

Kellogg School of Management
E V E N T M A R K E T I N G

Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management consistently ranks in the top tier of the most respected MBA programs in the nation. In support of this position, Kellogg develops and hosts, with corporate partners, a variety of conferences and forums designed to advance its standing on critical issues of concern to current and future business leaders.

The need

In 1990, the Chicago office of Spencer Stuart, through its advisory board, approached the Kellogg School to host an invitation-only conference covering an issue of ongoing concern to senior management and their boards of directors: corporate governance. The recruiting firm was seeking to solidify its reputation as the firm of choice for board searches and believed this sponsorship would, over time, achieve that objective. Hodge Schindler, Spencer Stuart's agency at the time, was part of the team charged with developing the concept for the annual Corporate Governance Conference.

Our approach

We guided a variety of aspects of the program, from presentation format (a series of panel discussions opened to audience participation) to event marketing collateral development (folders with speaker bios, sponsor credits, appropriate newsclips). We also provided input as to structure: It was decided to fund this entirely through sponsorships, rather than charge for attendance, which was limited to those specifically invited by Kellogg or one of the sponsors as a means of heightening the event's exclusivity and cachet among corporate leaders. Unless asked to participate as speakers, the media would not be invited.

Additionally, as a means of marketing the event to past and future attendees, we arranged to record and transcribe the proceedings. Hodge Schindler edited the content to ensure the commentary flowed and showed continuity, and made sure all speakers (including audience members) approved the edits to their comments. After three rounds of edits, the content was handed over to a graphic designer and ultimately printed as a soft-cover, 80-page book. This conference report was distributed to speakers, audience members and the complete board of directors of each participating corporation, covered by a letter inviting them to attend the next year's conference. Seventeen years later, Hodge Schindler is still involved in the conference as editor of the book; Kellogg manages event details in-house.

The outcomes

Over the years, the Kellogg Corporate Governance Conference has become one of the premier summits on corporate governance, attracting the highest profile executives in the United States (and many from Europe, as well). From a first-year attendance of 50 chief executives and directors, attendance has grown to more than 200 – a capacity crowd for Kellogg's facilities. And for the two corporate sponsors – Spencer Stuart and Booz Allen Hamilton – participation has firmly solidified their standing as partners of choice to senior management.