our guiding principles:
 - 1) sustainability: creating as little waste as possible
 - 2) attendee experience: creating as much meaning as possible
 - ◆ Identified options of items to offer based on values:
 - **Donations** to local nonprofits – in lieu of a physical item
 - **“Drink vessel”** – a “traditional” branded conference swag item
 - **Local Souvenir** – memento of the year’s conference location (local)
- 



HOW WE DID SWAG DIFFERENTLY AT COMNET 23

(and how you can too!)

CREATE THE INFRASTRUCTURE

- ◆ Webpage created (Squarespace) to turn the concept into a “store”
 - Highlighted all ~15 Swag options (descriptions, images and links)
 - Used a form to capture submissions
 - Tested the functionality + solicited feedback on user experience

COMMUNICATE

- ◆ Communicated the what, why and how throughout the process: in email communication, on the webpage itself, and onsite at ComNet23
 - Swag is different this year to reduce waste
 - Make your selection within the specified time frame to order only the number needed
 - If no selection is made, a donation will be made on the attendee’s behalf to one of the local nonprofits

DELIVER & MEASURE

- ◆ Tracked submissions to order precise amount + coordinate attendee pick-up
- ◆ Impact = Instead of ordering several items per person, each person got one item that they picked as being meaningful to them
 - Outcome:
 - 500 of 900 attendees participated in the Swag selection process
 - ◆ 200 attendees chose to donate in lieu of a physical item (another 400 donations we made on behalf of attendees)
 - ordered over 1500 fewer items
 - donated over \$10,000 to local nonprofit organizations



HOW WE DID SWAG DIFFERENTLY AT COMNET 23

(and how you can too!)

TO CREATE YOUR OWN SWAG STORE CONSIDER

TOOLS

A customizable web page
we used Squarespace

How to collect + track orders

we created a submission form through Squarespace that tracked all submissions through a Google sheet in our workspace Drive; this was used both for ordering and coordinating with attendees

TIME

Several weeks to source items, create the web page, develop communications, etc.

we found it was about equivalent to one staff person full-time for about 4 weeks

Ensuring enough time to collect and fulfill orders

we announced and collected orders 8 weeks before the event and recommend allowing more time than that; needed at least 6 weeks to order to ensure timely delivery all items

COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION

Clearly communicated why + deadlines

we had hard deadlines that were set due to time needed to order items in advance, but the why and timeline was communicated upfront and stayed consistent

Onsite distribution

we sent email confirmations of orders to make pick-up onsite easier, and checked folks off on a list for tracking

Do you plan to **create something similar?**

We hope you use this as a guide!

Please [share your own experience and learnings with us!](#)