

# SAPPHIRE NOW

## Case Study



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SAPPHIRE Now  
Case Study  
**Overview**



[Click here](#) to watch a five minute highlight video from SAPPHIRE NOW 2010.

Sweeping changes in the way people consume information, engage with companies and communicate have dramatically altered the marketing, media and business landscapes. In 2010, SAP leaders wanted their live event SAPPHIRE to reflect these trends, and they needed to revitalize the brand to showcase the company's innovation and relevance—quickly. SAP knew an extraordinary event would go far in accomplishing this goal.

The annual SAPPHIRE customer and partner event always played a key role in showcasing the SAP brand. But in May 2010, it did much more. It provided a launch pad to accelerate the company's efforts to become more relevant and essential, with the customer at the center of its strategy. SAPPHIRE was transformed into SAPPHIRE NOW just 100 days after the hiring of two co-CEOs, creating an opportunity to articulate the company's vision and go-forward strategy.

SAPPHIRE NOW launched on two continents, connecting satellite locations in seven cities and comprising 16,000 onsite and 35,000 online delegates, two network-quality TV studios, 400 sessions broadcast online in HD and hundreds more presentations, discussions and microforums onsite. This case study shows how SAP executed the event and provides ideas about how to recreate aspects of the SAPPHIRE NOW experience on any scale.

**The SAP Experience  
Guiding Principles**

Make it...

- Easy
- Informative
- Engaging
- Rewarding
- Personal
- Consistent
- Authentic

**By The Numbers**

Attendance:	51,000+
Interactions: (demo leads, collateral requests, tele-interactions)	35,000+
Post-event requests for info:	1,604
Meetings with customers:	1,254
Exhibitors who will definitely come back:	75%
Brand impact: (increases in brand belief statements from pre- to post-event)	10% to 35%
Very/extremely likely to recommend SAP to friend or colleague:	79%
- Increase pre- to post-event:	12%
Leads: (achieved increase over 2009)	76%
Business impact: (positive pipeline movement exceeded 2009 results by)	40%

# Transform the Brand



In January 2010, the marketing goal is clear: Show the world that SAP is an amazing company. To influence market perception of the SAP brand and speed its transformation, the focus is on a revolutionized event. SAPPHIRE NOW must show customers SAP is relevant, innovative and essential. Company leaders have a single goal: internal and external stakeholders must leave the event thinking "SAP is an amazing company."

A full brand transformation takes time (as many as three years), but SAP wants 30 percent of its event transformation accomplished in one year. To achieve this goal, executives combine the company's two SAPPHIRE NOW events (North America and EMEA) and extend the online experience through multiple channels.

The new SAPPHIRE NOW is more engaging, content-rich, and conversational. In addition, delegates customize their experiences to get content when and how they want to receive it.

*"The marketing world is no longer B2B (business to business) or B2C (business to consumer), but B2P. That's business to people. Brand relationships are built on authentic conversations between businesses and the people who use their products and services. Anything we design should be designed on the principle of business to people."*

**Marty Homlish**  
former chief marketing officer



*"The way we delivered content was a big part of the transformation from SAPPHIRE to SAPPHIRE NOW. We took a completely new approach to the way we structured and delivered content with a goal to make it innovative, relevant, essential – and consumable."*

**Jonathan Becher**  
executive vice president, marketing



<b>Audience</b>	Internal and external stakeholders
<b>Objective</b>	Pipeline acceleration; Brand transformation
<b>Message</b>	SAP is innovative, relevant, essential
<b>Medium</b>	Connected, hybrid event with broadcast quality content and conversation
<b>Measurement</b>	Pipeline movement and brand perception, intent to act
<b>Competitive Environment</b>	Competitors moving quickly

# Design And Conquer

## The Design Team's Top Three Considerations

- #1) Create a "wow" factor
- #2) Craft a conversational tone
- #3) Provide innovative content



Photo of the interactive video wall from SAPPHIRE NOW 2010

There were four main strategies to revitalize customer content delivery.

### Village to Campus

Event layout will change from 13 separate content villages to four campuses. Fewer areas simplify the system and create more learning and networking opportunities.

### Connection Points and Networking

Discussion rooms and micro forums with comfortable seating will promote interaction and participation all day.

### Shorter Speeches, More Interaction

The classic 45-minute SAP presentation will become 20 minutes, with follow-up discussions enabling dialogue. Micro forums will provide the opportunity for small and specialized discussions throughout the show floor, for up to 12 people.

### Customization: Topic Selection

Instead of asking employees what SAP wants to tell, the team will ask participants what they want to hear.

Content will be **consumable**, **relevant**, **on-demand** and **contextual**. The design team's early conversations sounded something like this...

*"We can't just take a physical environment and try to extend its reach by bringing it into a virtual space. We need to be more creative than that. We need to bring some of the things that happen online into the face-to-face environment—for example, you can search information much easier online. We should bring the different channels together into an experience. It requires an event strategy, not a virtual strategy and a physical strategy."*



**Scott Schenker**  
vice president, global events

*"It's important not only what you say, but how you say it. We want to tell stories in a way that resonates with the listener. We are going to do this by putting ourselves in the shoes of our customer, and putting their wants and needs ahead of our own agenda."*



**Jonathan Becher**  
executive vice president, marketing

*"How do we take the notion of this interactive, accessible, technological design imperative and create an experience? We need to consider every single touch point we have with our audiences and the experience we create needs to last longer than just three days. This is an opportunity to influence the way each person thinks and feels about SAP, how they interact with SAP and whether they will ultimately recommend or purchase from SAP."*



**Susan Popper**  
senior vice president, marketing communications

*"Let's think back to our audience segmentation for a moment. We've got different buyer types. Within customers, there are seven or eight types, and the global communications group has bloggers, business media and analysts. All of these are stakeholders. A realistic segment is less than 500 people."*



**Scott Schenker**  
vice president, global events

# SAPPHIRE vs. SAPPHIRE NOW



Broadcast centers share programming from Frankfurt and Orlando with attendees in both locations, online and at satellite events in other countries. The design team helps decide which perspectives to bring in from industry experts, analysts and journalists.

Category	SAPPHIRE	SAPPHIRE NOW
Cadence	Moment in time	Continuous experience; Connected moments
Content	Push; Show and tell; SAP Centric	Pull; Experience; Ecosystem, community and individual-centric
Online	Event site	Community site
Physical	One-time event	Multi-touch
Relationship	Attendee; Isolated	Community Member, Individual; Open to rest of the world



*Photo of the Keynote Entry from  
SAPPHIRE NOW 2010*



*Photo of a Demo Pod from  
SAPPHIRE NOW 2010*



*Photo of the Executive Meeting  
Center from SAPPHIRE NOW 2010*



Photo of the Broadcast Center from SAPHIRE NOW 2010



Three of these screens surround the Broadcast Center. No matter where you are, you know where center is. [Here's a video](#) of the new ad campaign played on the large screens.



[Click here](#) to view a video from one of the broadcast interviews.

### Global Hybrid Design

SAPHIRE NOW was a combination of two main hubs (Orlando and Frankfurt), the online platform and virtual "spokes" (locally managed satellite events) in Japan, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and India.

Latin American and Asian customers gathered in offices, hotels or small venues, where there were short networking events before the audience tuned in to streaming video and, in some cases, even interacted with the main hubs.

In Tokyo, 400 delegates viewed a live satellite program from Orlando entirely in Japanese, including an update from the managing director of SAP Japan, an interview with a Japanese customer attending the Orlando event and a translated welcome by co-company CEO Bill McDermott.

Virtual delegates are fully involved. SAPHIRENOW.com and a strong social media component provide an online experience that is a dialogue, not a presentation. The field sales team takes full advantage of the event—from securing time with board members to using the show floor and resources in creative ways. Education sessions help sales reps understand how to customize agendas, create unique value propositions and use special interest activities in one-to-one sales campaigns.

Twitter (#sapphirenow), Facebook and LinkedIn properties strategically "leak" information. Email blasts, ads and other channels promote the new SAPHIRE NOW name to boost expectations of a new experience. The plan works. In about three weeks stakeholders, bloggers and customers pick up SAPHIRE NOW as the new brand. A social media-monitoring tool launched about 90 days prior to the event tracks mentions in blogs, tweets and discussion forums. Monitoring is essential to track volume, retweets and online dialogue tone as well as questions, attitudes and concerns.

Onsite, the central broadcast centers feature three studios and a control room that rivals any major network. A large, interactive video screen constitutes one of the center's walls.

### The Broadcast Effect

Two broadcast centers (one in Orlando and the other in Frankfurt) dominated the show floors. They were encased in glass—a metaphor for SAP's transparency.

In addition to a control room, each center housed three studios.

- The keynote studio broadcasted presentations from the local floor and between EMEA and North America.
- The anchor studio featured presentations from SAP colleagues and interviews with customers, partners, analysts, authors and journalists.
- The conference room studio hosted press conferences and special sessions between EMEA and North America.

Each of the eight SAP broadcast programs had logos, intros, outros and commercials. Professional newscasters hosted guests—SAP employees, senior executives and outside experts. During the overlapping three hours when Orlando and Frankfurt were both live, interviewers and guests in one location linked to counterparts in the other location.

### The Video Wall

The broadcast center video wall worked like a giant e-tablet and displayed a combination of event content and outside information.

On Day 1, brand video recordings played until “social media ambassadors” began turning in informal videos they shot on the show floor. The wall had less to do with sharing content and more to do with drama and “wow” factor. It was populated with the agenda, videos, programs, satellite and news feeds—including the weather, which was important because the meeting took place around the time of a volcanic ash cloud crisis.

Over three days, the team produces more than 400 programs in the broadcast center, which are also streamed live via [SAPPHIRENOW.com](http://SAPPHIRENOW.com). Pre-program interviews set the context for on-stage speeches, and post-presentation interviews dive deeper into subject matter. Pre-taped shows demonstrate the ways customers use SAP.



*“It’s important for the people attending to have everything they need right there. In addition to an open design, customized space for each content element and soundproofed meeting rooms on the show floor, this also meant comfortable seating and all-day dining. We had to anticipate every need so that each attendee could stay onsite doing business and networking. Ultimately, this meant that they—and SAP—could make the most of the SAPPHIRE NOW experience.”*



**Julie Lynch**, director, global events

*“Big video screens are particularly useful at a time when there's a big brand rollout or you're trying to convey something like a very big, simple idea. And in this case, where there is so much new stuff that we are trying to convey, the screens are really helpful. There is a macro view from afar which conveys an emotion or reinforces something very general and broad. And then a micro view when you get down in the campus, where you're at eye level looking at things. You have to organize things there so people know where to start.”*



**Rick Stockton**, senior creative on the sap global events design team

There's buzz about the concerts (Santana in Orlando and Duran Duran in Frankfurt). The choice of these musicians is conscious; like everything else, entertainment is strategy down, not logistics up.

### Cultural Differences

Because SAP is a global company, the core message was the same for all audiences. However, regional preferences shaped local content and customer treatment. In North America, customers were segmented and treated by industry; in EMEA, they were handled by country and industry.

As for networking, there were 17 different market units at the EMEA event, and each had its own lounge. These national centers allowed customers to discourse and learn among their cultural and linguistic peers.

Frankfurt hosted a party with Duran Duran, a D.J. and food and drink; Orlando delegates enjoyed a concert with Santana. Keynotes highlighted well-known names: environmentalist and former U.S. vice president Al Gore in North America and airline mogul Sir Richard Branson in EMEA.

The campuses are organized around topic areas and at each campus, theaters show 20-minute presentations on pertinent topics. Nearby, speakers and participants meet in discussion rooms. Virtual delegates participate via streaming video. Experts host "on demand" discussions in the Executive Meeting Center, demo areas and kiosks.

### Shorter Speeches

The team limited keynote speeches to 20-30 minutes and followed them with live or taped conversations. SAP executives understood why the speeches needed to be shorter and simpler because they occupied prime-time TV slots. PowerPoint presentations were streamlined and presentations were succinct and crisp. Professional coaching made the approach viable.

The team also conducted off-stage broadcast interviews with speakers following their on-stage presentations and created video trailers of cutting-edge content prior to the event, so that content could be shared before, during and after the meeting. The trailers gave leaders a channel for communicating outside the boundaries of their speeches. This idea worked particularly well for sharing content.

### Experts on Demand

On the show floor, the Executive Meeting Center accommodated a schedule of content experts on a series of topics. Thought leaders discussed best practices and solutions. Solution experts demonstrated products, and industry experts answered questions. SAP leveraged the significant intellectual property of its internal experts. At the hands-on areas, delegates received "demo guide" experiences—an idea inspired by a concept Apple uses in its retail stores. Alternatively, delegates used touch-screen kiosks near session theaters to download videos and topical assets.

Every campus has areas with tables and chairs and a projection area for hosting micro forums, or small group discussions on specialized topics. Everyone has access to more detailed content online. The show floor encourages interaction with round tables, couches, small meeting rooms, small amphitheatres and telepresence rooms for virtual conversations. Sound and lighting are key to creating personal experiences across the show floor.

### Light and Sound

Lighting sets the ambiance of the space. Bright and precisely focused lights helped the delegate eye know where to look in 800,000 square feet of visual stimulation. Lighting director Paul Palazzo highlighted where he wanted people to look or go. Scale and lighting are organizing principles; they help delegates decipher the big messages from the small ones. Each theater seat came equipped with a speaker underneath. Outside the space, people couldn't hear the presenters. Delegates conversed in informal seating areas without overwhelming background noise.

Delegates use kiosks to access personalized information. Other show floor areas include the Boardroom of the Future and Meet Our Customers. Everything in Orlando is mirrored in Frankfurt, though EMEA also hosts rooms for each of its regions. The Leadership Forum targets c-level execs. The keynote center and show floor feature 60-by-18-foot screens. A video loop delivers brand messaging.

### Leadership Forum

The Leadership Forum provided separate activities and content for c-level executives. Forum participants spent time on the show floor, but also enjoyed unique experiences, such as an inside tour of the Disney customer experience. Networking opportunities took the form of one-on-one, speed dating-type meetings between SAP leaders and top prospects and clients. The field marketing team worked with sales to target the senior executive audience.

Customers and ecosystem partners delivered more content than SAP employees. The content steering committee developed content around what customers wanted to know, not what SAP wanted to convey. There was even a call for papers from customers and partners.

### Feeding the Ecosystem

The SAP ecosystem is a network of more than 10,000 partners that help SAP customers build and deploy solutions that address unique business needs. The ecosystem encompasses a virtual community network of more than 2 million active members that help customers engage with partners, other customers and SAP experts.

Ecosystem partners were critical participants at SAPPHIRE NOW. Customers benefit by seeing how partners can help them with business solutions and field sales benefited as partners told the SAP story. Reps drew upon ecosystem experts to support the customer sales cycles. Partners benefitted from exposure to SAP's customers and prospects.

These partners conversed with customers in theater presentations and panel discussions across the show floor, participated in micro forums and taped programs in the broadcast center. There was an ecosystem content track. In the EcoHub, partners engaged in consultative conversations with customers.

Media have a pressroom on the show floor. In the keynote studio, they have worktables with power outlets, Internet and digital audio and video feeds.

### Free the Press

At previous SAPPHIREs, media were cloistered in a remote room away from the show floor action. Their movements were carefully orchestrated to avoid loss of control over core messaging. However, the desire for a more open and transparent approach by the communications team required the design team to think differently.

As a result, the Global Communications Center was relocated to the center of the show floor, and influencers were encouraged to interact and ask questions with all delegates. Journalists were thrilled to be on the show floor, and turns out, the fear of loss of control was unfounded.

The online experience mirrors the SAPPHIRE NOW focus on conversation. Twenty-four live feeds stream to the virtual platform.

### The Virtual Experience

More than 400 sessions and 300 follow-up discussions were broadcast live from Orlando and Frankfurt on 24 live Web feeds—all on a proprietary virtual events platform. Several innovative features offered interaction between remote user and onsite delegates, presenters and staff.

- "Ask a Speaker" routed virtual delegate and social media questions to moderators, who then connected to colleagues onstage.
- Virtual delegates tracked their online peers and requested chats. Account execs and customers who couldn't attend in person watched sessions together virtually.
- The platform featured social media integration. Online delegates followed a live Twitter stream while watching sessions and reading comments on Facebook.
- Attendees saved and recorded content, and kept play lists.
- Delegates shared content via email, Twitter, Facebook and other platforms.
- Partners and exhibitors occupied a virtual "trade show" space, uploaded collateral, talked about their companies and collected contacts.
- The virtual platform was available on mobile devices. Onsite delegates saved sessions to their online profiles and created play lists from their mobile devices.

Day 2: the event is the fourth-top trending topic on Twitter. "Social media ambassadors" report from each show floor, sending out info to the online audience.

Social media ambassadors also capture video content. Two video editors (one in Frankfurt and the other in Orlando) download and edit videos. One editor per location doesn't seem enough; the ambassadors are prolific and global communications has a Content News Team capturing footage as well.

### Social Media Ambassadors

Social media ambassadors swarmed SAPPHIRE NOW, armed with Flip cameras. They were each assigned a specific topic and area of the show floor, allowing audiences to follow the ambassador covering their interests. Their footage was taken to the broadcast center, edited and then posted online. They gave online viewers a glimpse of the show floor and conducted interviews with delegates and speakers. They attended workshops, keynotes and other sessions—walking the floor, stopping at booths and talking to people. They tweeted and blogged like journalists, not SAP employees.

The online audience is alerted when new content is available. While connecting virtually, online delegates can send questions to onsite moderators.

### Content News Team

The Content News Team reported on the event and uploaded press releases, newsbytes, articles, videos, blogs and clips of media coverage to the online newsroom.

Onsite involvement of the global communications team was new—in the past most of the team stayed home, but at SAPPHIRE NOW, more than 100 attended the event to be part of the content news team.

Twitter serves as an "event concierge" communications backchannel. People ask questions and receive quick answers. Delegates use their mobile devices to build personal agendas and record sessions.

### Social Media Strategy and Results

SAP created six goals for SAPPHIRE NOW social media:

- Enhance audience acquisition
- Positively impact virtual and onsite attendees
- Acknowledge attendees as influencers
- Showcase SAP technology
- Establish SAP as a savvy social media practitioner
- Contribute to delegate matchmaking

**Twitter.** #sapphirennow and @sapphirennow served as the broadcast Twitter channel and hash tag for the event.

**Social Media Ambassadors.** Six social media ambassadors in each location (12 between Orlando and Frankfurt) blogged and tweeted on their specific assigned topics to keep content relevant to a varied audience.

**Wrap Up.** Each day, the team created video wrap-ups based on content from the social media monitoring system. SAP executives discussed trending topics at the event. The team posted the wrap-up on YouTube and used it to open presentations the next day.

**Live in Orlando.** The team broadcast Twitter feeds on two screens on either side of the stage during the Santana show. Staff urged people to tweet live as they entered the stadium. During the warm up, Twitter exploded with Santana tweets. Live cameras scanned the audience and displayed shots on the screens—creating energy and excitement for those attending.

**According to the Numbers.** By event's end, SAPPHIRE NOW had 2,100 followers on Twitter and 3,300 Facebook fans. The event hash tag was mentioned 10,500 times and re-tweeted 730 times. The social media team sent out 446 tweets and drove 1,600 clicks to the virtual event site. The Facebook page generated more than 21,000 views, 3,000 clicks on ads and 800 clicks on the virtual event site.

[Click here](#) to view a video of two SAP executives discussing the social media strategy.



Telepresence rooms augment the Meet Our Customers and Executive Meeting Center areas. Salespeople connect customers with similar challenges to discuss shared solutions.

### Meet our Customers

The "Meet Our Customers" area provided yet another outlet for customers and prospects to connect and talk candidly about their experiences with SAP. It also allowed current customers to provide positive reviews of products they use and convey their excitement firsthand. SAP signed up 195 current clients for 30-minute reference discussions to share their experiences.

### A Cadence of Events

SAPPHIRE NOW is part of a continuum of events that produce results at SAP:

- Field Kick-off Meeting: held early in the year, informs sales about the company's direction
- SAPHIRE NOW: helps customers make buying decisions (together with similar but smaller events in countries around the world)
- SAP TechEd: trains the employees of SAP customers how to use their new systems
- SAP Influencer Summit: reveals the roadmap for the coming year to industry analysts and other influencers

*"Some people question if the era of the big event is over. The big event is not over, it just needs to evolve to accommodate the way people consume information and engage with experts today."*



**Tom Zeuss**, senior vice president of ecosystem marketing

*“Our primary objective with SAPPHIRE NOW was transforming the brand and pipeline acceleration. Did we transform the brand? Yes. As a result of the event, people think of us as an amazing company, they think of us as necessary to their solutions, they think of us as going in the right direction, they’re more likely to recommend us and they’re more likely to buy and buy sooner. These measures are results against stated brand objectives that I can show you I measured and improved against a cost. Did we accelerate the pipeline? Yes. We can show increased opportunity movement and deal closure among attendees to both the physical and online elements.”*



**Scott Schenker**, vice president of global events

*“We learned about The SAP Experience by creating simplicity and authenticity for attendees at SAPPHIRENOW. All of this is the byproduct of those three days. We learned from those moments of truth, that vivid imagery and those simple and compelling messages and experiences. We’ve taken all of that and created a transformation platform for the company. That is the story.”*



**Marty Homlish**, former chief marketing officer

## Additional Resources

### **Webinar: 20 Minutes Can Change Your Career**

Specific, hands-on instruction on how to address your key executives on of the strategic value of meetings and events using this case study as an example. [View Now](#)

Download a PDF of the presentation [here](#).

View the official case study website [here](#).

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Mary Boone conducted the research and wrote this case study. She is the founder of *MaryBoone.com*, president of Boone Associates and a leading authority on high performance collaboration and engagement. Her work as a keynote speaker, educator, thought leader and published author has received widespread acclaim. Among those quoting from and praising Mary's work are Tom Peters, *The New York Times*, *National Public Radio*, *CNN*, *The Financial Times*, *Chief Executive Magazine*, *Investor's Business Daily*, *CNBC*, *Information Week*, *CIO Magazine*, and *Industry Week*. The *Harvard Business Review* article she co-authored with David Snowden entitled "A Leader's Framework for Decision Making" won the Emerald Citation Award in 2011 which is awarded to the top 50 articles from the top 300 management publications worldwide that have proven impact since their publication date, and in 2008, they won an Academy of Management award for the same article. Mary's books include *Managing Inter@ctively: Executing Strategy, Improving Communication and Creating a Knowledge-Sharing Culture*. (McGraw-Hill) and *The Information Edge* (co-authored with N. Dean Meyer, Dow Jones). Another of her books, *Leadership and the Computer* (Prima Publishing), was selected as "required reading" for Congress by Newt Gingrich when he was Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.