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QUICK GUIDE TO EVENT MARKETING

8 tactics for getting the most from your investment

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Quick Guide to Event Marketing

8 tactics for getting the most from your investment

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Event Marketing: 8 tactics for getting the most from your investment

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TACTICS YOU CAN LEARN OVER LUNCH

Welcome to *Quick Guide to Event Marketing* – a resource from MarketingSherpa featuring bite-sized tips for busy marketers.

In this report, we show you how to get the most bang out of your event marketing buck.

Events can be an effective marketing tactic, especially early in the process when making a strong impression is so important. Unlike social media and other online tactics, in-person events allow you to make eye contact with a prospect and shake their hand. That can go a long way in helping you establish a connection—one that ideally will turn a prospect into a customer.

But events can be costly, and many organizations have limited budget and resources to devote to them. Therefore, it's important you get the best possible return on investment for your event marketing spending.

In this report, we'll show you:

- How to select your event
- Why “stunts” can be a great tool
- Tips for using social media in the process
- How your event materials can pay off after the event ends

We know you're in a hurry, so let's get started. We're eager to share these tips on how you can get the most out of your event investment.

Bobbi Dempsey
Editor, *Quick Guide to Event Marketing*

About 30-Minute Marketer

MarketingSherpa's *Quick Guide Series* is designed with you, the busy marketer, in mind. We provide quick, simple tips that you can put into action right away.

For each *Quick Guide*, we scour the vast MECLABS library of marketing research, from MarketingSherpa case studies and benchmark reports, to MarketingExperiments optimization tests and analysis. We highlight tips to help improve your marketing performance right now ... or, at least, by the time you're done with lunch.

Tactic #1: Choose your event carefully

One common mistake is focusing solely on events targeted toward your industry, or one that mainly draws people who are your existing clients. At these events, you will be surrounded by your competitors, with all of you fighting for attention from attendees. You could also find yourself chatting mostly with people who know about your company and are already customers—great for engagement and strengthening connections, but not so helpful if your goal is lead generation and garnering new business.

Granted, it may be necessary to attend some events of these types, in order to network with important people in your industry and stay abreast on the latest news.

However, a smart strategy balances these events with others where you will meet a diverse group of people, especially those who may be unfamiliar with your product. Ideally, you can identify events your competitors don't usually attend, so you will stand out as the lone attendee who offers your product or service.

In the MarketingSherpa article, "[Event Marketing: Stunt combined with social media draws 2,500 to Dreamforce booth](#)," the team at SiSense, a business intelligence analytics company, discussed their challenges in planning their first outing into event marketing. The team considered business intelligence (BI) and business analytics shows, but chose Dreamforce, a huge conference targeting the cloud computing industry that draws more than 90,000 people.

Bruno Aziza, VP of Marketing, SiSense, said, "We chose, on purpose, to go after the one (conference) that is *not* a BI conference because the BI expert is not who we were selling to."

Once they selected the event, Aziza and his team decided to invest in a large booth to ensure they had enough real estate to be highly visible.

Tactic #2: Stand out from the crowd

Buying a booth—especially at a major event—can be a big investment. That money will be wasted if you are lost among a sea of other exhibitors, so you need to devise ways to be visible and attract attention.

This may mean thinking outside the box and developing creative ideas, even if they seem a bit crazy or risky.

The SiSense team started with giveaways of hot gadgets, such as the iPhone 5. However, once they realized celebrity guests were popular with Dreamforce organizers and attendees, they decided to capitalize on that. They couldn't get a celebrity, so they obtained the next best thing: a celebrity impersonator. Specifically, a President Obama lookalike. He would appear at the SiSense booth on the second day of the show, so the team dropped hints about the celebrity guest to create a buzz throughout the first day. When the Obama lookalike arrived, Aziza made a big deal out of parading him through the event floor with lots of fanfare to draw attention and motivate people to follow the "President" to the booth.

Due in large part to this creative stunt, the event was a big success for SiSense. One magazine named SiSense as the number one analytics product at Dreamforce, and more than 2,500 people visited the SiSense booth over the three days.

In the MarketingSherpa article, "[Event Marketing: HubSpot's Dreamforce effort generates more than 2,300 new leads and 362 product demos](#)," the HubSpot team chose a "fact vs. fantasy" theme for its appearance at Dreamforce '11. Instead of hosting one evening cocktail party during the show, HubSpot sponsored an "[RVIP Lounge](#)" the week of the event, which was housed in a recreational vehicle (RV).

"The RVIP Lounge, which is basically a karaoke bar on wheels, was decked out in some HubSpot branding and drove around the streets of San Francisco each evening of the conference," explained Marta Kagan, Director of Brand and Buzz, HubSpot.

She continued, "We would pick some people up, they would come in, they would sing karaoke, they would have a cocktail, they would talk to a HubSpotter, and they would have a good time and a really memorable experience that they would then talk about with other fellow attendees."

Tactic #3: Include email in both pre- and post-event marketing

In the MarketingShepa article, "[Event Marketing: Zombie-themed campaign nets \\$1.2 million revenue impact](#)," Stonesoft, a network security company, described how it promoted its participation in the 2011 Black Hat Briefings, where it conducted a zombie-themed event marketing campaign.

Before the event, Stonesoft sent three emails to its subscriber database with a call-to-action to register for the Black Hat event, as well as the larger goal of driving traffic to the company booth at the upcoming live event.

The pre-marketing email content promoted the zombie theme for the event, and included an element of brand awareness around Stonesoft's business for recipients who were not going to attend the event.

The follow-up email after the event featured a message from the Stonesoft spokeszombie with a call-to-action to set up meetings with Black Hat attendees.

(In keeping with the stunt theme of Tactic #2, Stonesoft really played up the zombie theme, including having a "spokeszombie" who [appeared in a video](#) to promote the event.)

Tactic #4: Use social media to build buzz at all stages of the process

In the B2B Lead Roundtable Blog post, "[Nine Simple Tactics to Drive a Higher Return on Trade Show Investment](#)," Pamela Markey, Director of Marketing and Brand Strategy, MECLABS, stresses the importance of leveraging social media before, during and after the event.

“Connect with attendees and build your profile before the event through your blog and updates on Twitter and LinkedIn. Tweet relevant content during the event. Invite customer feedback afterward.”

For their appearance at Dreanforce '11, the HubSpot team (see Tactic #2) used social media to promote through multiple channels during the event.

The fact vs. fantasy slide show both online and on display screens at the event were a major source of promotion. The company also created its typically large amount of content—such as blog posts, online video and tweets—during the event, along with bringing in guest bloggers to augment that content.

In the MarketingSherpa article, “[Combining Social Media and Event Marketing: Year-round effort boosts clickthrough 236%](#),” Kathleen Mudge, Social Media Marketing Manager and consultant, Cisco Systems, explained how her team works to harness the excitement from its large annual conference, Cisco Live.

The solution was to implement a social media marketing strategy based around engagement with prospects and customers.

She said, "Social media provided the opportunity to keep the conversation going, to keep connected with our attendees, to keep our brand loyalists excited, and to create more brand loyalists."

To maintain the engagement and excitement from its Cisco Live event, the Cisco team followed a multi-step process.

Step #1. Create the social media presence and publishing schedule

To launch the social media outreach effort, Mudge took a number of immediate actions:

- Created a presence for the Cisco Live communities on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#)
- Began managing the conversation on each platform
- Developed a plan for providing information
- Asked for community input for nurturing conversations
- Connected experts with the community to solve day-to-day work problems brought up in community discussions

Social media was also used to ask community members what subject areas they wanted addressed at the next event, as well as speakers they wanted to see. Creating a schedule that fostered this level of communication on each social media platform was a key element in the launch. Mudge added it was important for the communication be a true two-way conversation.

"My marketing plan within each channel would focus on getting information from them, as well as delivering information," she explained.

Another aspect of scheduling was utilizing analytic tools to uncover what sort of information community members were seeking from Cisco. This data analysis included monitoring participation within the community to find individual campaigns that were more successful or relevant with end users. The analytic tools were also used to schedule all the communications going out to the different platforms.

Step #2. Determine the frequency of messaging for each social media platform

Mudge said she looked into case studies and research information that was available to create an initial schedule of message frequency.

The team approached each platform differently:

- Twitter had up to 10 outgoing messages each day
- Facebook had three or four messages a week
- LinkedIn had as few as two messages a week

At times of "high energy" in the community, she said Facebook might have up to seven messages in a week, but that level of outgoing messages created a downside in drop-offs and end user fatigue from too much information and updates from Cisco.

Mudge stated, "On LinkedIn, the more information that I post, the less is self-generated by the community, so it's a fine balance."

She observed that providing multiple updates—four or more—in one week quieted the LinkedIn posts from attendees to zero.

She added that after setting the basic frequency of messaging for each social platform, she continually monitored engagement and actively adjusted message frequency based on the data tracking, particularly with engagement.

Step #3. Provide different social media platforms with different types of content

Mudge said understanding that all the people engaged with Cisco are not necessarily engaged on all three channels meant that any major announcement or important information was presented to Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. At the same time, content pushed to each platform provided end users with content types specifically tailored for that platform's strengths.

She said Twitter was best for just getting information, mostly in the form of links, out there to people, particularly people who might not even follow the Cisco Twitter account. Using hashtags can bring in "a huge number of eyeballs."

"In LinkedIn, that's where I can be the most technical because I can provide a deeper explanation, or a little deeper blurb in starting a conversation. [End users] can respond in kind to the community without that character limit they have on Twitter," Mudge stated.

She continued, "Higher-level and less technical information is easier to put on Twitter, and then Facebook is kind of in between, where you do have more characters. So, I can put more information [on Facebook], but they are more about having a conversation. It's kind of fun on Facebook. They are not as inclined to get into any technical discussions."

Step #4. Monitor each platform and facilitate two-way conversations

One challenge is to keep track of social media platforms while also actively encouraging and nurturing conversations since end user participation in social media is essentially 24/7, especially for a global company like Cisco.

Because the messages are scheduled based on analytics—and in the case of Twitter, to get messages out across international time zones—at times, messages and the resulting conversations can happen in the middle of night for Mudge.

To help ease this pain point, Cisco is in the process of adding staffing to help Mudge with the real-time social media monitoring. She said for effective monitoring, "You have to be willing to participate completely in the conversation."

Step #5. Involve internal experts in social media conversations

When community members would post technical questions, or questions that touch on specific subjects, Mudge reached out to internal experts at the company to answer the question, providing value to the community.

She said the process works in two ways. If the internal expert is comfortable in social media, the ideal response comes directly from that expert in whatever channel the question is posed—Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter. When timing or unfamiliarity with social media prevents this, the expert provides Mudge the response and she posts the information from the brand's social media handle.

EXAMPLE: CISCO TWITTER CONVERSATION

Tom Hollingsworth @networkingnerd 2h
@jay25f @ciscolive Okay, I have User Profile. Not seeing anything about Twitter on my page though.

CiscoLive @CiscoLive 33m
@networkingnerd Ur right, they neglected to add the path to NetVet page. Now it is in there and so is your account name. :)

Tom Hollingsworth @networkingnerd Close
@CiscoLive You rock!
← Hide conversation

CiscoLive @CiscoLive 5h
Read a seasoned attendee's top ten reasons for attending #clus. om.ly/BpbDP
↻ Retweeted by Rodney Heron

CiscoLive @CiscoLive 4h
@rodneyheron I am sure Mario will appreciate the retweet. It is always appreciated when attendees take time and write a blog. Thanks again

Rodney Heron @rodneyheron 4h
@CiscoLive it's massive they did this, I will be using this to help promote to my partners to why to invest in @CiscoLiveMEL 2013

CiscoLive @CiscoLive
@rodneyheron Great! bit.ly/MrTugs bit.ly/GzE1JF bit.ly/H8i3N3 Here are a couple more if that helps.
← Hide conversation

1 FAVORITE

Step #6. Continue to evaluate the program

About the social media outreach, Mudge stated, "It's always changing and always evolving. And, I am always evaluating. Now [that] it's after the big event, that's when we start the evaluations, and I am looking at, 'Okay, what am I going to do differently.'"

Mudge said part of the process is looking over the previous year's social media messaging to learn what was most successful. Even though this process is conducted month-to-month and quarterly on an ongoing basis, she said there is value in taking stock of the program as a whole on a yearly basis.

Mudge has found one challenge is that hot topics on social media can rapidly change, and what was most successful six months ago might not be so hot in the present. This requires keeping track of end user conversations, understanding the community's concerns and maintaining the two-way conversation.

Tactic #5: Be prepared to follow up

In the B2B Lead Roundtable Blog post, "[Nine Simple Tactics to Drive a Higher Return on Trade Show Investment](#)," Pamela Markey stresses the importance of having an execution plan in place before attending the event.

"Before the event even begins, be ready to follow up. Prepare a brief, customizable email template to send out immediately afterward. It can come directly from the sales professional who spoke with the prospect, or it could reference the conversation and any key information you were able to capture," Markey said.

"If the prospect doesn't respond, follow up with a thoughtfully scripted phone call where you position yourself as a resource they can turn to when they are ready to talk. Don't stalk and don't be pushy, but do be responsive and close the loop. And, be absolutely sure that only one person is doing the follow up. This is why it's critical to work from a single database."

Tactic #6: Maintain the momentum after the event ends

To continue to reap the benefits of their successful event strategy long after the Dreamforce conference ended, the SiSense team (see Tactic #1) videoed Bruno Aziza, VP of Marketing, interviewing the Obama look-alike on his thoughts about business analytics.

SiSense published the video after the event and let it run until November, gaining the benefit of interest in the actual Obama with election-year media coverage.

"[People] are going to be searching on YouTube for Obama, and there will be our video," Aziza stated.

Tactic #7: Reuse and repurpose content from the event

The MarketingSherpa article, "[Event Marketing: Entrepreneur drives year-round sales, increases email list](#)," describes how Nancy Juetten, owner of the one-woman publicity consultancy for small businesses, Main Street Media Savvy, produced an event to help garner donations for a charity. Although not a direct moneymaker for her business, Juetten was able to use material from the event in a profitable way.

She had the live event captured on audio, video and transcribed, and it is now a virtual product available for purchase. Juetten now sells this event as an e-summit on her website (a percentage of that profit went to charity for all of 2011). She is now selling the e-summit along with her book to leverage the time spent on the event.

She said the accessibility and ease of video coupled with the omnipresence of social media and useful tools for email marketing allow you to leverage live events and as she put it, "make it appear so much bigger after the fact."

Within three days of the completion of the event, a highlight video set to music was on Juetten's website, and co-promotion partners began sharing that video on Facebook communities, Twitter, email newsletters and blogs.

The MarketingSherpa article, "[How to Turn a Trade Show Speech Into a Podcast That Becomes a Lead Machine](#)," described how the team at Global Management Technologies Corp. used an appearance at a trade show to solve a problem: the sales reps had no marketing materials available to start conversations with prospects early in buying cycle.

Michael Williams, Marketing Director, wanted to try a podcast but his bosses were skeptical. He needed to test a podcast that required minimal investment, yet would be compelling enough to generate high-quality leads.

Williams saw a solution in the company's annual appearance at an industry conference. He enlisted a customer to give a speech at the event. That speech was recorded and later turned into a podcast. The podcast was hosted on the company's website in order to collect registration information and pass leads to the sales team. The registration page described the podcast's content and highlighted some of the key results from the customer testimonial.

The podcast not only convinced his company's skeptics, it surpassed Williams' expectations. More than nine times the number of people who attended the conference presentation listened to the podcast. Of those podcast listeners, 16.7% were considered highly qualified leads that the sales team aggressively pursued.

The HubSpot team (see Tactic #4) created a "fact vs. fantasy" e-book and accompanying landing page, which helped promote the event beforehand, but also provided useful information that could be used by prospects in the future.

EXAMPLE: HUBSPOT E-BOOK LANDING PAGE



Marketing Fact vs. Marketing Fantasy

Unicorns live in a fantasy world. Marketing execs can't afford to.

Download HubSpot's brand new **Marketing Fact vs. Marketing Fantasy** eBook and discover surprising facts about:

- Email marketing
- Mobile marketing
- Blogging
- Twitter
- Facebook
- SEO

and much more!

Missed Us at Dreamforce?

Yes, you heard right. We gave out **THOUSANDS** of free unicorns at Dreamforce.

Relive all the fun by checking out our [pic.twitter.com/.../res](#).

And remember, don't live in a fantasy world. Don't listen to the unicorns!



Download Your Fact vs. Fantasy eBook!

First Name *

Last Name *
Email (confirm@domain) *
Phone *
Company *
Company Website *
What is your role at the company? *

--Please select--

Number of Employees *

--Please select--

My business primarily sells to other businesses (B2B) or consumers (B2C) *

--Please select--

My company provides marketing services such as PR, SEO, Web Design, or other e-marketing *

--Please select--

Biggest Marketing Challenge

Tactic #8: Track and measure the results

In her blog post, Markey says it's important to watch the analytics to see how—if at all—the event pays off.

“After the follow-up emails have been sent and calls have been made, note how many are still in your marketing and sales funnels, and how many deals closed. Monitor this throughout the year to determine whether the event is worth investing in the next time.”

Useful Links and Resources:

[B2B Lead Roundtable Blog: Trade Show Follow-Up: 5 tips to optimize response](#)

[B2B Lead Roundtable Blog: How to Use Lead Scoring to Drive the Highest Return on Your Trade-Show Investment](#)

[MarketingSherpa Article: Event Marketing: Regional customer forums improve field events attendance rate by 150%](#)

[MarketingSherpa Blog: Webinar How To: The 8 roles you need to fill to make your virtual event a success](#)

[MarketingSherpa Article: Lead Generation: Targeted event marketing effort leads to 300% ROI, generates 140 qualified leads](#)

About MarketingSherpa LLC

MarketingSherpa LLC is a research firm publishing case studies, benchmark data, and how-to information read by hundreds of thousands of advertising, marketing and PR professionals every week.

Praised by *The Economist*, Harvard Business School's Working Knowledge Site, and Entrepreneur.com, MarketingSherpa offers practical, results-based marketing information researched and written by a dedicated staff of in-house reporters.

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- Annual Benchmark Reports featuring primary research and collected "best-of" secondary research, on statistics related to search marketing, email marketing, online advertising, e-commerce and business technology marketing

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