



**The Event
Marketing Playbook:
Engagement Strategy**

Events represent one of your biggest marketing expenditures and if executed well, they can also deliver some of the highest returns to the business. To help you maximize the ROI from your events, this playbook pulls together B2B event marketing best practices specific for your engagement strategy—complete with specific recommendations, tactics and more to streamline execution and improve results.

How to Use This Playbook

Look for these icons to get ideas to help you take your specific event type to the next level.



Conferences



Field Events



This playbook is part of [The Event Marketing Playbook](#)—a full guide highlighting 8 key event strategies to get you where you want to be faster.

Engagement Strategy

You've worked so hard to promote and drive registration for your event. How do you make sure that the right people actually attend? And once they show up, how can you ensure that they have a positive experience, learn more about your brand and gather the right information that helps them achieve their goals?

This playbook offers three essential steps for identifying your target attendees, finding the most effective channels for engagement, and recognizing what incentives will not only encourage but inspire engagement.



Studies show that attendees come to events for great content and worthwhile networking opportunities. But that's not all. For an event to truly shine, everything from registration to check-in to the sessions and entertainment must amount to a remarkable experience. As an event marketer, the way to succeed is to focus your efforts on attendee engagement and let the results follow suit.

Attendee engagement should be at the center of every event. A high level of engagement results in satisfaction, participation, loyalty, and advocacy among attendees.

Identify Target Attendees and Engage Them

First, determine who your ideal attendees are. Be specific about their pain points and what will get them interested in attending the event.



For Events You are Sponsoring

Get a list of expected companies from the show's organizer, if possible. Build a list of prospective attendees from each of those and similar companies. Target who you'd like to work with or learn more about and send them an invitation to visit you at the show. Include your booth number, of course, but more importantly, give them a reason to stop by. What can you offer them to make it worth their while, to pique their interest?



For Events You are Hosting

Make sure you have a clear understanding of the target profile of attendees for your show. What levels within the organizations do you want to attend? What content and session categories should be developed for each level to inspire your audience? Create a unique event brand (that's tied to your corporate brand) that is compelling to those you want to attend.



For the attendees that you are targeting, find out Twitter handles and look up LinkedIn profiles. Start following people and get email addresses for them or reach out via direct message to say you're looking forward to seeing them at the event. If you can't get a list of attendees, design your pre-show marketing to appeal to those who fit your profile of an ideal booth visitor or attendee.

At the same time, have your sales team do outreach to prospects to give them a reason to attend the event. This could be special pricing for the event, an invitation to a private networking hour, or a free one-on-one consultation.

2

Leverage Social Media

Social media is a fantastic tool not only for promoting your event, but for encouraging attendee engagement as well. Consider the various ways throughout the event cycle that you can engage your attendees with these simple tactics:

Before the Event:

- ▶ Develop a social presence for your event and invite your guests to connect socially, even those who haven't yet registered. It can be a great way to get attendees to connect with one another and build buzz and anticipation before your event even starts.
- ▶ Drop updates regularly on speakers and sessions that are of special interest to build excitement.

During the Event:

- ▶ Encourage attendee participation. Contests or giveaways, polls and mobile social walls are great ways to keep attendees engaged during your event. At least a third of attendees take photos during the event, so finding creative ways to encourage the sharing and storytelling of those snaps can go a long way in boosting attendee participation.

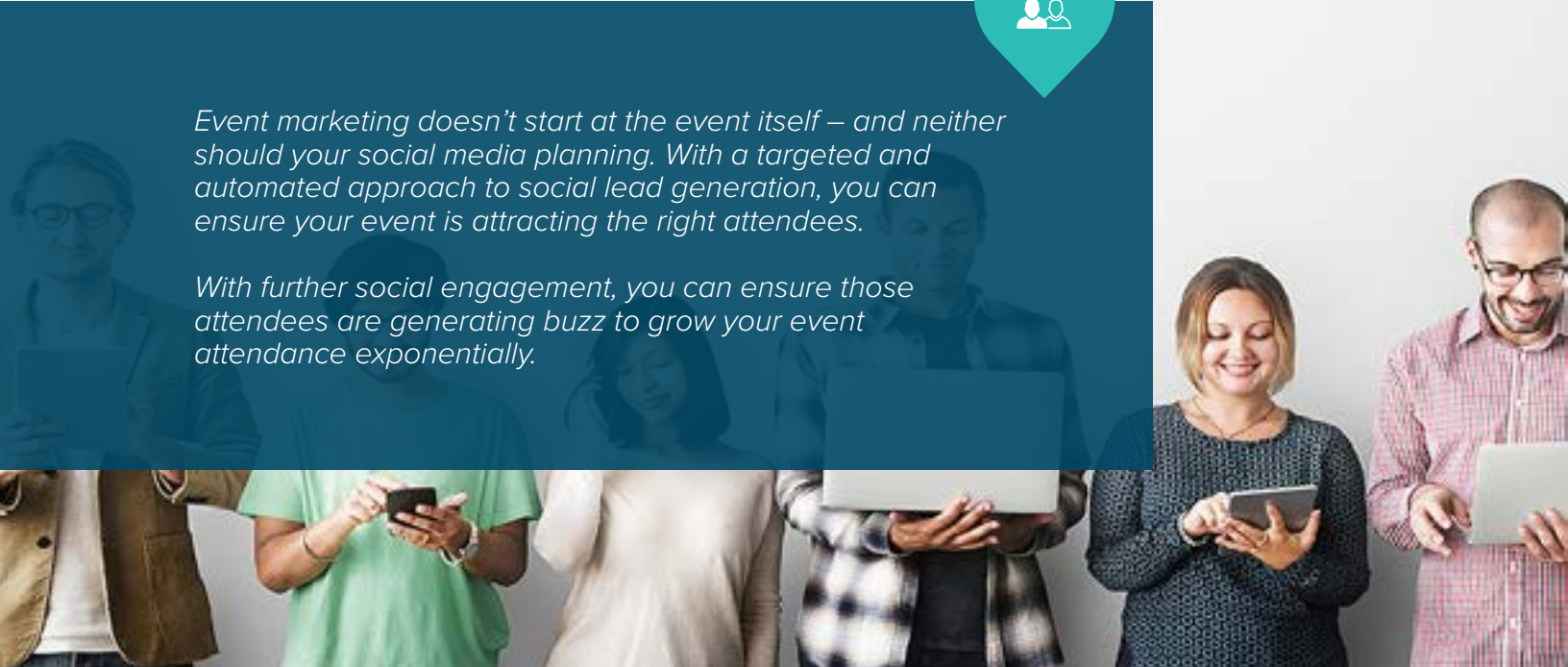
After the Event

- ▶ Social media is one of the best ways to keep the momentum going after your event has ended, so consider all the ways you can engage both attendees and speakers and encourage them to share their photos, videos or stories.



Event marketing doesn't start at the event itself – and neither should your social media planning. With a targeted and automated approach to social lead generation, you can ensure your event is attracting the right attendees.

With further social engagement, you can ensure those attendees are generating buzz to grow your event attendance exponentially.



3

Choose Appropriate Incentives to Drive Engagement

In addition to promoting the event to drive attendance, drive traffic to your booth or any sessions you're presenting or sponsoring. Incentives can be effective for driving this type of engagement, but they take some thought.



Tips for Choosing Incentives

- ▶ Think about incentives as more than simple freebies or swag. They are a marketing tool for getting people to your hosted event or booth during a conference and remembering your company after the event is over.
- ▶ Make sure there is some kind of tie-in or connection to your company beyond simply printing your logo on the giveaways. If there is a theme for the conference, try to tie into that theme.
- ▶ Consider usability. If your incentive is too quirky, it might get stored at the back of a desk and not used again. On the other hand, if it's useful, it will be present in your prospects' mind—and your brand will be remembered.
- ▶ Take into account shipping costs or transporting the incentives, if you're traveling to an event. It could be that a smaller incentive makes more sense financially for the out-of-state shows, but you can invest in something bigger (and heavier) for events close to home.
- ▶ When considering incentives, think about your target audience and their pain points. Should you be spending money on a fun game with your company logo? Or would more targeted visitors be drawn to your booth if you offered a 15-minute free consultation or a how-to guide related to your industry?

Engagement - Take it to the Next Level



Field Events

INFLUENCER & SPEAKER INVOLVEMENT

Marquee, or well-known influencer attendees and featured speakers can go a long way when it comes to attracting prospects and getting them excited about an event.

CREATE VALUABLE NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

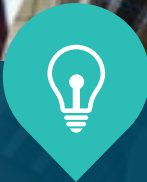
Expanding professional networks is a major reason people will want to attend your event, so don't overlook this element when designing your event experiences.

EXPERIENTIAL ENGAGEMENT

Memorability and authentic connections are fostered when you give prospect and customer attendees something to do, or a common goal to focus on rather than having them remain passive. Look for ways to engage attendees through fun and relevant activities.

POST-EVENT ENGAGEMENT

When planning your engagement strategy, a common pitfall is avoiding the post-event engagement strategy. Follow-up emails or direct messages with calls to action, or even recap posts from events are important steps in keeping the event—and your brand—alive in the minds of attendees, as well as accelerating sales cycles.



Encourage Guest Participation in Content Design

When working content into an event, make sure it speaks to the roles and levels of attendees who will be at the event, and that the content contains actual value. Work on making sure your attendees will get maximum value from your speakers' presentation materials and walk away feeling like they learned something useful.

For smaller, very targeted field events like dinners, consider prompting attendees to suggest content areas that they are most interested in learning about leading up to the event, especially if you've already established a relationship.



Conferences

Hosting a larger conference requires engagement to become an organization-wide initiative.

- ▶ Communicate to your organization early and often about your event.
- ▶ Work with your sales, customer success and account management teams to define a promotional strategy to garner the most attendees from across your customer and prospect base.
- ▶ Arm your teams with email templates they can personalize to send to their most important customers and prospects.
- ▶ Be thoughtful about your pricing strategy based on what you want to get out of the event. Obviously making it a paid event can lessen the number of attendees, but that may be okay if you want to focus only on high quality attendees with more of an ABM approach. If you want a more broad base of attendees to generate brand awareness, think about a smaller attendance fee or make it completely free.

Make the Most of Your Trade Show Booth

You've spent a big hunk of your budget on your booth, make the most of your presence there with these simple reminders:



Make eye contact and say hello

The best booth staffers are engaged, scanning the crowd, and proactively making eye contact and greeting visitors. They are not looking down at their phones.



Script the first five seconds

Craft a very short value proposition your booth staff can use to get visitors interested in learning more.



State your benefits in bold letters in your signage

Forget features. You want to get the attention of passers-by with your benefits loudly proclaimed by your booth display. This will also pre-qualify your visitors for you.



Move longer conversations out of traffic flow

When someone wants to know more, get them out of the aisle and into your booth. It will improve your conversation plus open up the front area for other visitors and booth staff to engage.



Offer value-added takeaways

Offer something useful but not sales-y, such as a book, a how-to guide, a cheat-sheet or something similar. No one really wants to read your brochure, but they will want to read about ways to be better at their job or make a more informed buying decision when they're ready to buy.



Understand your audience

For greater engagement during the event, develop a program that caters to your ideal attendee profile. Make sure all content and sessions during the event are relevant to your attendee and any outside speakers understand and will cater to the audience. Use a mobile event app to help drive engagement socially and allow attendees to connect digitally, as well as personally, during the event. (See our mobile strategy session for additional details on driving engagement via the mobile event app.)



Drive more traffic to your booth

To drive more traffic beyond the targeted attendees, come up with creative ideas to get visitors to prioritize your booth. Maybe validate their parking or offer a drawing for a big prize, or some other kind of incentive. Also consider joint offers with other exhibitors. Are there a couple of complementary exhibitors you could partner with in advance to drive traffic to your booths? Also find out which exhibitors will be next to your booth. Does it make sense to contact them and collaborate on a way to get people to both booths?



Qualify booth visitors

When talking to booth visitors, start qualifying them by asking questions that are both conversational and situational. Listen for any of a series of buying signals (based on needs, pains, symptoms) that determine whether the prospect has a situation or problem you might be able to solve. Questions might include:

- ▶ What brought you to this event?
- ▶ What are you hoping to find or learn?
- ▶ What do you need to take back to the office to justify this trip?





Use the power of events combined with a comprehensive engagement strategy for building relationships with your key target audiences and driving key business results.

About the Authors



Certain is the leading enterprise event automation platform that helps data-driven marketers and event professionals integrate rich buying signals and attendee insights into cross-channel marketing campaigns to improve sales and marketing results. Certain partners with hundreds of companies across tens of thousands of events with millions of attendees. Headquartered in San Francisco, with offices in Chapel Hill, NC, Europe and Asia Pacific, Certain serves enterprises across tens of thousands of events with millions of attendees to deliver flawless events.

Visit Certain on the web at www.certain.com and follow us on Twitter [@Certain](https://twitter.com/Certain)



Every day at Heinz Marketing brings a new adventure in the world of B2B sales and marketing. We are innovators at heart, and not afraid to challenge convention in order to deliver the results our customers need. We are passionate about what we do and strive to promote outcomes rather than just focus on activities.

Visit Heinz Marketing on the web at www.heinzmarketing.com and follow us on Twitter [@HeinzMarketing](https://twitter.com/HeinzMarketing)