Cvent Special Edition

Event Marketing Strategy

for dummies®

A Wiley Brand

Develop effective event strategies

Optimize events to drive revenue and loyalty

Prove the impact of your events

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Note to the Reader

Dear Reader,

Our profession is fast paced, rewarding, and constantly evolving. Though it can be stressful, we know the power of face-to-face drives human connections and business.

At Cvent, we execute more than 1,000 of our own meetings and events annually. Along the way, we realized we needed a broader view of event marketing to turn our events program into a proven driver of value.

Integrating events — both hosted and attended — into our marketing mix enables them to be key drivers to meet (and exceed) business and revenue goals. A thoughtful, data-driven events program allowed us to effectively prove their value to our stakeholders.

This book draws from our experiences and those of our customers, who've used Cvent to execute more than 3.5 million of their own events in our 20-year history. We hope you walk away with concrete ideas to improve your own events program.

The Cvent Marketing and Planning Team

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Event Marketing Strategy For Dummies®, Cvent Special Edition

Publisher's Acknowledgments

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Introduction

E vent marketing. Just the name itself sounds like one big party. Don't get us wrong — hosting and attending events *is* a lot of fun, but it's also a lot of work, it can be complex, and it's serious business — with serious business value in return.

Realizing that value can be a challenge. Too often, event marketing discussions are wrongly restricted to event promotion, the practice of driving attendance to a single meeting or event. Many organizations still treat events as an "offline" channel, where valuable engagement and data sit apart from their digital channels, preventing you from seeing — and acting on — the full picture.

If you're going to capture the full value of your events program, you need to broaden your perspective. Event marketing is about much more than promoting a single event. It's about building a purposeful, effective event strategy, personalizing your outreach, driving and capturing engagement data, and then being able to activate that data to improve — and prove — the business impact.

Just as importantly, event marketing is about executing consistently across your entire events program. Most events programs include many event types, from small regional events and large annual conferences you host, to the trade shows and industry events you attend. It's a mistake to focus on "one" or "some" events, when valuable data and insights live all across your events program.

We can't stress enough the importance of that data to paint the full picture. Just consider how you capture a person's digital interactions with your company. You know how long they visit your website, what pieces of content they download, which marketing emails they open, and so much more.

Shouldn't you measure your events program with the same precision? After all, the firmographic, demographic, and engagement data that comes from events is uniquely valuable. As attendees move through your event, they're sending signals about their interests and purchase intent. That's what makes events key touchpoints in both the buyer's and the customer's journeys. If you know the right data to collect — and how to collect it — you can unlock a lot of value for your business.

However, just having the data isn't enough. Many companies are stuck using spreadsheets and disparate point solutions to manage their events. This practice leads to data being collected "offline" that isn't added to the picture you have of your prospects and customers. Unless the data is tracked in one system, it's difficult to make it actionable. It takes time and resources to parse through the data, determine what is useful, clean up the rest of it, upload it into your system of record, and eventually analyze it. Phew! We're getting tired just thinking about it.

That's where event marketing and management technologies come into play. They can not only help you with event management and promotion, but also allow you to make sense of what was previously a messy pile of data. Yeah, it will make that into useful data that will drive revenue and prove impact. Now *that's* something to celebrate!

About This Book

Event Marketing Strategy For Dummies, Cvent Special Edition, discusses how event marketing has become an integral part of a company's entire marketing mix. It's no longer sufficient to only host (or attend) events with no strategy in mind. Everything you do when planning your event, from determining the event type to promoting it to post-event follow-up, needs to fit into a larger marketing strategy in order to ultimately drive revenue.

Icons Used in This Book

The little icons in the left margin of this book point your way to useful information. Be on the lookout for them.

REMEMBER The information marked by this icon is important enough to emphasize. In other words, don't forget it!

TIP Look for this icon when you want a few tricks of the trade for successful event marketing.

Chapter **1**

(Re)Learning Event Marketing

You know that events are an important part of your marketing strategy. Even with the rise of digital marketing channels, live events remain as some of the most valuable prospect and customer touchpoints. That's why organizations still spend up to half of their marketing budget on their events program. But since you're investing so much — and rightfully so — into your live events, are you getting enough out of them to achieve your goals?

Live events are instrumental in reaching, engaging, and converting prospects and customers to revenue. By executing events properly, you can maximize the impact of your events channel to reach (and exceed) your marketing and revenue objectives.

In this book, we walk you through how to build an event marketing strategy that truly delivers. And as we mention in the Introduction, this often requires a shift in how you define and approach event marketing.

But before we get to that, this section dives into some of the common event pitfalls that many organizations struggle with. These pitfalls are often what can keep you from unlocking the full value

of your events program. We identify the common symptoms and causes of underperforming programs to give you a clearer picture of what to look out for.

Doing It the Old Way

As with technology, the only thing constant about marketing is change. Marketing — both offline and digital — is evolving every day to keep up with the newest trends. This applies to every component under the marketing umbrella, which includes, you guessed it: live events.

Whether you're hosting or attending, live events have unique advantages over other marketing activities. Live events are a critical part of the marketing mix that often doesn't receive the attention it deserves. Events can be broken down into tiers based on their size and complexity: Tier 3 (small), Tier 2 (medium), and Tier 1 (large). Before we get to that, consider how organizations have historically approached live events and where things can go wrong.

Focusing on audience generation only

Although attendee counts can be an important metric, event success isn't only about the number of people in attendance. It doesn't matter if 2,000 people come to your event if only a fraction of those are potential leads or end up buying from you. That's a waste of your marketing dollars.

And although event attendance can be a great vanity statistic, the value of the event is ultimately tied to its impact on your organization. If you only focus on how many people come through the door, as opposed to the qualifications and intent of those people, then you'll have a difficult time proving your return on investment (ROI). You may even have a *negative* ROI because more attendees often increase your event costs. Being able to prove the business value of those attendees is crucial, especially when presenting to key stakeholders.

Concentrating on a single event type

Just as focusing solely on audience generation is a mistake, so is focusing on a single type of event. Like so much else in your marketing mix, live events work together with other marketing channels and tactics to attract new buyers, paint the full picture of prospect interest, and bring them down the sales funnel.

Events play a central role in helping your marketing and sales teams create leads and accelerate those deals. Figure 1-1 shows how having multiple events can properly support prospective customers at every stage of the buyer's journey and how they can work in concert with your other marketing efforts.
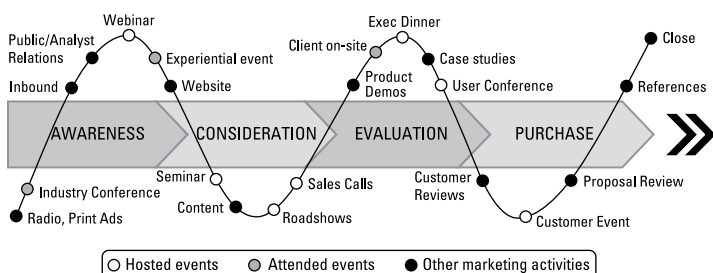
FIGURE 1-1: Having multiple events means supporting customers at every stage of their journey.

For a more holistic view of your marketing activities, recreate Figure 1-1 for your organization with the key touchpoints in your buyer's journey and make sure you include live events in the mix.

What about after a prospect becomes a customer? The importance of events doesn't stop there. Many event types are well-suited for supporting customers and continuing to engage them. These events can help you accomplish goals like driving adoption, expanding usage of your products and services, building advocacy, and increasing lifetime customer value. Figure 1-2 shows how events after the initial point of purchase can support the customer's journey.
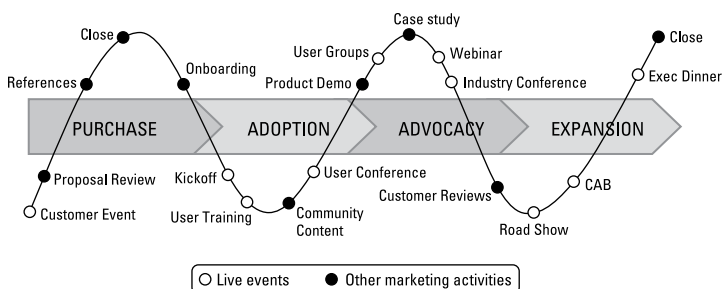
FIGURE 1-2: Post-purchase events further support customers on their buyer's journey.

REMEMBER

Events are valuable touchpoints that can support both the buyer's journey and the customer's journey. They should be well-integrated into the rest of your marketing mix.

Relying heavily on hosted events

If executed properly from start to finish, the events you host are an effective part of a company's overall marketing strategy.

But when you *only* host events, you're only getting one piece of the event pie. Attending external events is important for the buyer's journey because they introduce you to an audience that you didn't know or have access to before. They enable you to increase the number of touchpoints you have with prospective customers. As shown earlier in Figure 1-1, these attended events can be an integral part of not only your events program, but your entire marketing mix.

REMEMBER

When you aren't tracking and measuring the data collected from events you attend and adding that data to what you know about your customers and prospects, you're missing half the touchpoints in the customer lifecycle, and therefore half the picture.

Relying heavily on attended events

Just as some organizations limit themselves to *hosting* events, other organizations fall into the trap of only *attending* events.

Although hosting events typically requires a higher level of effort, they serve distinctly different purposes than those events you attend. During the buyer's journey, hosted events are powerful lead generators and lead accelerators. During the customer's

journey, hosted events engage customers and increase overall lifetime value.

Event marketing and management technology has made hosting impactful events much more manageable and efficient.

Failing to prove impact

Not attributing revenue to *any* portion of your marketing mix means it's only a matter of time until your budget for that activity decreases — or is eliminated.

It's no different with events. Companies don't partake in events just for fun. The bottom line is that they should have a positive — and provable — effect on the company's . . . um . . . bottom line.

Being able to show how powerful events can be and how they are significant contributors to a successful, holistic marketing strategy means you have a better chance of hosting and attending more events in the future.

Underperforming Event Programs

So, what happens when you put in the time and effort to plan and execute live events, and they don't perform as you hoped?

Underperforming events can be a strike against utilizing events in your marketing mix and may make it more difficult to get approval to host or attend any in the future.

All is not lost, though. There are three main reasons why events aren't successful – we get to those in a moment. But first, here are the four main symptoms of an underperforming events program.

Decoding event program killers — the symptoms

It can happen to any company at any time. You put a lot of time and energy (and money!) into organizing, running, or attending events, and they fall flat. When this happens, the best thing you and your team can do is learn from the mistakes and utilize the lessons to ensure you overcome the challenges the next time.

Here are a few common symptoms of an underperforming events program:

» **Stalled/declining lead growth**

- *Difficulty driving attendance:* Maybe it was the wrong audience list or the wrong time of year. Maybe the subject matter wasn't what your target audience was looking for. Whatever the reason, reduced attendance is a sign that something's wrong.

- *Lead "melt" at your trade shows:* Your event staff is working hard collecting leads, but many times these leads are never entered into your customer relationship management (CRM) system. Therefore, the sales team doesn't get the opportunity to follow up on them.

» **Slow, ineffective lead follow-up**

- *Languishing leads.* Too often, leads take too long to get to sales and marketing. Interest wanes, leads get "cold," and follow-up becomes less effective. Even worse, delay gives the competition time to set the playing field in their favor.

  Time is money! If you don't treat leads with urgency, chances are your competitors will beat you to the punch.

- *Generic follow-up:* The attendee took the time to come to the event. Not tailoring your follow-up to subjects or products they care about — and explicitly showed interest in — shows *your* lack of caring.

- *Data overload:* Then there's the data that gets collected at events — a *lot* of data. It can become disorganized and difficult to wade through. When that happens, you may not be able to take action on your data.

» **Inability to prove impact**

- *Inability to attribute revenue:* You know you *should* be able to attribute revenue to your events, but you can't seem to nail it down. Maybe it's because of poor organization or not collecting the right data.

  If you cannot prove the positive financial impact of your live events, then you risk that part of your marketing budget being reallocated or eliminated.

>> **Inability to execute at scale**

- *Lacking automation:* As event volumes grow and teams execute more events per year (often simultaneously), manual tasks put you at risk of costly human errors and avoidable delays.

- *Inability to replicate:* Another negative effect of the lack of automation is not being able to replicate what you've done for past events, thus wasting time and money. If you've found the perfect formula for hosting a successful event but can't reproduce it, you have to start from square one each time. That's a drain on your business.

Event program killers — understanding the cause

The preceding section discusses some of the symptoms of an underperforming event or events program. Now, take a look at some of the possible causes. Here are a few of the major ones:

>> "**Offline" mentality**

- *Outside of the traditional marketing mix:* At a time when most components of marketing are automated and have moved online, events are often viewed as outside of a typical digital marketing mix.

- *Inability to measure:* Without technology to collect event data, determining your event's true ROI can feel nearly impossible.

- *Lack of integration:* Not having the ability to integrate your events program into the rest of your marketing strategy means you're missing opportunities. For example, it's common for companies to treat their Tier 3 or Tier 2 events as "islands" — stand-alone occurrences that aren't connected to the rest of the company's marketing activities.

  Both attended and hosted events are broken into tiers: Tier 3 events are smaller in size, are relatively simple, and shorter in length. Tier 2 events are medium-sized and not as frequent as Tier 3 events. Tier 1 events are usually the most complex, largest, and typically happen about once a year.

REMEMBER

>> **Data silos**

- *Captured data sitting unused:* Event data often remains disconnected because multiple manual processes or point solutions are being used to collect it. In many cases, that data also isn't integrated with an organization's systems of record, such as marketing automation or CRM systems.

- *Lack of a holistic view of attendees:* Siloed data means marketers cannot get a single, clear picture of attendees, making it difficult to determine the next action to take.

- *Wasted time:* The time it takes to parse through siloed data translates to less time your sales and marketing teams have to get ahead of the competition.

>> **Manual processes meet fragmented technology**

- *Overwhelming volume of data:* Manual processes can't keep up with the amount of data that's collected at events. It can quickly become disorganized and unruly.

- *Fragmented point products:* It's inefficient when your teams have to know several products, use several systems, manage multiple vendors, and even deal with different security, privacy, and operational policies across products.

Moving Forward

Event marketing and management technology can help you rethink event marketing and realize the full potential and value of your events program. It can automate your processes, save time and energy, and — most importantly — increase your measurable ROI at all stages of the buyer's lifecycle.

Chapter **2**

Maximizing the Impact of Your Events

According to research from Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, 93 percent of companies consider hosting events for customers and prospects as a priority, and more than 50 percent believe events are the most effective marketing channel they have.

Whether you're hosting or attending events, it's important that you get the most out of them. However, there are different ways to gauge results and define their success, which includes using past data to make future decisions.

In this chapter, we look at how event marketing should be approached today and how this more holistic and data-driven view can help you optimize your events program.

Making the Most of Your Live Event Channel

A successful events program is about purposefully crafting, executing, and measuring your events to move prospects through the buyer's journey and move customers through the customer's journey.

Maximizing the impact of your events channel requires viewing your events and events program from a broader perspective.

Table 2-1 breaks out the four elements to keep in mind when extending your event marketing focus to a more holistic view:

» Event strategy, promotion, execution, and impact

» Events across all tiers, including those you host as well as those you attend

» The integration of your events program into the rest of your marketing channels and strategy

» A cross-channel strategy

TABLE 2-1 **Taking a More Holistic View of Your Event Marketing Strategy**

Not This	This
Just event promotion	Strategy, promotion, execution, and evidence of impact
About a single event or tier	All events, all tiers
Only events you host	Events you host *and attend*
Just about the event channel	Cross-channel

To help you understand why a broader view is necessary, the next section looks at how integrated events have become a vital part of the journeys of buyers and customers. As organizations of all kinds seek to deliver seamless purchase and customer experiences, live events have become integral and valuable parts of larger programs and campaigns.

Driving the buyer's journey

Events play a central role in helping your team generate leads and accelerate existing sales opportunities, ultimately leading to revenue. They provide opportunities for people to interact with your brand both in person (at the event) and afterward (via social media, for example). People are more likely to purchase from companies that they feel connected to.

Figure 2-1 shows the buyer's journey and examples of the types of events that can engage prospects at each stage.
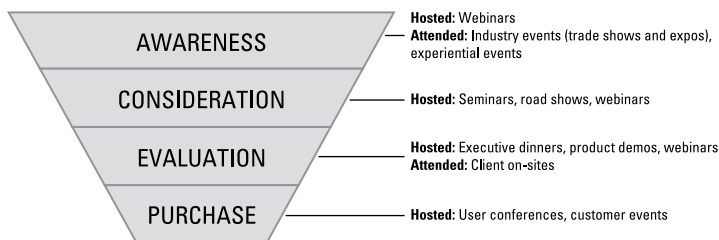
FIGURE 2-1: Events that support the buyer's journey.

Regardless of where the buyer is in his or her journey, you shouldn't see events only as a channel unto itself. Actually, the opposite is true.

Meetings and events are an integral part of a holistic marketing strategy. They are a unique, high-engagement, and measurable channel whose value is maximized when they are integrated as part of a multi-channel marketing strategy.

TIP Events are a great way to provide a human touch that can make the sales process move along more quickly and smoothly. Nothing can replace the value of meeting face-to-face, and events can accelerate deals in a way that other marketing channels just can't because you gauge interest over a compressed time.

Navigating the customer's journey

Events are also essential drivers of the customer's journey. They are powerful engagement points working alongside your other marketing channels to deliver value.

REMEMBER Events give existing customers a chance to interact with your brand in person, thereby helping you drive adoption, renewal, upsells, and cross-sells.

Figure 2-2 illustrates the customer's journey and gives examples of events that drive the customer's lifecycle.
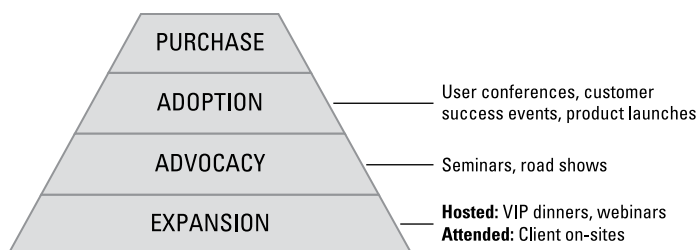
FIGURE 2-2: Events that support the customer's journey.

The pyramid shows from top to bottom: PURCHASE, ADOPTION, ADVOCACY, EXPANSION.

- ADOPTION — User conferences, customer success events, product launches
- ADVOCACY — Seminars, road shows
- EXPANSION — **Hosted:** VIP dinners, webinars / **Attended:** Client on-sites

Emphasizing the value of live events

An events program should play a valuable role in a company's overall marketing mix. Live events are:

» **Generators of expressed interest:** When attendees spend hours or even days away from their office, often spending hundreds or thousands of dollars in the process, their investment level is high. They "vote with their feet" in the sessions they attend, appointments they have, and booths they visit.

REMEMBER

Because of the significant investments the attendee and their company make, chances are high that they are very interested in your product or service.

» **Lead accelerators:** When you send out content-based "drip" campaigns, also known as *nurtures,* months can pass before a sale is made. At an event, you are face-to-face with leads, allowing you to define customer pain points quickly and clearly, thereby giving you opportunities to present solutions on the spot.

» **Trust builders:** According to Harvard Business Review, people are 34 times more likely to make a purchase in a face-to-face interaction. Despite the explosion of digital channels to reach and engage customers and prospects, at the end of the day, people buy from people they trust.

Integrated Event Marketing

Event marketing should be viewed holistically. This approach is quite different from what is typical in many organizations. In order for events to be successful, you should approach them with

the following four elements in mind: intelligent event strategy, effective and targeted promotion, data capture and activation, and proving the impact of your events program.

A successful event marketing strategy encompasses events that you host, as well as events that you attend. Both should be included in your events program.

In fact, almost half of event spend is on trade shows — events where lead acquisition and prospecting are some of the most important by-products.

Designing event strategy and program architecture

A successful and effective event marketing strategy is knowing what past events were successful based on their individual key performance indicators (KPIs) and matching the event type with the goal for each target audience. Different events serve different purposes, after all. Crafting a purposeful event strategy means deploying the right type of event for what you want to accomplish.

Likewise, the KPIs should reflect the event's purpose. For example, an event that was hosted for lead generation will be measured differently than an event that was hosted to increase brand awareness.

When you host events, you're in charge of the attendee list, so you can hone in on your target audience. In addition, you already have some baseline information about them and what their interests might be. That allows you to plan your event content accordingly.

When you attend events, you don't have control of attendee lists. But with the right research and planning, you can identify the events that have a similar audience to the one you're trying to reach and content that aligns well with your products and services.

Promoting events

An event is an event because of its attendees. However, many companies make the mistake of focusing on bringing people — *any* people — in the hope of landing *some* leads and sales. That technique is like throwing spaghetti at the wall and hoping something sticks!

That strategy doesn't happen only with event promotion — it happens with any marketing activity that should be planned utilizing data that helps you target the proper audience.

Still, promotion *is* an important part of hosting events that generates leads.

Event promotion begins (and continues) the branded and personalized experience for those invited. Promotion can be accomplished in various ways, including through the event website and registration flows. The team can also utilize social media to spread the word — both the accounts created specifically for the event and the company's branded accounts.

It's all about getting the word out — word of mouth is important — and setting up an experience that will carry through the event and beyond. Event promotion helps set the stage. It not only educates invitees about what they can expect if they attend the event, but also builds excitement and anticipation, driving invitees to become attendees (and customers).

In short, effective event promotion is about:

>> Matching the right audience to the right event

>> Personalizing the communication strategy and message based on the audience

>> Continuing that personalization when you get to the event website and registration process

Event marketing and management software manages all aspects of events, even promotion and registrations. These registrations serve an even bigger purpose, one that we discuss in the next section.

Capturing and activating data

Understanding the value that your events generate is one of the most important benefits of using event marketing and management technology. If you don't capture the right attendee data and use it to activate your sales and marketing teams, you're missing out on one of the key advantages of hosting events.

Unless data capture and activation are automated, attendee data that comes in at every step of the event lifecycle (registration through post-event follow-up) can quickly become disorganized, rendering it useless without heavy manual intervention.

What kind of data can you collect from events? We're glad you asked! We go into greater detail about the data you can (and should) collect in Chapter 5, but here are some examples:

» **During registration**

- Name
- Job title
- Contact information
- Industry
- Reason for attending (for example: education, product/ service evaluation, or networking)

  Knowing a person's reason for attending can help you plan and shape event content.

» **During the event**

- Session attendance
- Real-time polls and surveys
- Mobile event app usage (collecting questions for speakers, or session sign-up and sign-in)
- Visits at exhibitor and product showcase booths

» **Post-event**

- Attendee satisfaction
- Survey responses and feedback (about speakers, sessions, venue, exhibitors, sponsors, accommodation, and travel)

Proving impact

Connecting your events program to the rest of your marketing channels and systems of record helps you drive more revenue, show evidence of impact, and prove the overall value of your events program.

One of the most important things you can do with event marketing and management technology is capture and sync the data you collect with your systems of record, such as customer relationship management (CRM) or marketing automation software like Eloqua, Marketo, or Salesforce.

Another way to prove the impact of your events program is to measure it against company KPIs. These don't have to be tied solely to revenue or leads. KPIs can include the amount and types of data collected — for example, the number of attendees and event sentiment.

Finally, here's the big one. The main factor that your company's executive team will look at is return on investment (ROI). The best way to measure ROI is combining KPIs with the amount of revenue brought in. Chapter 7 goes into greater detail but know that a company's ROI boils down to what it costs to host or attend the event and what the company and attendees get out of it. If the benefit outweighs the cost, your event can be considered a success.

Chapter **3**

Creating Your Event Program Strategy

A well-thought-out strategy is an essential roadmap for any revenue-driving and value-driving endeavor. Think of it as a checklist for all the key items needed to make your events program a success, no matter how big or small. The success of an event should be defined as both having the data to see what happened at that event and using that information to make better, more informed decisions about future events. If an event is providing value at any level, you need a solid plan before (and after) game time.

In this chapter, we discuss the importance of having a strategy in mind when planning your events program. We also take you through some of the most common event types and what business purposes they serve.

Identifying Your Audience

The first step in any marketing activity is to identify your audience and who they are. This remains true if you're creating print materials, writing an eBook, hosting corporate events, or deciding

what trade shows to attend. If you don't know *who* you're looking to target, then you're likely wasting time and money.

Chances are, if you're an established company with a marketing department, you have access to a plethora of data about your target audience. Even though you may not have data from your past event marketing activities (yet), you likely have information about your audiences from your digital marketing channels. That's a great place to start!

Targeting the who

The first step in identifying your audience is to outline the different *personas* that you are targeting with each event you host. Depending on the types of events you have in mind, your target personas may be one or more groups. That's okay, as long as you start with your audience in mind when developing your marketing strategy.

After you've defined the audience, you need some important information about them so that you can tailor your events program and marketing approach to the right people. This data includes:

>> **Demographics:** What genders, age groups, education level, and maybe even marital statuses do you want to target?

>> **Psychographics:** What are the audience's needs, wants, and interests? What are its goals and expectations for the professional events it attends?

>> **Professional lives:** What roles do the audience members have in their companies or organizations? What challenges do they face and how can you address them?

>> **Motivations:** What is the audience's motivation for attending conferences, conventions, or trade shows? What criteria do audience members use to decide which events to attend?

>> **Location:** What are the best places to interact and market your events to the audience? Be sure to know where they "hang out," both online and offline.

Determining the where and how

Now that you've gathered the information about your target audience, it's time to identify how you're going to get the information

about your events program out to them. After all, different audi-
ences respond to different methods of communication.

Here are a few things to consider when deciding how to effectively
promote your events program to your audience:

>> **Email marketing:** Email marketing still remains as an
effective marketing channel. Chances are that you already
have email lists that contain your targeted audiences, so put
those to good use.

Don't forget to tailor your messaging to each individual
persona. With email marketing, one size does *not* fit all.

>> **Social media:** If you don't already have a social media
presence (you *do* have a social media presence, right?), now's
the time to create one. Identify which social channels your
target audience uses the most and thoughtfully post mes-
sages about your event before, during, and after the event.

>> **Other online and offline opportunities:** Add event
information to your email signatures and ask salespeople to
mention events when they're on the phone or in face-to-face
meetings with clients. Get the message about your events
out at every customer touchpoint.

Using event marketing and management software helps you keep
track of the methods of communication you're using as well as
how successful they were for past events, so you can replicate
those effective techniques in the future.

Setting the Purpose of Your Events

All events you host or attend should have a purpose that supports
the wants and needs of your target audience. Not every type of
event is appropriate for each audience.

This is where the buyer's and customer's journeys come into play
(we discuss both in Chapters 1 and 2 of this book). Are you look-
ing to build brand awareness with a new audience, generate new
leads, engage your existing customers, or wine and dine a set of
VIPs? If so, you will host and attend different types of events than
you would for people who are already evaluating options.

You can utilize different types of events within your events program to support each stage of the buyer's journey. For example:

>> **Build brand awareness and generate leads:**
- Industry events (trade shows and expos)
- Experiential events
- Webinars

>> **Accelerate the sales pipeline:**
- User conferences
- Road shows
- Executive dinners

>> **Engage existing customers:**
- User conferences
- Client on-sites
- User groups
- Training sessions

We take a deeper dive into the different types of events in the next section.

Discovering the Different Types of Events

Each event type within your events program serves its own, unique purpose. Sometimes different event types overlap because some events are large and complex enough (Tier 1 events, for example) to target more than one audience group. This section introduces a few of the main event types.

User conferences

User conferences are great ways to engage with an existing customer base. Many organizations use these large, often annual meetings to extend the lifetime value of their existing customers by offering training and adoption programs to introduce and promote new products.

Road shows

Road shows allow you to present your latest products to customers and business partners. This type of event is unique because it can involve people outside of marketing and sales.

Road shows are great opportunities to get other company employees such as engineers, designers, or product managers to speak with and listen to customers and prospects. These types of events can help you keep customers engaged, give you "face time" with them, give them previews of your product road map, and help them understand how they can improve or expand their use of your products or services.

When other departments participate in the events within your events program, they have the opportunity to interact with customers and prospects and take that information back to improve upon what the company offers.

Industry events

Organizations attend trade shows and expos primarily as a way to increase reach and generate new leads. Alternatively, hosting a trade show can reinforce the organization's image as an industry leader.

Planning these events involves negotiating sponsorship rates for booth space, advertising, promotion, and speaking opportunities for company leadership. Held in large spaces, industry events are great ways to showcase the products and services of hundreds of vendors.

Experiential events

Experiential events, sometimes referred to as *engagement events*, are a modernized and reinvigorated version of the trade show concept. This type of event is interactive and exciting while involving attendees in creating a memorable event experience. When that happens, an emotional connection is formed with attendees, often leading to future loyalty to a company's products or services.

People like to buy from brands they feel an emotional connection to. Experiential events are an excellent way to establish that connection.

Seminars

When you want to get the word out about what a company does and educate customers and prospects on products and services, seminars are a great option. These events are usually shorter than other event types. Organizations plan and hold seminars with targeted audiences and provide them with relevant information. In a seminar, the audience remains together in one space. One or more speakers may be on the program.

VIP events and retreats

A great way to increase brand loyalty among existing customers and drive sales with coveted prospects is to host VIP events and retreats. These events can go a long way toward increasing revenue because the attendees are decision makers at their companies.

A VIP event or retreat can be stand-alone or part of another event. For example, at an event you host, you might have a dinner or reception for VIPs. Or, at an event you attend, you might have an "event within an event" off the trade show floor. Your organization might host a dinner or reception for prospects or customers outside of the main event schedule.

Customer success events

When you want to have some face-to-face time with existing customers and showcase new products and services, customer success events are a great way to go. These events give you the opportunity to set up clients for success by giving them a head start on what to expect and how to interact with these new products or services.

User groups/product launches

Product launches can range from internal meetings to inform employees about upcoming products to full-blown launch parties that create a buzz among customers and the media.

These events are typically used at business-to-consumer (B2C) companies and are meant to generate media coverage prior to product releases.

Mixing Events to Meet Business Goals

Although hosting and attending events can be an enjoyable experience, the most successful events programs keep business goals in mind by utilizing past event data to influence future decisions.

Just as each type of event supports different stages in the buyer's and customer's lifecycles, different types of events support different business goals. Figure 3-1 illustrates some of the more popular event types and the goals they support. Focus on these goals when planning, executing, and following up on an event.

Event Type	Market Awareness/ New Lead Generation	Pipeline Creation and Acceleration	Customer Retention/ Loyalty
User Conferences	◔	◑	◕
Road Shows	◑	◑	◔
Seminars	◕	◔	○
Trade Shows and Expos	●	◔	◔
VIP Events/Retreats	◔	◑	◕
Customer Success Events	○	◑	●

FIGURE 3-1: Event types and the business objectives they support.

DID MY EVENT AND STRATEGY "WORK"?

Planning and executing events are only the beginning. Being able to measure KPIs and prove ROI are likely the most important steps in event marketing. Only when you can analyze this data can you determine whether or not your events accomplish their goals. Find out what works and what doesn't, and utilize that information to keep improving.

Here are a few common KPIs and the follow-up questions you should be able to answer after your events:

- **Leads:** Did you increase them? If so, by how many?
- **Sales creation and acceleration:** Did you create new sales opportunities? Did you accelerate existing pipeline? How much, and how do you know? Did you directly close deals from your events?
- **Education:** Did your users leave better able to use their tools? How do you know?

Event marketing and management software takes the guesswork out of determining the important KPIs as well as measuring the event's ROI after the fact.

Chapter **4**

Promoting Your Events

Companies of all sizes and in all industries are constantly competing for the time and attention of their target markets. Even if you're the attendee, you can easily become overwhelmed with options. Throw in the fact that marketers use so many channels to reach their audience, and you have marketing overload.

In this chapter, we talk about the importance of driving the right audience — your *target* audience — to the hosted events in your events program. We get into the importance of tailoring your promotional strategies so they best speak to the attendees you want to reach. Then we discuss the importance of having a consistent, branded experience for attendees from start to finish.

Determining Your Promotion Strategy

In Chapter 3, we talk about the importance of having an event strategy consisting of hosted and attended events, as well as how each type of event supports particular business goals.

Once you've created your events program strategy, it's time to get into the details. One of the most important is how you're going to get the word out about your events program. How you promote your events program drives everything else. After all, if you don't get the word out, people won't attend, and what's an event without attendees?

Where, when, and how you promote your events program has to be strategic — and all strategies are not created equal because not all events within your events program are created equal. For example, the best approach to promoting a large–scale conference with various sessions is going to be different from promoting a small road show or an experimental event.

TIP

Approach event promotion the same way you'd approach any marketing campaign (or even content promotion): Start defining the who, what, why, and how.

EVENT TECHNOLOGY AND YOUR AUDIENCE

Because the event marketplace is so crowded and your audience is getting invited to everyone else's events too, your message has to be hyper-relevant to get your invitees' attention. Event marketing and management software makes audience and list segmentation easier and more efficient by allowing you to target each audience with personalized, relevant messaging, which is difficult to do at scale without the support of technology. It also lets you monitor and track past behavior (email opens, email interactions, registrations) so you can better understand how large your email lists should be and what messages resonate.

Event marketing and management technology helps you personalize the promotional messages to your attendees in two major ways:

- Segmenting your audience so you can send different groups of invitees different messages
- Utilizing data tags that let you easily personalize messages with information like an attendee's name, company name, and so on

Event marketing and management technology can also help you create audience profiles where you can define the core target audience to include:

- Firmographics such as industry, size, geography, and relationship with the brand
- Demographics such as role, title, persona, needs, and pain points

Once that's done, you can quickly segment your audience by the personas you created as well as:

- Prospects versus customers
- Buyer type
- Region or location
- Industry or vertical

Figuring out Marketing Channels and Tactics

It wasn't that long ago that the only way to reach people was through what is now considered "traditional" media such as television, radio, and newspapers. Marketers now cast a wider net in the hope that their target audiences will receive their message.

Once you determine who to target, it's easier to tailor the message — and the delivery mechanism — in ways that will increase your chance of a conversion.

With event marketing, you can utilize a number of channels and tactics when promoting your event. Here are a few of the main ones.

Email

Even after all these years, email still remains "king" as a key marketing channel. However, you should keep a couple of things in mind when utilizing it.

We cannot stress enough the importance of segmentation and content targeting! Sending a mass message to your entire email list, regardless of where they are on the buyer's or customer's journey, shows that you haven't properly researched who they are, what they want, or what they need.

If you're able to properly segment your audience and send targeted messaging, email can be an effective way to promote your events to audiences who are already engaged with your brand as well as audiences that you're trying to engage for the first time.

Email communication doesn't have to stop at registration. It's also a great way to keep people up to date on event details as well as serve as reminders about the event itself. It helps keep your potential attendees engaged and your brand top-of-mind.

Event marketing and management technology lets you customize the messages for each audience segment, making them more personal and therefore more effective.

Search

Search engine marketing (SEM), whether paid or organic, is another way to get highly-targeted messages to your intended audiences for a reasonable cost.

It's the perfect promotional method for attracting prospects who have an interest in what you have to say but may not be familiar with your brand or products.

The organic search route doesn't cost you anything (except maybe the time spent creating new content filled with the right keywords), and it can be just as effective as paid — sometimes more. With so much "noise" in the digital advertising sphere these days, people tend to be "ad blind," which may mean your ads won't be as effective.

One of the biggest things to keep in mind with both paid and organic search promotion is search engine optimization (SEO) and your use of keywords.

The keywords you've chosen via research (you've done keyword research, right?) should be utilized properly in all online content. By "properly," we mean don't "keyword stuff" just to check those proverbial boxes. It makes your content sound weird at best and disingenuous at worst.

Narrowing down and targeting keywords ensures that your event messages get in front of the most relevant people — presenting them with information that resonates with what they care about (as evident by the search terms they're using).

Getting high up on the search engine results pages (SERPs), can take time, so make sure you plan accordingly.

One thing to remember when utilizing your keywords is to make sure you're also targeting keywords for localization purposes.

If you're hosting an artificial intelligence event in Chicago, for example, not only should you target keywords like "artificial intelligence events," but also long-tailed keywords like "artificial intelligence events in Chicago."

Social media and online channels

Social media is one of the most cost-effective and easiest ways to promote your events program. After all, you're putting out messages on media that you already "own" and control and, in theory, where you have a strong following.

Because you have a built-in audience, chances are good that a large portion of them are the personas you're targeting anyway.

TIP You can always run paid online ads and take advantage of their robust audience targeting capabilities to get your message out beyond your existing follower base.

The online platforms you utilize to get the message out about your event should be the same ones where you have found general success already. Whether you're on Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, or another platform, make sure you're tailoring your message for those audiences. Not every type of content performs well across all channels.

Engagement is one of the most important metrics that social media teams measure to gauge the success of their activities. One of the factors that goes into engagement is how much the content is shared by followers. Whenever you post something to any of your social platforms, ensure that it's easily shareable by your audience!

Enlisting your customer-facing teams

Your sales and client services teams are the ones interfacing with potential and actual customers every day. They know the pain points and what features your products or services help ease. Because of that, they're the perfect people to help get the word out about your events program.

Because these folks are familiar with what the customers need, make sure you provide them with the content and tools that will best communicate the benefits of your event so they can get the message across to the people they interface with. It's one thing to inform a potential customer on the phone; it's an entirely

different thing to email that person more information about the event that they're interested in.

Influencers

Influencers are individuals and organizations that have a vested interest in the success of your event — for example: exhibitors, sponsors, speakers, customer advocates, and favorable media partners. All have something to gain if your event exceeds business goals. A credited and validated speaker is another great way to drive attendance (they likely will promote on their social media channels as well), boosting your event's exposure.

Social media influencers are a hot topic these days. Whether it's a celebrity or blogger who has amassed a large following because of the content they produce, having someone well-known inform their audience of your event can be invaluable. After all, people are more receptive to information when it comes from someone they trust.

REMEMBER

Utilizing influencers is rarely free. The cost depends on a number of factors including the size of their following and how creative you want their endorsement to be.

There are organizations that focus solely on connecting companies with influencers that are best suited for the company's needs. If your event would benefit from going the influencer word-of-mouth marketing route, it's best to get in touch with one of these companies because they do the heavy lifting (researching, vetting, contracts, and so on) for you.

Understanding the Importance of an Event Website

Having a branded website is another way to promote an event, but it's such an important one that we gave it its own section.

It isn't enough just to have an event website, however. Sure, that's a good start, but what you want to ensure you do is make it the start of the entire branded experience that your invitees (and attendees) will be going through from registration to post-event follow-up. Most importantly, you want to make sure the visitors to the website register for that event!

Chances are, if you're reading this book, you're going to be hosting or attending numerous events each year. This is why it's imperative that your brand messaging be consistent — and memorable — throughout the entire promotional process from the initial email or social post to the event website and the visuals the day of the event. The invitee, registrant, and attendee should have a personalized, memorable experience.

REMEMBER

Once visitors get to your event's website, they need to find the information they're looking for and clearly see the value that they'll get from the event. Make sure your website answers the question, "What's in it for me?"

The registration path, content, and overall visitor experience should continue to be relevant to their segment, regardless of where they are in their journey. For example, if you received a VIP email invitation, your registration experience should show your VIP session and available content. Continuing that personalization all the way down the registration flow maximizes conversion.

So, what are some of the things you should include on your event website in addition to the registration form and ticket purchase information? Here are some to consider:

» **Company information:** This goes beyond the information you have on your company website's "About" page. People not only want to know who is hosting the event, but why. What connection do they have to the subject matter?

» **Event description:** Having a descriptive event title isn't enough. Tell viewers what the event is going to feature and what's in it for them.

» **Speaker bios:** Attendees want to know if the presenters are thought leaders in their fields. Make sure you include pertinent information about your speakers, so attendees know they'll get something out of the presentations.

» **Event schedules:** What time does registration open? Can attendees sign in online or the night before? What time do the festivities start and finish?

» **Agenda (sessions, activities, networking time, and so on):** What time are the individual sessions and where are they going to be held? Is there going to be a lunch break, and will lunch be provided? Is there a networking happy hour or social gathering in the evening?

Always include in the agenda any downtime that the attendees may have. After all, they're taking time off from work; they likely have emails to open and phone calls to return.

>> **Venue location and address:** Where is the event being held? How close is it to the nearest airport? Are there on-site accommodations or will the attendees have to find them nearby? Include a map and directions, as well as information about parking.

>> **Pictures and videos (especially from past events):** Include eye-catching visuals (pictures and videos) from past events if you have them. Showcase people having fun and enjoying the sessions, meals, and networking.

>> **Social media links:** Make sure you include social media links not only for your event accounts, but also for your corporate accounts so they can get to know the unique personality of your organization.

>> **Testimonials:** What better way to get the word out about how useful and fun your previous events were than by posting testimonials from previous event attendees?

When you're collecting the different types of event data and feedback (before, during, and after the event), make sure you offer opportunities for people to write comments, not just check boxes or fill in rating circles (we discuss data collection more in Chapter 5).

>> **Sponsor logo:** If your event has sponsors, be sure to include their logos and a brief write-up about them. If you have different levels of sponsorships (such as Bronze, Silver, and Gold), make sure you call those out.

>> **News page for event updates:** This page is for pre-event information, announcements during the event, and follow-ups after the event.

Keep your news page active and fresh, even after the event has ended! It will show past — and future — attendees that you take pride in your events.

>> **FAQs:** If people contact you with questions, you can answer them personally and also put them on a FAQ page on your event website. Sometimes the questions are one-offs and don't warrant their own page or section. FAQs are perfect for answers that are short and sweet.

Chapter **5**

Collecting Data from (All Your) Events

From the smallest field events to the largest user conferences, from the half-day regional expo to the largest industry trade show you attend, data lives everywhere in your events program. This data is filled with insights that help you deliver a better event experience. It's also filled with signals that indicate what an attendee is interested in and how ready they are to buy.

The bottom line is that collecting more data — and the *right* data — across all your events allows you to:

» Learn what works and what doesn't, so you can make more informed decisions about future events

» Learn more about your prospects and customers and paint a fuller picture of who they are, what they need, and how you can help

You'll be better-equipped to deliver more impactful events and measure event return on investment (ROI).

In this chapter, we discuss the importance of collecting the right data to ensure your business needs are met. We also go into the different methods of data collection as well as how to ensure all attendee data is kept secure.

Determining the Types of Data to Collect

Where do you start? Well, that's the million-dollar question!

Luckily, the answer is fairly simple. You start by determining the types of data to collect at different parts of the event lifecycle — at all tiers and at both hosted and attended events.

Although we can give you numerous examples, it's ultimately up to you to determine exactly what data you need to collect and measure to prove the KPIs defined as critical success metrics.

Here are some of the ways you can collect data at each stage of the attendee journey.

Program architecture

This stage is where you decide what audiences to target, your budget, what events you are going to host and attend, and when to host and attend those events. Although much of this may seem like administrative minutia, tracking program data is a critical step toward understanding and providing the value of your events program.

Tracking data is key, but a great event starts with getting your program architecture right. Here are the decisions you need to make when building that architecture:

>> **Department:** Which department will the event support?

>> **Business initiative:** What is the goal of this event? Do you want to build brand awareness? How about customer loyalty? (We discuss business goals in Chapter 3.)

>> **Region:** In what area of the country or world is this event taking place?

>> **Event topic:** What is the overall theme of your event? Data security and artificial intelligence are some examples.

>> **Audience:** Who is your target audience for the event? Prospects? Customers? A certain segment of your customer base?

>> **Event goal:** What do you want to accomplish? More leads? Awareness of a new product?

Pre-event

The pre-event stage is where your planning team does the bulk of the work including event logistics planning, event program planning, event promotion, and registration. These are accomplished through outbound programs, email nurtures, event websites, registration pathing, and appointment setting. Tons of firmographic, demographic, and initial interest data can be captured during these touchpoints. Thus, this part of the event planning lifecycle can yield valuable data to help you build a customer profile or begin to get a better picture of interests and preferences.

The following data elements are key parts of this stage:

- » **Registration data:** What are the attendees' names, email addresses, and phone numbers?
- » **Registrations/declines/abandons:** Who completed the registration process, declined to attend, or only got partway through signing up?
- » **Custom questions:** What additional event-related information do you want to know about the attendees?
- » **P**re-event surveys:** What are attendees' expectations of the event? What topics would they like to suggest?
- » **Session enrollment:** Who wants to attend which sessions?

Event marketing and management technology can support collecting this data, providing more insight into your audience, and freeing you up to complete other tasks on your to-do list.

During the event

Although pre-event questionnaires and registration forms are helpful, during the event you get to see how attendees behave. You can learn how they spend their time and with whom. This type of expressed interest is among the most valuable data to capture!

The following data elements are key parts of this stage:

- » **Check-ins:** Which registered attendees showed up?
- » **Session attendance and feedback:** Who attended which sessions? For how long? What opinions did they express?

- >> **Poll responses:** What did attendees say regarding the topics you asked about?

- >> **Booth and exhibitor visits:** Who visited which booths and interacted with exhibitors? How was the foot traffic throughout the exhibit floor?

- >> **Social media activity:** What is the social buzz?

- >> **Demos and appointments:** Who attended product demos and set individual appointments to learn more?

- >> **Speaker and session ratings:** How helpful were the sessions and speakers?

- >> **Trade show leads:** Who became a lead after speaking with your team?

- >> **Appointments:** Who is meeting with whom? Are attendees with your team? With exhibitors and sponsors? With each other?

REMEMBER

Your smaller Tier 3 events likely will not have all the engagement points in the preceding list. After all, how many sessions can you pack into a half-day event? At a minimum, capture registration, attendance, and attendee satisfaction from *every* event you host or attend, no matter how small.

Post-event

After the event, you're already armed with an abundance of data, but your job isn't done. At this point, you're assigning leads, sending out post-event surveys, analyzing and reporting on the existing data, and deploying a post-event campaign (such as social media posts and follow-up emails). And don't forget, you need to integrate all that event data into your systems of record, too.

The following data elements are key parts of this stage:

- >> **Attendee SAT:** Attendee satisfaction scores are what your attendees thought of your event program overall.

- >> **Survey responses:** What did the attendees have to say about the event details?

- >> **Event cost:** How much did the event cost the company?

- >> **Direct and indirect event revenue:** How much money did the event generate?

>> **Event ROI:** What were the event's results, aside from revenue?

>> **Campaign results:** How many opens, clicks, views, and form fills took place?

Capturing and Employing Event Data

An events program can consist of hundreds or even thousands of events each year. Capturing all that data requires consistency, automation, and the right tools. Utilizing event marketing and management technology can take the variability and guesswork out of recording, organizing, storing, and figuring out how to utilize the data to make informed business decisions.

Here are some of the other tools you can use to make data capture easier:

>> **Event registration tools:** Depending on the features offered by the software, they can handle a branded event registration website or landing page, subsequent attendee communications, session scheduling, ticket sales, and travel/accommodation information.

Your event website and registration process are usually some of the first interactions that an invitee has with your event, so they have to make a great impression.

>> **Mobile event apps:** These apps deliver a personalized event experience at scale for attendees and a wealth of data for organizers. Some helpful features are: real-time event updates, community forums, social media groups, polls, private meeting scheduling, personalized agendas, exhibitor listings, trade show floor maps, and attendee profiles.

>> **Appointment scheduling tools:** It's important to have a web-based appointment scheduling tool at hand at all times. Some important features to look for are: customizable intake forms, embeddable calendars, third-party application calendar synchronizing, and group scheduling for workshops/sessions.

>> **On-site check-in technology:** Say goodbye to long queues with technology that can quickly check in attendees, print their name badges, and easily accommodate and register walk-ins.

>> **Session scanning tools:** Session trackers allow the event host to track attendees in and out of presentations. They can manage invitation lists in case some sessions are closed. This can be done using a scanner or radio-frequency identification (RFID) to passively track attendees' activities.

>> **Lead retrieval tools/beacons:** These tools connect to a database containing attendees' contact information. Each attendee wears a badge during the event. Exhibitors use lead retrieval devices to scan the badges to access the attendees' information from the database. Beacons do the same thing through Bluetooth and an app on the attendees' phones.

>> **Feedback surveys:** Get the specific information you want by utilizing feedback surveys sent out via email or handed out in person at the conclusion of the event.

Ensuring Your Data Is Secure

The regulatory environment is shifting, with data security and privacy continuing to be more of a focus and area of concern. Event organizers need to stay compliant with the latest regulations and be judicious with all the attendee data that they collect and what they do with that data. They also need to be able to gain and prove consent to use the data collected at an event.

TIP

Event marketing and management technology makes it easier for event organizers to remain compliant by storing all attendee data in one centralized location.

One notable regulation is the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which was passed by the European Union Parliament in 2016. Its purpose is to ensure that all companies handle data through secure and transparent methods. Privacy policies must be simple and plainspoken and make it easy for consumers to give or withdraw consent. New data security and privacy regulations will continue to emerge, so event organizers should always be informed and prepared to make adjustments to remain in compliance.

Chapter **6**

Activating Your Event Data

By now, if everything has gone smoothly, you should be swimming in valuable and actionable data. This is exactly what you've been looking to do with all your event activities. But . . . now what? Where do you go from here?

In this chapter, we discuss the importance of collecting the right data and how to break it down into practical uses. We also look at the role that marketing automation and customer relationship management (CRM) systems play in data activation and the importance of integrating your data.

Diving into the Data

You've successfully collected the necessary data to help shape and inform your future events. How exciting! Now comes the challenging part — organizing it and deciding how to best utilize it. After all, what's the point of having data if it's just going to sit and collect proverbial dust?

If you aren't properly activating your event data, you're not alone! Here are some statistics to give you a better idea how other companies are handling (or not handling) their event data:

» **Digital and physical footprint:** Eighty-one percent of event professionals say integrating data from attendees' digital and physical footprints is extremely or very important — but only 20 percent feel their organizations are extremely or very effective at this integration process.

   Collecting all that event data does no good if you don't know how to act on it and if you don't integrate that data with your CRM or marketing automation system.

» **Data collection:** Event professionals feel they need to be more effective at collecting and using attendee data. Only 29 percent of event professionals say their organizations are extremely or very effective at collecting data compared to 23 percent who say they are extremely or very effective at using their event data.

» **Lack of oversight:** Most events can do better at tracking and understanding what their attendees do while at their events. Only 38 percent of event professionals say they understand extremely or very well what their attendees do on-site.

Finding Practical Uses for Event Data

In Chapter 7, we show you how to prove and calculate your event's ROI to senior executives and other stakeholders. We discuss how it's important to take a holistic look at the value of events and other intangible factors (outside of revenue) that play a factor in overall ROI. Of course, revenue is extremely important, but it isn't the only data you should analyze in order to gauge the value of your events program.

That brings us to a few practical uses for the event data that you've collected.

Prioritizing sales and marketing follow-up

If someone attended your event, you can assume they are interested in your product or service at some level. But it's helpful to know *what* that level of interest is. Nurturing leads at the top of the sales funnel is a completely different approach from how leads are nurtured when they are further along in their buyer's journey. Sure, they should be cultivated in some way, but priority should be given to leads that you know are lower in the sales funnel.

For example, leads that show the highest level of buying intent might be sent to sales for quick follow-up, while lukewarm leads might just be added into marketing nurture programs.

How do you know which leads deserve more of your attention and marketing dollars? Take a look at the data you've collected to identify key indicators of interest, such as who set up follow-up appointments, attended product demonstrations, exchanged business cards with one of your team members, or took the time to chat about their pain points and how your offerings can help.

Improving the attendee experience

Face it, no one will want to attend any of your events if they don't find any perceived added value. Attendees are taking time away from their busy schedules to attend, and thus it's important that they take away something they find valuable.

One way you can ensure that your events meet attendee expectations is by administering post-event surveys. These surveys help improve future attendee experiences by gathering feedback on all aspects of your events program. Take a look at how the different aspects of your event were scored. Maybe the venue was scored highly but the food wasn't up to par. Were attendees raving about one session while another got lackluster reviews?

All this information helps you make adjustments for future events and boost their success.

Proving evidence of impact

Every event has certain predetermined key performance indicators (KPIs), and what those are depends on the type of event. Regardless, the data collected should be compared to the KPIs to ensure that the results meet or exceed these benchmarks.

As a marketing professional, you know that a number of factors go into making a successful event (including past event data, of course). Although that's good for behind-the-scenes stuff (it's helpful for the people "in the trenches"), senior executives and other stakeholders want you to answer a couple of simple questions: Did the event drive revenue? Did we decrease our costs?

TIP

Chapter 7 takes a deep dive into how to utilize the data collected to provide evidence of impact.

Looking at the Role of Marketing Automation and CRM Systems

Every organization has systems that serve as the "one source of truth" for all its data. Those systems are often marketing automation, a CRM system, or both.

Whether you're employing tools like Eloqua, Marketo, or Salesforce, these platforms are the brains of your sales and marketing departments. Without the data that is housed in these, sales wouldn't be made, leads wouldn't be tracked, and customers would be . . . well . . . they'd be invisible to a degree (you can't contact customers whose information you don't have!). These systems allow marketing and sales teams to better understand, target, manage, and track touchpoints with customers and prospects.

TIP

Savvy organizations rely on marketing automation and CRM systems to trigger timely, personalized communications to customers and prospects using data generated from live events. It's a great way to stay top-of-mind.

Understanding Why Data Integration Is Important

When an event takes place, it's important that the data collected gets integrated into your system of record. This creates a unified data layer, as illustrated in Figure 6-1.
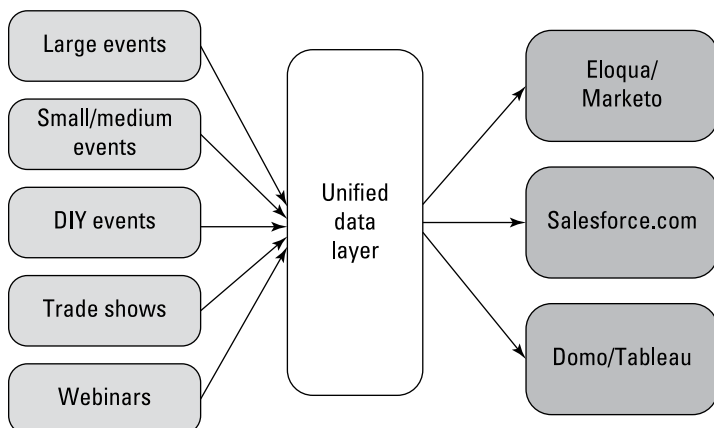
FIGURE 6-1: Integrating data with your system of record creates a unified data layer.

Your systems of record are your "one source of truth," the places you go for the most reliable, accurate, and up-to-date data about your prospects and customers. By consolidating all your data, including what you capture at your events, you'll have a fuller picture of your prospects and customers. You'll be able to more clearly understand the actions that you should take next and you'll have more visibility into how your events program is contributing to the sales pipeline and to revenue.

Dealing with ineffective data integration

When you have ineffective data integration (or gasp, none at all!), you're only getting a small part of the picture, if any picture at all. Siloed data is of very little use to either the sales or marketing departments.

If your company is using point solutions to manage different parts of the event lifecycle, data is stored in multiple systems. For example, you may be using a stand-alone registration system along with manual solutions like spreadsheets.

When data isn't effectively integrated into your marketing automation system, then you're wasting resources and not tapping into its full potential. Once the data is collected *somewhere*, it has to be parsed through, organized, and analyzed. When all of this is done manually, it takes resources away from more important tasks, like following up on leads or planning future events.

More often than not, the data doesn't get integrated at all and acting on that lead is either delayed or — even worse — doesn't happen at all.

By using event marketing and management software, you'll have all your data stored in one system. That way, you can create a single integration to your CRM system and a single integration to your marketing automation system. This approach reduces the headaches and wasted resources of manual data entry. It also, and most importantly, helps paint a complete and actionable picture of your prospects.

Tracking on-site behavior

When you track an attendee's on-site behavior, you can get a clearer picture of his or her level of interest and what exactly he or she is interested in, which in turn tells if you should be activating your sales team to close the deal, or your marketing team to further nurture the person along the buyer's journey.

What is considered on-site behavior that's worthy of tracking and activating? Examples include: sessions attended, who they met with, what product demos they watched, and what their survey responses were. Did they request a meeting or a follow-up call from someone on your team? Were they actively engaged in a product demonstration? All of these give insights into what the attendee is thinking and what your next steps should be.

Integrating Event Data with Sales and Marketing Systems

By now, we've (hopefully) convinced you of the importance of integrating the data you've collected from events into your systems of record in order to be able to make informed decisions on how to pursue and nurture leads. Here are some more details regarding the different systems.

Marketing automation

In order to effectively act on your event data, it's important to integrate it with a marketing automation system. When you do this, you'll be able to:

»» Consolidate all event data into your system of record

»» Build richer, more in-depth prospect and customer profiles

»» Get event leads to your marketing team for post-event communications

»» Add contacts to the right nurture programs to continue to engage them until they're ready to speak to your sales team

»» Incorporate each attendee's event engagement into your lead scoring programs, so that they can be passed to your sales team when they've reached your defined level of engagement.

Utilizing CRMs

When you integrate your data into your CRM you can:

»» Consolidate all event data into your system of record

»» Increase visibility into how events contribute to sales pipeline and revenue

»» Get event leads to your sales team more quickly for follow-up that's more relevant and effective

»» Help your sales team prioritize event leads

Activating Your Data to Drive Revenue

When you have organized, integrated data, you can activate it quickly . . . sometimes in real time. Remember, time is money!

So, what are some common ways to activate your data in order to increase revenue?

Building post-event segments

When you segment your contacts into things like lead score, audience segment, or even industry, you can quickly and easily access that data when it comes time to target contacts for future events or other sales and marketing campaigns. When the data is accessible in one location, you take the guesswork and headaches out of building these profiles from scratch each time.

Marketing nurture

Sometimes a prospect isn't ready to buy. The reasons range from needing more information to lacking a budget.

When this data is collected and activated, your marketing team can determine the best way to nurture this prospect along their buyer's journey. Maybe they need thought leadership content to better understand the problem they're facing, or maybe they need data sheets to learn more about how you can help them overcome those problems.

When you can provide the prospect with the relevant information that they need to move along the sales cycle, it'll be easier for your sales team to follow up with them.

Handing off the data to sales

Finally, it's time for the sales team to jump in and work its magic with all the rich data that's been collected! After all, the value of having collected this data about attendees is so you can deliver it to sales, and they can tailor their follow-up and be more effective.

For example, if you know an attendee watched a demo about a certain product, attended sessions on the same topic, and talked to a sales representative about it, the sales follow-up should lead with that product. It's clear there's a real interest!

Chapter **7**
Calculating ROI and Proving Impact

Data here, data there, data everywhere! The event is over and now you're ready to jump into the numbers that will tell you whether or not your event was a success, and how to continue to improve.

In this chapter, we show you how this data can be utilized to calculate and illustrate your event program's return on investment (ROI). We also give you a glimpse into a few models to consider when it's time to apply a dollar value to an event.

REMEMBER

ROI is a ratio used to calculate the financial benefit generated on an investment relative to the amount of money invested.

Remember, not all event value is financial. Events and their rich data offer many other benefits that are worth measuring and acting on. So, we conclude this chapter by discussing some of the "softer benefits" of events, including how event data can be used to improve your marketing activities.

Calculating Event ROI

As a marketer, you know that a number of factors go into making an event successful. Although that's good for behind-the-scenes activities, senior executives and other stakeholders want you to answer a few simple questions: Did the event drive revenue? How much? How much did it cost?

REMEMBER ROI is calculated by dividing the revenue generated (in this case, through a single event or overall events program) by the original event investment and is expressed as a percentage of increase or decrease in the amount invested.

When calculating your ROI, consider the following types of costs and benefits:

» **Costs/investments**

- *Direct cost:* Direct costs are those costs directly attributable to your event program such as venue costs, food and beverage, and audio/visual services. Even if all you have is direct costs, you have the investment number you need to do a basic ROI calculation.

- *Indirect expenses:* Indirect expenses can be harder to measure, but give you a better sense of true event cost. They include general overhead items like salaries for employees who worked on the event, shared services contracts, and insurance.

- *Opportunity costs:* Also known as *alternative* costs, these are what is sacrificed when you make decisions about who attends an event and the cost of not working on something else. Historically, these can be hard to measure, but keep them in mind when assessing the full cost of an event.

» **Value/return**

- *Direct revenue:* Among the easiest benefits to calculate, direct revenue is the revenue immediately generated from hosting or attending the event. Examples include sponsorship revenue, ticket sales, registration fees, and on-site product sales.

- *Attributed sales pipeline:* This is the dollar value of potential sales opportunities that can be credited to the event. This isn't revenue yet, but is an important measure of your event's ability to generate real business opportunities.

- *Attributed revenue:* This is the amount of revenue that can be tied to (*attributed* to) the event. These are sales or dollars that may not be realized until months after the event, but your event was an important, measurable contributor in driving that revenue.

What's My Event Worth? Understanding Attribution

In the preceding section, we introduce attributed sales pipeline and attributed revenue as measurements of event value. These can be among the largest financial benefits in an events program and warrant a closer look.

If someone attends your event, it's relatively easy to see if they become a customer on-site, but what happens once they leave? Did that attendee buy or become a member in the following months? Did the event influence that decision? If so, how much of the sale should be attributed to the event?

Marketers face this measurement challenge on all channels and tactics, and have created attribution models to assign financial value to a touchpoint that led to a sale. Many attribution models are available to help you calculate the impact of your events. The finer details of each of them reach beyond the scope of this book, but here is an introduction:

» **First-touch model:** This model assigns most financial value to the first marketing touchpoint that a customer has with your company. If a trade show was the first touchpoint with a customer who became a $10,000 customer, the trade show would receive most or all of that $10,000 value.

» **Last-touch model:** This model gives financial credit to the marketing touchpoint that converts the person into a known prospect and lead.

- » **Full path or linear model:** This model gives equal weight and credit to all marketing touchpoints.

- » **Time decay model:** When you use this model, the most recent marketing touchpoints get the most financial credit.

- » **W-model:** The W-model gives more credit to the first touch, the lead conversion touch, and the touchpoint that led to the opportunity.

REMEMBER

If you want to accurately measure the financial value of your events program against other marketing channels, make sure events are part of your organization's attribution model!

You may not have all of this data. Don't worry; even if you're just calculating ROI using direct costs and direct revenue, that's a great start. But realize that the more data you capture, the more completely and accurately you can showcase event ROI.

Gauging Event Effectiveness

As discussed in Chapter 3, different event types serve different purposes and thus have different success metrics. So, when measuring and reporting event effectiveness, keep in mind that it isn't one-size-fits-all. However, the event health metrics shown in Table 7-1 can give you an idea of how a specific event, and your entire events program, performed.

TABLE 7-1 **ROI Essentials**

Hosted Event Metrics	Attended Event Metrics
• Event location	• Event location
• Event cost	• Event cost (sponsorship cost plus travel costs)
• Total registrations	• Pre-show leads (pre-set appointments)
• Total attendees	• Post-show leads (total leads from the show)
• Attendee satisfaction	• Attributed sales pipeline from the event
	• Attributed revenue from the event

These building blocks give you most of the data you need to demonstrate the value of your hosted events program or the events you attend.

A Brief Look at Non-Financial Benefits

Numbers tell an important story, but they don't tell the full story. As you convey the value of your events to stakeholders, keep in mind some important non-financial benefits that events can provide:

» **Brand equity:** This is the value of a brand. Consumers gravitate toward, and remain loyal to, brands that are well-known and admired. The face-to-face nature of events can build and reinforce brand equity, giving prospects reasons to believe, and customers confidence in the partner they've chosen.

» **Knowledge exchange:** This is the accelerated learning that takes place between customers, prospects, and the organization in face-to-face environments. Events can speed the "problem-realization-to-solution-identification" journey faster than many other marketing activities.

Improving Sales and Marketing Effectiveness

Events generate great firmographic, demographic, and activity data that your marketing and sales teams can use to be more effective. This section details a few ways event data can be mobilized.

Building and enhancing attendee and account profiles

Event registration questions are a great data source to help marketers complete contact and account-level profiles. Take advantage of the opportunity to augment and update contact location, role or title, department, and even product interest data.

By tracking activity data on-site, you can better understand attendee interests and the intensity of those interests. You can then group attendee data by their respective organizations to give you a better sense of that entire account's activity. This information enables your sales and marketing teams to send more targeted messaging and have more relevant conversations.

Event marketing and management software can help you collect and organize all your attendee and account data so you can see the full picture and act on it.

Prioritizing and routing leads

Attendees send valuable interest signals as they move through your event. The sessions they attend, booths they visit, demos they watch, and people they meet with can help you determine their interest level in your products or services.

These insights can help you determine the level of engagement so you can more intelligently prioritize and route leads. An attendee who went to several sessions and booths on a particular topic may go directly to sales for follow-up, while someone with more light engagement can go to marketing for nurture.

Refining your content

For many events, a key question is whether the content and message resonated with the audience. Which topics worked? Which topics fell flat? Session attendance and session/speaker feedback data can give you valuable insights into content and speaker preferences and the overall effectiveness of your messages.

This data, combined with audience data, allows you to uncover differences in how various segments perceived your content. Marketing can use this data to refine or validate campaign messaging, suggest new content priorities, and better target the right message to the right audience.

Chapter **8**
Eight Questions to Ask an Event Marketing Technology Partner

Throughout this book, we discuss the importance of event marketing as part of a company's entire marketing mix. If you're evaluating your approach to event marketing and gathering ideas from this book to improve your program, you know the importance of investing in event marketing and management technology to automate processes and to generate, utilize, and measure event data. You should consider several important factors when you evaluate potential vendors.

Where do you even begin? A good place to start is to arm yourself with these eight questions to ask the solution providers that you're evaluating. See how their answers not only measure up to what we've written, but also how they stack up against the competitors you'll be vetting.

What Is Your Track Record?

As with any industry, there are established software providers and there are newer players in the game. All have merit, but it's essential to look at the track record and history of any company you're evaluating.

It's no different for event marketing and management technology. A company's track record is an important indicator of future performance and how well they'll be able to support your current and long-term needs.

How long have they been in business? How many events have they powered? How much churn do they experience? Are they growing and profitable?

Is Your Solution Scalable?

Tier 1 events are the largest and often most complex. Tier 2 events are mid-sized. Tier 3 events are the smallest and typically repeatable.

Is the event marketing and management technology you're evaluating scalable? Can it handle all sizes and complexities of events, either to satisfy a current need or give you the option to "grow into it?"

The last thing you want to do is invest time and money into software, only to learn a couple of years down the line that it can't handle the volume of repeatable Tier 3 events that you now want to start incorporating into your strategy. You also need a solution that can scale up. For your largest event, you need a solution that can handle the complexities and personalization of your most valuable and visible marquee events.

The same goes for its feature set. Maybe you don't need all the bells and whistles the software offers right now, but that doesn't mean that you won't find them useful — even necessary — in the near future. Be sure you're thinking ahead when you're deciding which event marketing and management software is best for your needs.

What Marketing and Sales Technologies Can You Integrate With?

Throughout the book, we discuss the importance of getting your event data into your system of record, so it's important to get details on exactly which marketing and sales technologies a vendor can integrate with and how they work together.

For example, is the solution out-of-the-box, does it require custom development, or is it available through an open application programming interface (API)? What kinds of data can be pushed back and forth between the systems? Is this done in real time?

How Comprehensive Is Your Training and Support?

Say you encounter an issue with the software. Can you call a toll-free number 24/7 for immediate assistance? Is an online support ticketing system available? Does the vendor have a website chat function where you can reach a live person in real time? Or maybe all three!

On the other hand, how comprehensive is their knowledge base? Do they just have limited materials that you can search through in order to *try* to find a solution to your problem? Do they have a robust set of material, articles, and educational content you can access? Can you connect directly with other customers to share best practices and ideas?

Another important question to ask is if the event marketing and management technology provider offers training. No one is better qualified to show you how to get the most out of your investment than the company you purchased it from.

If they offer training, is it in person, or is it a series of videos or webinars your team has to watch on its own? If the latter, you may want to ask for hands-on help instead. Be sure that the company you're working with is invested in your success from start to finish . . . and every hiccup in between.

What Security Measures Do You
Take for Data Safekeeping?

Event attendees trust you with their data. From contact information to payment details, you likely collect a lot of personal information from your contacts. Keep in mind that it's *your* responsibility to keep up with the latest regulations, be compliant, and remain judicious with your attendees' data.

As data security and privacy continue to become a greater focus in the industry and among consumers, regulations are starting to pop up accordingly. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) are just the start.

TIP

Although this can feel daunting, your event marketing and management technology provider should prioritize data security at the highest level and make it easier for you to maintain compliance.

How Will You Help Us Measure
the ROI of Our Events Program?

In Chapter 7, we detail the cost and benefit categories that make up ROI. For example, how does the solution measure and track the direct and indirect costs of events? How does it track direct and attributed revenue?

Measuring the ROI of event programs is only half the battle. You also have to be able to report the results. Some questions to keep in mind when discussing reporting are:

>> What single event and cross-event reports do you have?

>> Can we build custom reports?

>> Do you have any professional services to help us analyze our event data?

Where Do You Foresee Event Marketing Going in the Future?

When you ask this question, you're obviously not expecting the vendor to bring out a crystal ball and predict the future of event marketing — if you are, you may want to rethink your expectations!

What you should expect from the event marketing and management software provider are some predictions about the direction of the industry in general. This shows that they're invested in their craft. It shows they're forward-thinking. Regardless of whether the predictions are coming from a salesperson or the CEO, they show that the company is committed to staying at the forefront of the industry.

The worst thing you can do is get involved with an event marketing and management solution provider that is complacent and has no interest in staying ahead of trends in event marketing. You'll be stuck right along with them.

Do You Continually Improve Your Solutions as the Market Changes?

The marketing and events industry is always evolving, and the technology that supports it needs to keep up. Otherwise, it can quickly feel stale and out of date.

Today, more is expected of event and marketing professionals than ever before. Their attendees expect a frictionless event experience from start to finish. Their stakeholders require them to be data-driven, precisely measuring and proving how events are tied to marketing and revenue goals. More and more, technology is making it easier for event organizers to keep up with these market changes.

TIP Ask important questions like: How large is their technology staff? How often are they releasing product updates? Are they innovative?

What does a provider do with attendees' data? How are they helping customers comply with regulations like GDPR? What data safeguards do they have in place? Do they have a dedicated, in-house security team? What security standards and data privacy regulations do they comply or align with?

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Improve the impact of your events program

Live events are a key channel in a successful marketing mix, helping capture buyer insights and accelerate revenue. To get the most from your events program, it's important to move beyond just driving attendance and take a fresh look at how you approach event marketing. Event marketing today extends to event strategy, promotion, execution, and measurement of all your events, big and small, hosted and attended. This book is your guide to maximizing the impact of your events to meet marketing and business goals.

Inside…

- (Re) learn event marketing
- Maximize the impact of your events
- Create an event program strategy
- Effectively promote your events
- Collect the right data from your events
- Activate data for smarter follow up
- Calculate ROI and show impact

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