



# SMART MARKETERS GUIDE

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# 01 So, you're going to a trade show

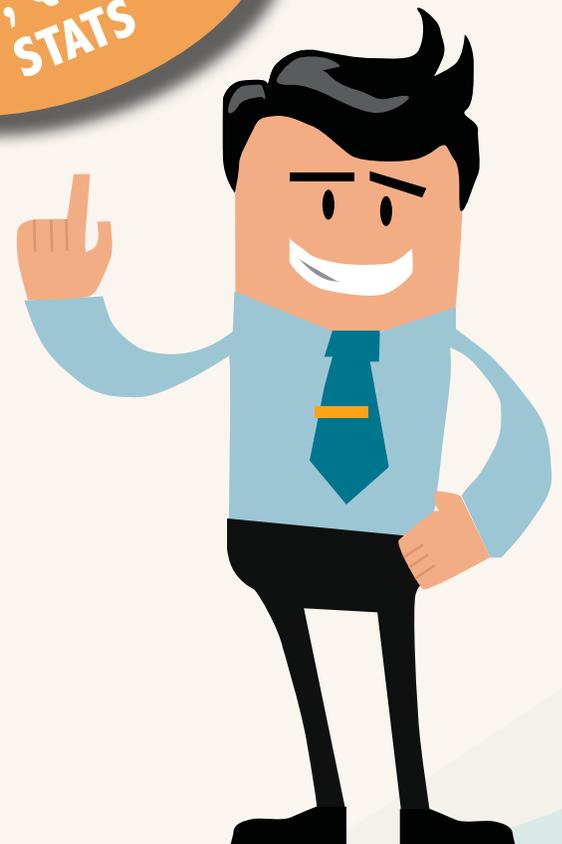
According to a 2014 report by The Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR) trade show and event marketing has grown for 17 consecutive quarters and is predicted to continue to grow in the coming years. With this up-surge, many novice trade show and event marketers are being thrown into the mix without experience in exhibiting at events.

That is why we have created this guide to trade show and event marketing to help beginners' in the event marketing world get a leg up when it comes to planning their campaigns. We've taken out some of the guesswork by offering tips, strategies and best practices when it comes to creating, implementing and running trade show and event marketing campaigns from beginning to end. Also, we provide worksheets within this guide to help you outline your event marketing strategy.

## Understanding The Landscape

It's not about the destination, but rather the journey. It's not about the wedding, but the marriage. It's not about the event, but the return on investment and growth over time. Too often marketers get wrapped up in a show or event so much so that they lose sight of the big organizational picture, but the smart marketer keeps the larger picture in clear focus. Before laying the groundwork for your event marketing efforts, you must first evaluate the two primary reasons you're attending the event in the first place: your organization and you clients.

sharing the best of  
**NOTES, QUOTES, &  
STATS**



## What does your organization want?

Every smart marketer asks themselves this question before they embark on a marketing campaign because sales and marketing is often the tip of the spear when it comes to fulfilling an organization's objectives. To craft an effective marketing plan around an event, you must clearly understand the organization's big picture objective. Do they want to grow new sales? Do they want to encourage existing clients into bigger purchases? Are they out to make a name for themselves or emerge as an industry thought leader? Do you want to educate the public on new technology, products or services? **Identify the top three to five goals of your organization's management team and use them as the guide to your event marketing strategy.**

SAMPLE	<p><i>goal 1: grow overall sales 10% this year</i></p> <p><i>goal 2: grow rebranded division 15%</i></p> <p><i>goal 3: encourage existing clients into bigger purchases</i></p>
GOAL 1	
GOAL 2	
GOAL 3	
GOAL 4	

**"84% of marketers identify reaching many prospects in a short amount of time as the key benefit of Event Marketing"**

\*Source: Vorha, Nimish; Seethapathy, Srinivansan. Regali(x) Research. "State of B2B Event Marketing"

## 02 What do your client's need?

The sweet spot of every sales and marketing strategy is where the organizational objectives and client needs converge, so establishing a client profile – or buyer persona – is a critical step in better understanding client needs.

A buyer persona is a research-based depiction of an ideal buyer or prospect for a company. They are a fictionalized person or group of people who embody the behavioral patterns of a customer in need of your product or service. A good buyer persona should include demographic information, such as business titles, company type, revenue, age ranges and geographic location as well as insightful behavioral information such as goals and pain points, buyer behavior and operational needs.

Smart marketers with a well-researched buyer persona will create the content and marketing strategy most effective for their clients and prospects.



## Buyer Persona Criteria

### Goals and Pain Points:

What common needs, desires and goals does your target demographic share? Are there any common challenges or pain points that your target must hurdle to achieve their goals?

### Information Sources:

Where does your target demographic get their product information? From the internet? Print publications? Peers? Television? Case studies?

### Desired Method of Communication:

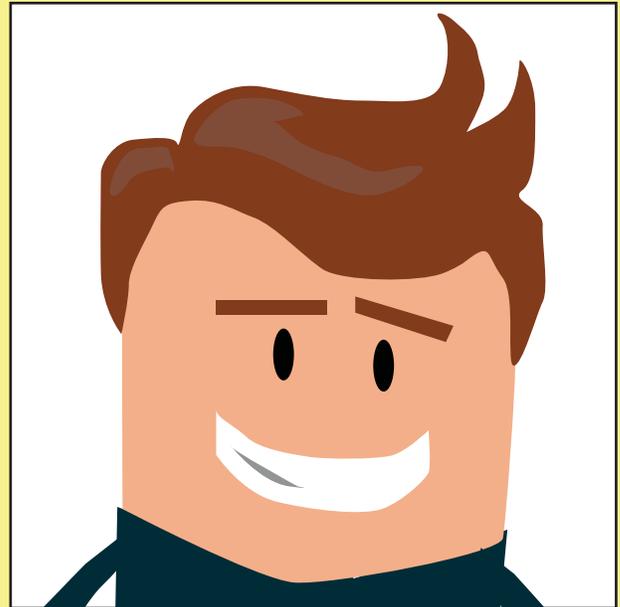
What form of communication does your target demographic typically use to communicate with vendors? Would an appropriately timed email work better than a call or would they appreciate a handwritten letter?

### Disposition:

How do members of your target demographic view vendors/sales people? Are they receptive and inviting? Or do they prefer to learn and engage independently during their own time?

### Common Objections:

Which objections to your sales pitch are you likely to hear from your target demographic?



### Title(s):

### Profile Attributes (B2C)

**Age:** Average approximate age range?

**Gender:** Equal parts men and women, or is there a disparity?

**Education:** What's the highest level of education they are likely to have achieved?

**Experience:** How long have they worked in the industry?

**Company Size:** Small, medium and large in terms of revenue and employees? What's the rough average?

**Region:** Where are they likely to be located?

## 02 What do your client's need?

### Buyer Persona #1

#### Goals and Pain Points:

- Wants to improve production
- Reduce work-related accidents
- Comply with safety standards
- Stay within budget without undermining quality of purchased product

#### Information Sources:

- Vendor websites
- Industry media outlets
- Case studies
- Product reviews
- Recommendations from peers
- Data-driven white papers
- Product spec sheets and catalogs

#### Desired Method of Communication:

Likes to communicate via email mostly, but is open to phone calls.  
Best time to contact before 10 a.m. PST Mon – Fri.

#### Disposition:

Does not like sales people. Would rather independently research white papers.

#### Common Objections:

"I already have a vendor."

"I like what you have to offer, but guys are a little outside of our budget."

"Our last vendor was terrible, we don't want to create new relationships right now until we have more time to research."



**Title(s):** Industrial Buyer, Project Manager

#### **Individual Attributes**

**Age:** 35 - 45

**Gender:** Mostly Male

**Education:** Master's in Engineering

**Experience:** 7-10 Years

**Industry:** Food Manufacturing

#### **Company Size:**

- Revenue range: 5-10 million
- Employees: 50-150

**Region:** West Coast, U.S.

## Buyer Persona #2

### Goals and Pain Points:

- Improve company revenue by 7%
- Reduce wasted man-hours caused by faulty machinery
- Wants to grow client base in key markets
- Improve production speed to gain a competitive edge

### Information Sources:

- Employee research and reports
- Industry webinars and conferences attended by employees
- Existing vendor relationships
- Sales brochures sent to office via direct mail outreach

### Desired Method of Communication:

Emails and phone calls are fine as long as they come between business hours 8 a.m. through 6:30 p.m. and are directed towards relevant company contacts.

### Disposition:

Does not mind having a vendor approach them so long as they target the right personnel within the company i.e. purchasing manager, relevant department head etc...

### Common Objections:

"Our budget this quarter is kind of slim, reach out to us in a few months and I'll see if some room has opened up."

"We are not in the market for your product."

"If we change our process now we have no guarantee that it will help us, and in this competitive landscape we need certainties not promises."



### Company Attributes

**Years in Business:** 75 years

**Industry:** Food Manufacturing

**Primary Product:** Honey Buns

**Industry:** Manufacturing

### **Company Size:**

- Revenue range: 10-30 million
- Employees: 50-150
- Locations: 3

**Region:** West Coast, U.S.

## 02 What do your client's need?

### Buyer Persona #3

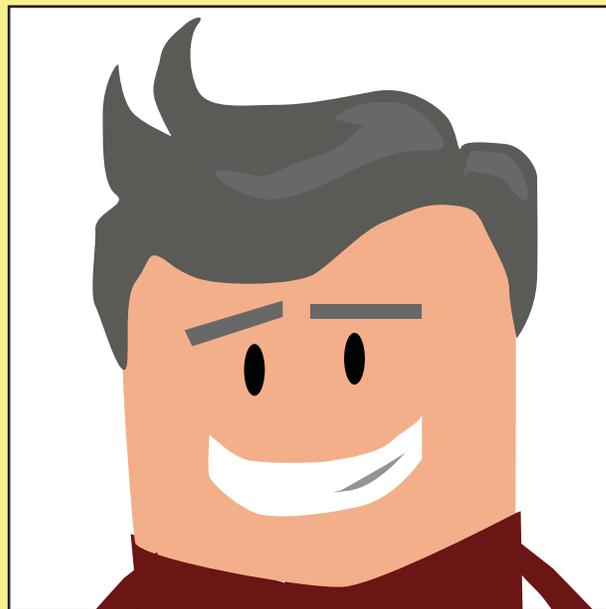
**Goals and Pain Points:**

**Information Sources:**

**Desired method of Communication:**

**Disposition:**

**Common Objections:**



**Title(s):**

#### **Profile Attributes**

**Age:**

**Gender:**

**Education:**

**Experience:**

**Company Size:**

**Region:**

# 03 Smart Marketers Event Marketing Plan

Organizational objectives and buyer needs and personas will be the driving forces behind smart marketers' event marketing plans. Like any plan, a strong event plan begins at a snapshot of the event landscape.

## Create An Event Objective

When developing an event marketing objective, you must do more than simply state your intentions. The objective will be the guiding force driving all decisions relating to this event's marketing strategy. You must ask yourself what, specifically, you want to accomplish within a time frame, who are you targeting and how will you measure results.

### Sample:

<b>A)</b> Which communication channels are most accessible and relevant?	<i>event-specific online web form</i>
<b>B)</b> How many times do you feel appropriate to market to for desired response?	<i>daily on social media outlets.</i>
<b>C)</b> What do you want to accomplish/desired response?	<i>increase leads by 25% over last year's event</i>
<b>D)</b> Who is your target audience?	<i>accounting managers of small and medium-size businesses</i>
<b>E)</b> What is the timeframe of the campaign?	<i>August 14 through August 18, as well as any lead collected from July 1 through September 30</i>
<b>F)</b> How will you measure results?	<i>measured by on-site lead retrieval machines at the event</i>

<b>A)</b> Which communication channels are most accessible and relevant?	
<b>B)</b> How many times do you feel appropriate to market to for desired response?	
<b>C)</b> What do you want to accomplish/desired response?	
<b>D)</b> Who is your target audience?	
<b>E)</b> What is the time frame of the campaign?	
<b>F)</b> How will you measure results?	

## Define Your Budget

Have a full understanding of your true marketing and promotional budget for the event. If a budget is not already determined, this number is typically 6-10% of the total event budget as defined by management. If an event budget has not been defined yet, take a critical eye to your marketing budget and allocate an adequate portion to the event to meet your objectives without sacrificing other marketing programs that meet organizational objectives.

**Estimated marketing budget for event: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

## Event Details

Understanding the basics of the show can help guide decisions you make to your marketing strategy. If, for example, the event takes place in Chicago, you may decide to focus your marketing on clients in the Midwest and develop a phone or web campaign for east and west coast prospects.

Date of event \_\_\_\_\_

Event hours \_\_\_\_\_

Event city & state \_\_\_\_\_

Event venue \_\_\_\_\_

**"46% of marketers allocate 10-25% of the overall budget to events"**

\*Source: Vorha, Nimish; Seethapathy, Srinivansan. Regalii(x) Research. "State of B2B Event Marketing"

## Profile Event Attendees

Understanding the attendees will help you better understand the best ways to market. For example, if the attendees tend to be tech-savvy, printed advertisements may not be the most effective way to reach them.

How many attendees are estimated to visit? (You can usually find this on the event website or media kit.)	
What percentage of attendees fit into your buyer persona? (Are 100% of the attendees exactly the person you're looking for? Or are your targets diamonds in the rough?)	
What is their objective at this event? (Are they looking to buy? Or are they just browsing? Understand their objectives to help define your strategy and tactics at the event.)	

# 03 Smart Marketers Event Marketing Plan

## Determine Strategies and Tactics

You have an overall objective and you have data to guide your decisions, so now it's time to define the best strategies and tactics to achieve your objectives that take the event environment into consideration.

**Sample:** Your objective is to close sales contracts and you know that the majority of show attendees are there to browse but are not ready to buy.

<b>What is your focus? (Strategy)</b>	<b>How will you achieve it? (Tactic(s))</b>
Focus on the attendees who are ready to buy	Identify which of your prospects are attending the show and schedule meetings to take place during the show

**Sample:** You want to generate leads, but many of the attendees are not within your targeted persona.

<b>What is your focus? (Strategy)</b>	<b>How will you achieve it? (Tactic(s))</b>
Grab attention of attendees within your targeted persona in a way that they would truly value (but may not be of value to attendees not included in that persona)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demo a product that specifically captivates your target</li><li>• Offer a free evaluation</li><li>• Give away free samples to those who demo a product or take advantage of an evaluation</li></ul>

<b>What is your focus? (Strategy)</b>	<b>How will you achieve it? (Tactic(s))</b>

## Promotion

The hard work is done! Use your objective, persona and event plan to craft a successful promotional strategy. All strategies should include a pre-event, in-event and post-event dimension, so you are nurturing the lead throughout the entire sales process. Sales are about relationships, and the same is true for marketing.

After your goals have been outlined, your buyer persona completed, and your marketing plan established it's time to promote your event. The internet is one of your most powerful promotional tools in the pre-event preparation, but depending on your demographic and organizational objectives you can also utilize other mediums for promotion.

## A) Your Digital Home Base

An effect event marketing campaign needs a strong digital home base to bridge together all of the pre-, in- and post event marketing initiatives. An added value for the smart marketer is the ability to quantify metrics to evaluate campaign success. Creating an event landing page with event information, resources and collateral relevant to your target demographic is an easy and effective way to build your campaign.

On average, you only have **8 seconds** to keep customers on the page

# 04 Pre-Event Promotion

## B) Direct Outreach

Create event and campaign awareness with your clients and prospects by reaching out to them directly. Use your buyer persona to establish their preferred direct mail medium – print, electronic or both – and the digital home base to guide direct mail content and calls to action.

## C) E-Mail

- Send out a series of emails with your campaign message
- Use your buyer persona to determine email frequency leading up to the event
- Match calls-to-action and value propositions of emails to that of your landing page
- Measure traffic and conversion on the landing page
- Create reasons for your readers to share your content
- Feature event-only promotions and a countdown timer to move the reader into action

## 6 TIPS FOR E-MAIL OUTREACH

**A) Send out a series of emails with your campaign message**

**B) Use your buyer persona to determine email frequency leading up to the event**

**C) Match calls-to-action and value propositions of emails to that of your landing page**

**D) Measure traffic and conversion on the landing page**

**E) Create reason for your readers to share your content**

**F) Feature event-only promotions and a countdown timer to move the reader to action**

## D) Social Media

A smart marketer uses social media outlets to create a strong social buzz before their event to help create awareness about themselves and their organization before they arrive at the show.

### Tips on stirring pre-event social media buzz:

- Update all of your social media accounts with information 6 weeks, 3 weeks and 1 week before your event
- Create pre-event hashtags to promote your booth
- Share teaser images of your booth on your Facebook, Instagram & Pinterest accounts
- Inform followers that you will be at the event



## E) Advertising

Whether it's on the web, in publications or in other promotional spaces, advertising can be an effective way of communicating your event to your target demographic. The event itself may offer pre-event marketing opportunities such as information registered attendee email blast and event guides you could advertise in.

### What to include in pre-event advertisements:

- Location of your booth
- Main attraction at your booth
- Your in-booth giveaways
- Special offers and incentives to visitor your booth

## F) Public Relations

Just like advertising public relations is a key element in your pre-show promotion. Public relations can help build a buzz around your organization at the event. Reach out to relevant media outlets with a formal press release containing the details of your event participation and campaign.

### Press release can feature:

- Major organizational announcements
- Product releases information
- Speakers you will have at the event
- Any event sponsorships you are attached to

## G) Use Your Sales Team

The smart marketer's sales team is the driving force for word-of-mouth and relationship leveraging to encourage and promote their event. In addition to sharing event details with existing clients and prospects your sales team should follow-up on leads and inquires during the pre-event promotional phase.

### Sales team pre-event duties include:

- Following up with target clients and prospects
- Answering questions and inquiries received from website, advertising and your PR campaigns
- Promote in-event activities, offers and promotions to landing page converts
- Provide feedback to the marketing team on ways to improve the in-event and post-event campaigns



\*Source: Vorha, Nimish; Seethapathy, Srinivansan. Regali(x) Research. "State of B2B Event Marketing"

# 05 In-Event Promotion

## A) Event Space Draw

Of all the promotional avenues in an event, what happens in your event space is the most critical. Plan out your event space activities and drive in-event promotional efforts around that agenda.

### Consider the following event space activities:

- Product demonstrations
- Group presentations
- One-on-one client meetings
- Lighthearted games and activities. See how Nimlok incorporated games and activities into their trade show exhibit (<http://nimloktrade.showmarketing.com/use-trade-show-contests-drive-traffic-booth/>)
- Raffles and contests

## C) Social Media at the Event

In the modern digital age, the ability to reach people has grown exponentially. Leveraging your social media assets is an effective way to reach your target audience in a meaningful way. Whether promoting the brand, establishing your organization as a thought leader or driving people to your space at an event, social media can help you reach your objectives.

- Monitor event hashtags
- Listen to what attendees want
- Share original content from your corporate blog that relates to the event
- Promote your landing page if it contains content covering important event-related topics
- Post expert insights and observations about the event
- Post useful info on industry topic or practical advice during the event
- Share in-event photos & videos
- Post “best of” notes, quotes & stats from educational sessions
- Show your fun side by sharing the non-business part of exhibiting

## B) Promotions and Purchase Incentives

At any given event, it is estimated that four out of every five attendees have buying power or influence. This means that attendees know how to spot a good deal. Leverage this knowledge and offer a special in-event promotion – such as a special discounted rate or rewards for purchasing – that would only be redeemable during the event. This sense of urgency to take advantage of a good deal could be all it takes to move a passerby into a purchaser.

**SPECIAL IN-EVENT PROMOTION!**

Show this ad to one of the members at our booth, and get

**50% off!**

This deal is only during the days of the event, so act quickly!

## D) Sponsorships and Advertising Opportunities

Events often offer a multitude of advertising options for event vendors and exhibitors. While not every advertising option is best suited for every organization, it is worth exploring to gain additional, meaningful exposure to your target audience. Like with any other promotional effort, carefully consider organizational objectives, cost and target audience behavior before signing on the dotted line.

### Common event advertising opportunities:

- Event sponsorship
- Event website banner ads
- Event guide or pamphlet ads
- Reception, keynote speech or seminar sponsorship

## CONNECT

### E) Public Relations

At any event, it is safe to assume that industry media will be present. Use this opportunity to interact to gain additional exposure for your organization.

#### Smart marketers press tips:

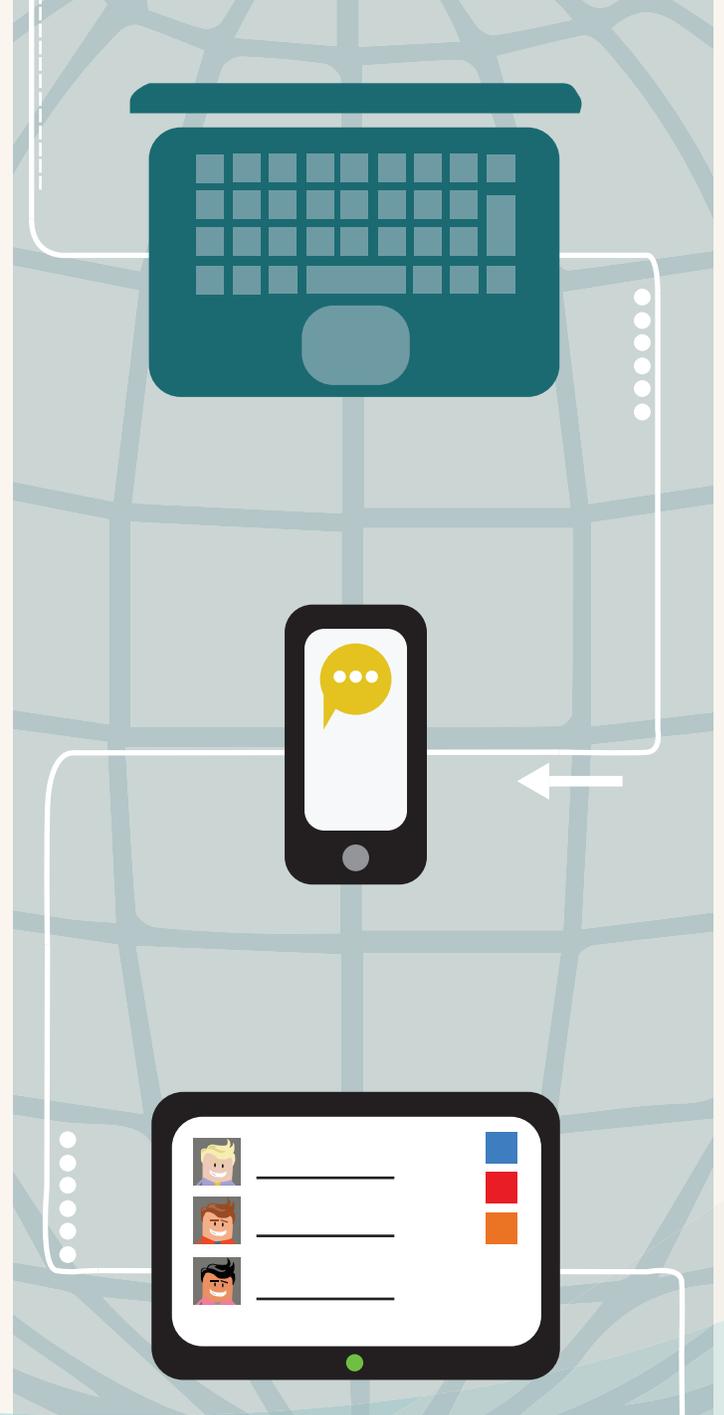
- Use social media to stay connected with the press, updating them on the happenings at your event space
- Offer to answer reporter questions/write articles or summaries and send photos
- Attend press events to engage and connect with key media contacts.

### F) Motivating Your Prospects into Action

Now that you and your staff have been able to establish great connections with your prospects, you need to motivate these potential buyers into customers. After properly listening to your prospects concerns and establishing trust you now have to filter out which prospects are hot-leads, which ones are not -- and who is not worth a follow up after the event.

Depending on your objectives, your approach to motivating a prospect will vary, but here are some tips on prompting your visitors to take action:

- Add suspense, don't give away everything, create an incentive for your prospect to ask more about you and how they can purchase or get more information
- Promote limited time offers and offers that are only available at the trade show, think back to your pre-show promotions as a way to create motivation
- Remind your leads about the expiration date of promotional event offers in order to create a sense of urgency after the show
- Schedule post-event meetings and appointments with interested prospects



**"79% of marketers believe physical events yield better ROI"**

\*Source: Vorha, Nimish; Seethapathy, Srinivansan. Regali(x) Research. "State of B2B Event Marketing"

# 06 Post-Event Promotion

After the event floor has cleared and the hall lights have dimmed, smart marketers grab an extra cup of coffee and press onward with the one of the most important portions of their event marketing campaign: post-event marketing. Fewer than 70% of all marketers have formalized plans for post-event promotion, giving those that do an absolute advantage.\*

## A) The Post-Event Draw

Your event space is now gone, but interest for your organization is still thriving. Use the versatile event landing page created during the pre-event promotion timeframe to inform, captivate and engage post-event follow up.

### Smart marketers post-event landing page tips:

- Remove event details. The event is over, meaning lingering details will make your landing page look outdated.
- Modify calls to action to “Schedule a meeting”, “call”, “Email for more info”. If the calls to action were focused on the event, evolve them to direct users to your sales team.
- React to the event. There’s no need to pretend that it never happened! Post photos or highlights – even a big “Thank You” – to illustrate your involvement in the event share success stories if pertinent.

## B) Purchase Incentive

The exciting in-show promotions and special offers have ended, but those who missed out may be easily enticed by a secondary promotion or offer.

### Smart marketers promotion tips:

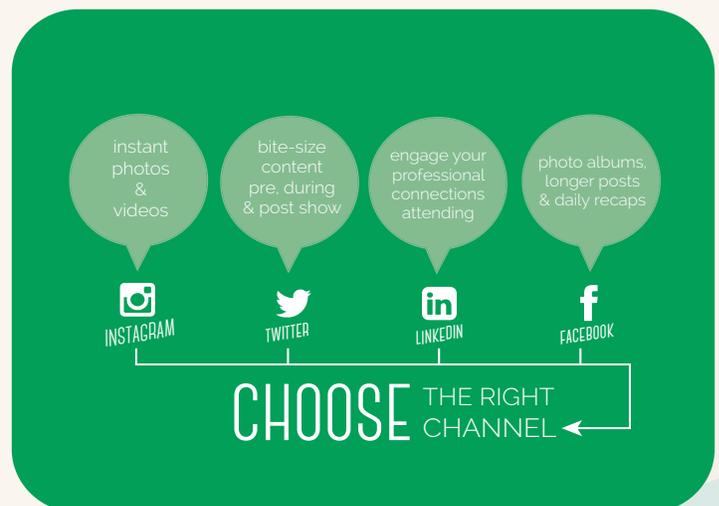
- Consider running another promotion that is redeemable only by event attendees or – even better – only by those who engaged with you at the event.
- Reward those who took advantage of your in-event promotion with an extended promotion or other value-add.

## C) Direct Outreach

Smart marketers know to strike when the iron is hot. With the event and – hopefully – your organization being top of mind, direct outreach – either by email, personal mail, phone call or social media – is a powerful tool for converting prospects into clients and/or clients into repeat clients. Follow the email and post mail guidelines outlined in the pre-show promotion section of this guide and review the smart marketer tips below.

### Smart marketers post-event direct outreach tips:

- Communicate any post-show promotion and drive readers to act.
- Follow your buyer persona to establish method and frequency of communication.
- Leverage social media to further relationships and to maintain your expert persona developed during the pre- and in-event promotion phases. See our 24 Social Media Tips article to learn about best practices.\*



\*source: EXHIBITOR MAGAZINE, [www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=742](http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=742)  
\*source: [www.nimlok.coms/social-tips](http://www.nimlok.coms/social-tips)

## Advertising

Based on the buyer persona, advertising post-show in carefully selected outlets may be a good way for your brand to build on awareness and credibility established during the event.

### Smart marketers post-event advertising tips:

- Check the event to see if they offer post-event advertising options, such as follow-up e-blasts to all attendees
- Consider advertising on the event's website or social media outlet. The number of site visitors and followers will have swelled following the event and post-event would be the best time to maximize exposure
- Consider print publications who had media covering the event, especially if those publications relate to the event. The event will have piqued the interest of attendees on related industry topics, and those attendees will start turning to industry leading media outlets while the experience is fresh in their memory.

## Public Relations

PR is especially important after an event. This is the time to leverage new media connections gained at the event to share organizational information.

### Smart marketers press tips:

- If you were holding anything back in the pre-event press releases, now is the time to share the secret with the world
- Post-event is the best time to share organizational updates as well as event-related press.
- Pushing your content is one thing, but also be sure to follow up with press contacts you made at the event, especially if you were interviewed or featured. Find out when and where your segment will appear and make plans to promote

## Sales Force: The Smart Marketer's Super Glue

Your sales team will, no doubt, be busy following an event. Yes, following up with hot leads and contacts from the event is a top priority. But the team needs to also be aware of your post-event marketing efforts and make plans for following up with residual leads from those efforts.

### Sales activities post-event:

- Follow up directly with personal connections made on the show floor. Send contacts relevant content and information that aligns with conversations had on the event floor
- Use in-event promotions – such as contests, activities and presentations – as conversation starters when following up with attendees. There's no easier conversation-starter in the world than contacting a raffle prize winner to ask for their mailing address
- Don't forget about in-event purchasers! Contact these purchasers to ensure they are satisfied with their product and to extend any additional promotions.
- Follow up with direct emails and post mails sent during the post-event marketing campaign, ensuring that contacts received the communication and handling any questions or comments
- Answer questions and inquiries received from post-event advertisements
- Communicate post-event promotions and calls to actions to leads collected from the landing page

## Conclusion

Now that you have learned how to create an effective and organized trade show/event marketing campaign it's up to you to decide how to best apply these strategies and tactics to your organization. Each piece of advice in this guide is meant to empower you with ideas and stimulate your creativity. So take what has been provided, share it with your team and get out there and plan the event marketing campaign that is sure to gain great results and ROI.



Your Company @YourCompany

Check out our blog post about our time at #Tradeshow2015

<http://nimloktradeshowmarketing.com/24-social-media-tips-trade-show-exhibitors/>

Since opening our doors in 1970, Nimlok works to create custom exhibit and face-to-face marketing solutions as unique and original as our clients. We bring ideas to life by working to understand needs, create unique concepts and deliver total solutions.

Nimlok's dealer network serves clients throughout the United States, as well as abroad, and supports the entire lifecycle of an exhibit, taking the hard work off of your shoulders. Nimlok branded exhibit and display solutions range from portable and rental displays to modular displays to fully custom trade show exhibits and solutions.

**Visit [www.nimlok.com](http://www.nimlok.com) to learn more and connect with a Nimlok representative near you.**



# nimlok brings ideas to life

