

86

WAYS TO DRIVE MORE TRAFFIC TO YOUR EVENT AND INCREASE ROI



**A Guide to Promotions
Before, During and After
Your Event**



MARKETING • PRINT • MAIL

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Event Marketing: Does it Make Sense for You?

Event marketing is made to order for small to mid-sized businesses, nonprofits and other organizations with aggressive goals but limited sales resources. Participating in the right local, regional, national or international events allow you to present your sales story to many prospects in one place within a short period of time. Individual sales calling can't match it for efficiency.

Event marketing also adds a personal contact dimension to the less personal, technology-driven engagement that defines so much of the marketing and sales conversations today. It creates face-to-face opportunities to meet important prospects and the chance to reinforce your relationships with current customers.

If your brand is not yet established, trade shows and other events can help level the competitive playing field, providing exposure in front of the largest and most attractive prospects. Your event participation can also lead to valuable press coverage and connections with influential early adopters and opinion leaders who can create far greater buzz and more referrals than you could hope to generate one individual meeting at a time.

The success of any event depends on your ability to attract as much attention and as many prospects as possible. That's what makes effective event promotion so important.

Events boost brand reputation and generate word-of-mouth referrals

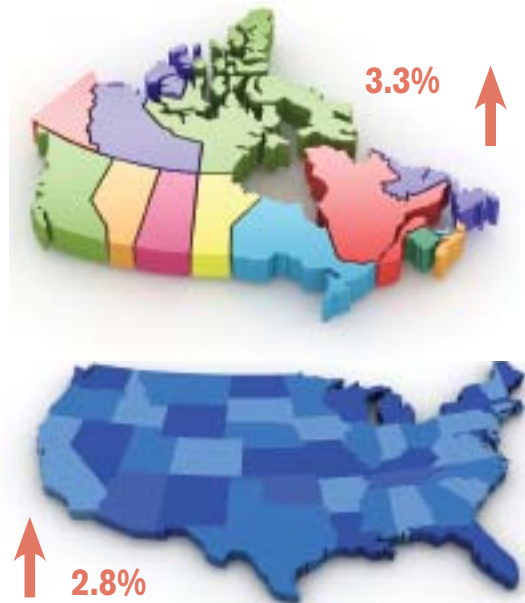
- 85% of event attendees felt positive about the sponsoring company after an event
- Nearly half of participants purchased sponsoring products
- 78% told friends and family about the event; 69% mentioned the sponsor
- 93% said it's "okay" for the sponsor to send them post-event direct mail and advertising

Source: Event Marketing Institute

Meetings and Events Continue to Grow in Popularity

Meeting professionals in North America predict an increase in the number of meetings this year compared to last.

Source: Meeting Professionals International 2012 Business Barometer Annual



Marketers Rank Events High in Importance

According to the Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR), investments in trade shows rank behind only advertising and promotion in the mix of activities used by most B2B marketers. A 2010 Constant Contact survey revealed B2C marketers value events even more highly with 78% saying they consider them important to their business. In the same survey, a still higher percentage of nonprofits – 90% – said events are important to their organizations.

The top three reasons organizations plan events are for education, lead generation and to attract donations. Other events are held as social gatherings, workshops, networking opportunities and retreats, to name a few.

The Times, They Are a Changing...

Meeting planners across the U.S. and Canada say technology is changing the way marketers plan and execute event strategies. Differing preferences across generations magnify the challenge. To meet the growing preference for information delivered via new channels, planners are embracing websites, mobile apps, social media and streaming to present content in real time. Social media is reported to be one of the leading technologies recently purchased or soon to be purchased by event marketers and exhibitors.*

There are so many options, some planners say deciding which ones to use has become one of their greatest challenges! The good news is the proliferation of new channels multiplies opportunities to connect with prospects many times over.

Experts say the shorter attention spans of Gen X, Y and Z mean content must be delivered more concisely and interactively.

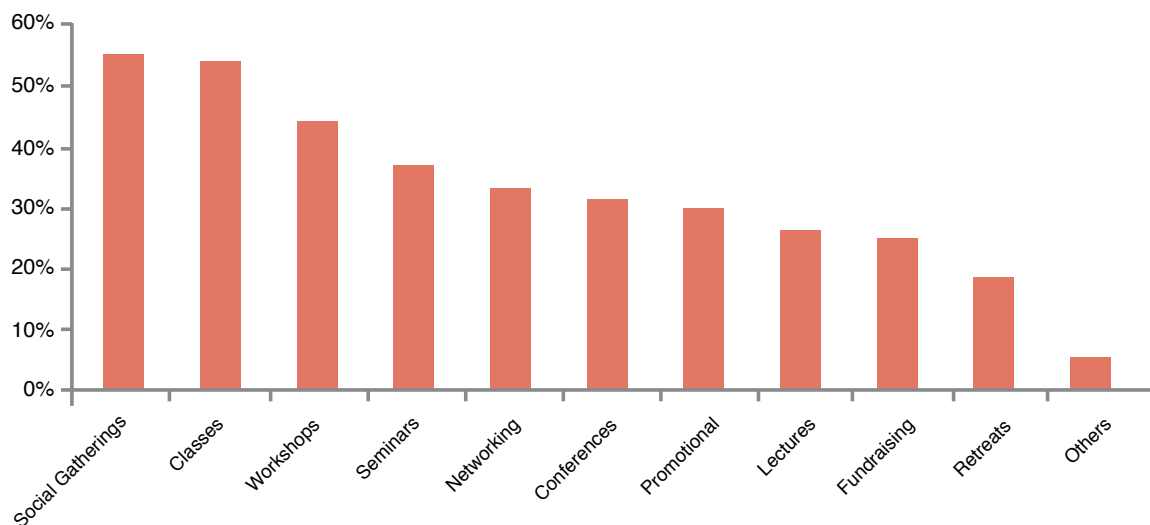
Source: Meeting Professionals International 2012 Business Barometer Annual

Traditional messaging is also giving way to new methods of delivering information to attract the interest and attention of younger audiences with shorter attention spans. Exhibitors and meeting presenters are delivering information in shorter segments and more interactively to engage prospects across generations.

Meeting agendas are changing to accommodate the schedules of people who can't leave their offices or homes for long periods of time – planners say meetings are averaging 30 minutes shorter in the U.S. and 15 minutes shorter in Canada. And as the pace of business and family life continues to accelerate, it has never been more important to share the news you'll deliver at your event with those who can't attend.

* Event Marketing Institute/Active Network Research Report – The Connected Event, Key Insights into 2012 Event Technology Trends

Importance of Events by Type



Source: 2010 Constant Contact

Choose the Right Type of Event

Experts say most small to mid-sized businesses that are considering exhibiting at trade shows should start with well-established events that can provide verified past attendance that aligns with their target audiences. Reviewing lists of past exhibitors can tell you if your competitors or others interested in reaching the same prospects find the show valuable.

Some marketers prefer to attend and “walk the show” before deciding whether or not to exhibit the following year. When speed to market is critical – and it almost always is – get a quick reading by asking your best customers which shows they attend.

Large industry shows are not the only type of event available to you. In fact, a 2010 Constant Contact survey of event marketers found social gatherings and classes are the most popular types of events, and that nonprofits hold more conferences than B2B and B2C businesses combined. Private meetings of sales representatives, distributors or employees – as well as other invitation-only gatherings – involve staging your own event.

Entrepreneurs and small businesses targeting a limited clientele often create their own workshops, seminars, conferences or other events. Of course, when you are the sole sponsor of an event, the full responsibility for attracting the right audience falls on you. Co-sponsorship with a larger or better known organization that can help attract the right audience is one way to increase your odds of success.

Success Starts with a Plan

Well-planned promotions can deliver prospects to your event in droves and at a time when they want to learn what's new, and identify sources who can help them achieve their goals. It's your job to be sure they know where to find you on the show floor or in the conference facility and – more importantly – why they should come looking for you.

Susan Freidman, author of *Meeting & Event Planning for Dummies*, says your show promotion plan should be a strategic extension of your overall marketing plan. If you are launching a new product, use the show to support the launch. If expanding market share is your top priority, create promotions that aid in attracting and qualifying prospective customers.

Make your plan as comprehensive as possible to provide promotions before, during and after the event. Clearly define who you want to target in your promotions, and identify the information and offers most likely to incentivize prospects to visit you. If you will be competing with other exhibitors for the attention of prospects at a large show, remember that most attendees will arrive with a plan to visit specific booths. Your investment in event promotion is an important factor in earning a spot on those lists.

Surveys of marketers indicate that exhibitors allocate about 20% of their budgets to event promotion and they invest in an average of five promotional methods. Spend as much on promotion as your budget will allow, because it's the best way to ensure that you attract the right audience and obtain maximum return on total investment in your event.



Pre-show promotion is essential. The average trade show attendee arrives with a list of 75% of the exhibitors they want to see.

Source: Skyline Exhibits



Direct Marketing

Use Incentives

Follow up

86 Ways to Drive Traffic to Your Next Event or Trade Show

On the following pages, we'll share dozens of proven tips to drive traffic to your booth or event. While not every idea will fit your needs, if you need to increase selling opportunities, attract donations, educate or simply wish to boost awareness and ignite buzz around your brand, we'll bet you'll find many ideas to make your event more successful.

If you are staging your own event, be sure to check out the list of special tips for promoting seminars, workshops and other events you create yourself. You'll find it at the end of this guide. There's no time like the present to plan promotions around your upcoming event. So let's get started.

Create and Maintain an Online Presence

1. Once you have a plan, your first promotional investment should be a dedicated event website to fulfill all the interest your other event promotions will stimulate.
2. Don't steal your own thunder by sharing complete information on your website before the event. Make it an extension of your pre-show promotion, then begin adding the information you are sharing at the event.
3. If you are hosting your own event, use your site to make it easy for people to register, confirm plans and obtain event updates leading up to the event.
4. Optimize your website for mobile users to take advantage of the rapid adoption of smartphones and the desire of prospective attendees to access information wherever they are.
5. Reach more people by creating event pages on LinkedIn and Facebook. Promote your event and encourage prospects to register and attend. Your social presence will also enhance your visibility in online search results.
6. Email is favored by many event marketers to successfully develop event online communities, says the Event Marketing Institute/Active Network 2012 survey.
7. During and after the show, stay in touch with your followers by posting social updates, breaking news and ongoing commentary from your experts.
8. Identify customers who are your strongest promoters and ask them to post live updates during the event.
9. Monitor social conversation around the event and curate content to present on your social pages, making your company a source for a broader range of information relevant to your audience.
10. Use your social platforms to stay engaged with prospects after the event. Be sure to alert your followers of upcoming events or other announcements.

Make Direct Marketing Your Cornerstone

11. You don't want everyone to attend your event, just the people who fit your target profile. Build an event direct marketing campaign to efficiently target the prospects you want to see, and avoid paying to reach those you don't.
12. Take advantage of the high impact potential of well-designed and written print direct mail. Supplement with email to multiply contacts at lower cost.
13. Select mail lists carefully. If you're exhibiting at a trade show, start with the sponsor's pre-registration list.
14. If a pre-registration list is not available, ask for a list of the previous show's attendees. Although it won't be current, the list will include many who will attend the upcoming event plus others who are still prospective customers.
15. Combine lists supplied by the show with your own lists of current customers, past inquirers or others you know.
16. Consider renting supplemental lists of prospects from your marketing services provider who can deliver names that fit your target profile.

17. Postcard mailings are an inexpensive way to mail several times before the show to stay front of mind.
18. Conduct special invitation mailings to important current customers and treat them like valued insiders by sharing news and incentives you won't reveal to others until the show.
19. Use special mailings or emails and the telephone to pre-set appointments with your most important customers and prospects during the show. Consider using awards or special incentive items to obtain extra time with them.
20. If you know the hotels where prospects will be staying, make arrangements with the management to deliver promotional materials to guests' rooms before they arrive.

Use Incentives to Draw Them In

21. News and information your prospects need and want is the best incentive, so highlight yours in all of your promotions.
22. If you will be holding a contest or offering an attractive giveaway item, make those special offers an additional incentive to attend.
23. The best gifts help support your selling process and help you stand apart from other exhibitors. Think of them as conversation starters for booth staff.
24. Logoed gifts (including wearable items, pens, notepads and other items used in the office) are especially effective.
25. If you'll be sharing technical or detailed information with visitors, offer a notepad and pen they can put to immediate use. Branded USB drives are an excellent way to deliver your new software, mobile app, catalog or other information.

Expand pre-show mailings to include target prospects who won't be attending your event. You can leverage the timeliness of event news to capture attention and share key messages plus attract additional leads.



- 26.** Create a compelling but concise sales handout to give to every booth visitor. It will reinforce your key messages after they leave your booth and remind them how to follow up to learn more.
- 27.** Hold more extensive sales literature and catalogs in reserve for those guests who specifically ask for it. Offer to send or deliver the complete literature to qualified visitors in their offices after the show to increase impact and avoid expensive waste.
- 28.** Share your newsletter with visitors and offer a free subscription. Quality content will impress them, and you'll have a vehicle for ongoing follow-up contact.
- 29.** Sponsor prize drawings or other contests to increase booth traffic. Promote your contest before the show and collect entries from visitors to your booth.

Make Your Display a Showstopper

- 30.** Location, location, location. Try to reserve prime real estate in a high-traffic location so your booth will be seen by as many prospects as possible.
- 31.** Plan your display graphics and messages to stop visitors in their tracks. Express your value proposition powerfully, and keep messaging clear and concise. Don't make visitors guess what you are selling.
- 32.** Use freestanding posters or roll-up banner stands to reinforce key messages and offers or to promote special demonstrations, educational sessions and other "events within the event."
- 33.** Schedule presentations or demonstrations in your booth, and promote the times and dates. You'll boost attendance and allow your experts to "wow" entire groups of visitors at one time.
- 34.** Stream live or recorded video footage of presentations or demonstrations to your event website and post to your YouTube channel. Email or use Twitter to alert non-attendees that they can experience your content remotely.

Offer your best prospects the chance to receive a valuable "thank you" gift if they schedule a follow-up sales presentation in their office.

- 35.** Use technology to present information more effectively and interactively.
- 36.** Flat screens can present looped video or slide presentations. Touchscreen technology and augmented reality can take your display to a new level.
- 37.** Use computer workstations or tablets to let visitors interact with your software, new app or online tools.
- 38.** Use QR codes or other two-dimensional barcodes on posters or other display panels to provide smartphone users with on-the-spot access to your website. Be sure to create a mobile optimized site or landing pages, otherwise phone users may abandon your site quickly.
- 39.** Add an animated or interactive virtual tour of your booth on your website to deliver the show experience to prospects who can't be at the show.
- 40.** Purchase poster or banner space from the show to promote your brand and booth location across the show floor.
- 41.** Advertise in the show guide or newspaper. Ad positions near the exhibitor directory or map offer the greatest visibility to visitors looking for directions.
- 42.** Train booth staff to extend a friendly greeting to visitors and quickly present key messages.
- 43.** Make sure prospect information is captured consistently. If the show does not offer badge scanner technology, create your own system to ensure the information you need is captured.
- 44.** Outfit your booth staff in logoed wearables to increase their professional appearance and elevate your brand image.
- 45.** Limit booth staff to just essential personnel. Crowds discourage visitors.
- 46.** Conduct extended meetings with customers away from the booth in a remote meeting room or at a nearby restaurant or hotel. You'll have more privacy and won't inhibit others from visiting your booth.
- 47.** Print and display signs and posters in your booth to promote your offsite presentations, hospitality events or other gatherings.
- 48.** Schedule a presentation or participate on a panel during educational sessions sponsored by the event. You'll be seen as a thought leader and expert.
- 49.** Make your presentation dynamic with stimulating AV, posters and other visual aids. Offer handout materials to all who attend.
- 50.** If sponsors will allow, make your technical paper, slides or other materials available online after the show and highlight their free availability in follow-up mailings to customers and prospects.



Optimize your event website for mobile viewing. By 2011, two in five mobile users had adopted smartphones.



Slow but Steady: Projected Change in Meeting Attendance This Year



+1.9% in the U.S.



+1.4% in Canada

Source: Meeting Professionals International 2012 Business Barometer Annual



Put the Press to Work for You

- 51.** Seek pre-show publicity in key publications focused on your target audience. It's an inexpensive way to reach prospects who are actively planning who they will visit at the show.
- 52.** Print and package your news professionally in a press kit to give your news added substance and credibility.
- 53.** Ask editors in advance if they plan to attend the show, and schedule meetings to discuss your news during the event. Personally deliver your press kit.
- 54.** Place copies of the press kit in the show press room for editors you won't see personally.
- 55.** Compile a list of all media outlets that might print or post your news, and distribute a press announcement highlighting your news while you are at the show.
- 56.** Provide your spokespeople with press training before the event. Share talking points and Q&As so they are well-prepared for meetings. Alert everyone who works in your booth to recognize reporters who stop by and refer them to the proper contacts.



Build In Measurement

Lead generation and brand awareness are two primary goals of event marketing. Measure the success of your promotional plan to continue doing what's working . . . and re-direct what's not.

- Evaluate your communications strategies (direct mail, email, mobile, digital, social media and public relations) used to drive attendance. What channels underperformed? Why?
- How effective was your offer?
- Determine referral traffic for your event site to your main website. Was there a spike in organic search traffic?
- Do you have more followers on your social media pages? More engagement?
- How much media pick-up did you get?
- Most importantly, did your efforts result in new customers?

Don't Forget the Follow-up

57. When the event is over there is still plenty to do. Create an aggressive plan for sales lead follow-up after the show, assign responsibility and then closely monitor results.
58. Send follow-up mailings or emails to everyone you met at the show and those who could not attend. Remind them of your key messages and restate your offer or a new incentive.
59. Conduct a follow-up survey of customers, business partners and members of your team. They will be flattered and their comments will help you plan your next event.
60. Conduct a follow-up telephone campaign with the media to arrange additional interviews, offer more information and confirm when and where your news is likely to appear.
61. Monitor your coverage and when articles appear, gain permission to post them to your website to give your marketing added credibility.

Experts say failure to follow up promptly with prospects is a leading reason many companies consider their events unsuccessful.



Ideas When Hosting Your Own Events

If you are planning your own seminar, training workshop, social gatherings or other event, you won't be able to rely on a show sponsor or other exhibitors to help fill seats. The full burden of attracting an audience falls on you. The last thing you want is to invest hours and money in planning and staging an event only to have no one show up. Here are some promotional tips that can help you avoid that fate.

1. Start months before your event to define your audience and identify ways to tell them about your event.
2. Two or more brands combined may have more appeal than yours alone. Consider partnering with other organizations who are strongly affiliated with your target audience to co-sponsor your event.
3. Make it easy for people to sign up and streamline attendee recordkeeping with a registration website.
4. Optimize your registration website for mobile use to take advantage of the rapid adoption of smartphones.
5. Give people an incentive to register early. You'll rest easier knowing quickly that seats are filled and you are on your way to covering expenses.
6. Use direct mail to deliver invitations to individuals who are likely to be interested in your event.
7. Supplement direct mail with email to increase the frequency of your invitation mailings.
8. Ask those you invite to share the information with others. Offer an incentive for referrals that lead to additional registrations.
9. Use social media to create buzz around your event. Create a Facebook event page and provide frequent updates leading up to the event.
10. Create a memorable hash tag and publicize it in all promotions encouraging people to share comments about your event on Twitter and other networks.
11. If yours is a B2B audience, start a LinkedIn group and invite attendees to join when they register, to receive updates before the event and stay in touch afterwards.
12. Start an online and social media competition to get people excited about your event and incentivize them to register. Award the prize during the event.



- 13.** Identify your strongest promoters by monitoring pre-event buzz and ask them if they will be willing to contribute live updates and other content during the event.
- 14.** Produce posters and ask permission to place them in public areas or with cooperating businesses. Include your registration website address or use QR codes or other two-dimensional barcodes so people can easily register online.
- 15.** Reach out to the press to gain pre-event publicity to broaden your audience. Newspapers, local online media, radio stations and even television outlets may be willing to publicize your event.
- 16.** Reach out to bloggers and opinion leaders outside of traditional media outlets. These alternative information channels can expand the reach of your publicity efforts.
- 17.** Provide event participants with takeaway printed materials that remind them of your messages and serve as referral pieces they can share with others.
- 18.** Wow attendees with an arresting presentation, posters and other visual aids. Professional design and production is a must to inform and entertain.
- 19.** Consider an incentive gift for each participant – logoed notepads and pens are ideal for note-taking at seminars and other educational events.
- 20.** Remember, younger participants have shorter attention spans. Deliver information in shorter segments and interactively if they are your audience.
- 21.** Provide online social media access during your event to engage and obtain participation from younger audiences.
- 22.** Invite the audience to participate in a live forum, join you on Twitter, or post comments to Facebook during the event. Pause to respond to questions and comments.
- 23.** Use live social feedback to make presentation adjustments on the fly.
- 24.** Create a quick online survey on your website or use your social media pages to gain feedback at the close of your event.
- 25.** Stay in touch with participants after your event using email and social platforms. Provide news and updates and solicit referrals for your next event.



Where Does a Marketer Begin?

Creating and executing a comprehensive event promotion plan is time consuming. Managing multiple resources or freelancers is inefficient, and big agencies can be costly. To make the most efficient use of your staff, time and dollars, consolidate your promotional activities with a single source capable of helping you plan, develop, produce and implement every promotional tactic you need to attract more of the best prospects to your event and achieve your marketing goals.

Why Choose Allegra?

Allegra is locally-owned and operated. When you work with us, you also tap into our national resources and the accumulated expertise of nearly 500 of our sister companies and, in turn, the tens of thousands of marketing successes they've had with their customers.

Our focus is on small and mid-sized businesses and other organizations that need printed and online communications. We specialize in online and direct mail marketing, targeted mailing lists, social media marketing, posters and signage, literature and handouts, promotional items, logo wear, employee training, digital video and presentations, public relations materials and more.

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Beginning with a plan and strategy, we'll help you determine how event marketing can support your marketing goals and how to make your events successful extensions of your overall marketing plan. Then we'll precisely define your target audience and ensure that every activity achieves maximum impact with minimum waste.

We'll help you define multi-channel activities that will expand event attendance and create more attractive opportunities to achieve your sales or other goals. And, we'll implement your event promotional program efficiently and effectively to drive the desired results within your timeline and budget.

Want to Learn More?
Contact your Allegra representative today.

255 York Blvd
Hamilton, Ontario L8R 1Y7
Phone: (905) 528-2999
glipari@allegrahamilton.ca



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