eBook

Getting the C-Suite On Board with Your Event Strategy

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Introduction

Events have come a long way over the past two decades – from paper check-in and manual exporting of registrant lists, to leveraging fully-integrated, cross-channel event and marketing automation systems that capture rich attendee data and launch personalized follow-up campaigns. At the same time, event technology has progressed and the stakes have been raised.

Recent research shows the C-Suite is becoming more involved in the day-to-day decision-making of technology initiatives and digital transformation efforts. CMOs, specifically, have been tasked with driving new technology initiatives and making businesses' interactions with customers "more human."

For today's event marketer, these insights emphasize an ongoing need to prove the worth of in-person events and demonstrate how they contribute to the overall success of the business. Building personalized relationships that lead to long-term partnerships is the desired end result, but this starts with gaining buy-in from within the organization as to why events are the right avenue to reach that goal.

This eBook will offer readers insightful data on:

The changing role of the C-Suite in event planning

Top tips & tricks to prove ROI from your events

How events will evolve over the next year

How event marketing strategies will shift in 2020

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The Current State of Events

Today, even with the rapid growth in digital marketing strategies, the C-Suite still recognizes in-person events as an important and relevant part of their companies' marketing plans. In fact, a recent Forrester report found 93% of global business-to-business (B2B) marketing decision makers planned to increase or maintain their spending on events in 2019.

Certain's own State of B2B Event Marketing report, too, affirmed that the importance of events is only increasing, noting that today's most successful companies leverage events to drive brand awareness, demand generation, pipeline acceleration, and customer engagement, allowing their sales and marketing teams to meaningfully impact every stage of the buyer's journey.

So, if the C-Suite already believes events are a critical part of their companies' success, why are we writing this eBook?

Well, because the simple truth is that event marketers still struggle to communicate the return on investment (ROI) of their events to the C-Suite. Over half of B2B professionals report that tying event spend to revenue generation is an elusive task. And the struggle goes beyond event marketers, specifically: less than 30% of marketers really understand the ROI of their marketing funnel and which tactics are truly making an impact. All of this points to the growing need for marketers to become equipped with the right solutions that make proving event spend and ROI an easier, more familiar task.

Less than
30%
of marketers understand the ROI of their marketing funnel

The Opportunity for Event Marketers

Overall, the stakes are only getting higher for event marketers. Today they are often expected to look beyond the execution of logistical processes that go into conferences. With the rise of data-driven marketing, the role of the event marketer is changing—encompassing more strategic planning, reporting and decision-making.

With event marketers' responsibilities only increasing, the opportunity exists for these professionals to play a critical role in event strategy planning and execution. By better exhibiting data-driven decision making and an in-depth understanding of how event technology is critical to meet their business objectives, event marketers can become the go-to resource within their organizations to execute on a stellar events strategy.

In the next section of this eBook, we'll talk about how event marketers can uplevel their communication with the C-Suite in order to demonstrate the value they can bring to the overall events process.

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The C-Suite and the Bottom Line

More and more, we are seeing the growing involvement of the C-Suite in technology decisions and processes that directly contribute to the bottom line. These business execs are playing a bigger role in buying technologies to help their companies win, serve, and retain customers.

It's forecasted that both CMOs and CIOs are most likely to take control of all marketing technology-related new project spend.

Executives are becoming increasingly intertwined in the day-to-day logistics to sell more products, enhance the customer experience and measure results – including for events. For event marketers, this means an opportunity to showcase their knowledge of data-driven decision-making and savvy event tech to key stakeholders within the business.

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How Event Marketers Can Uplevel Their Communication With the C-Suite

Event marketers are some of the closest people within an organization to the nitty gritty details and insights that can help inform a stronger events strategy. They understand the rich data at their fingertips and know that technologies can help lead to better ROI, but they don't always make it known to the rest of the organization – notably, the C-Suite.

The more event marketers can demonstrate how they use specific data and insights to determine the path forward for an event, the more they can persuade top-level decision-makers of how this knowledge can be used in the strategic planning part of the process.

Here are a few considerations for how event marketers can uplevel communication before, during and after events, in order to showcase their event tech and data know-how:

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Before the Event

Revisit key results from your previous event, and use them to outline potential shifts in strategy to consider for the event at hand.

Why? The C-Suite likely only sees high-level results from an event, like how many leads turned into actual paying customers. What they don't always know is how event marketers' insight into a wealth of attendee data can help determine real shifts in strategy—shifts that will lead to greater results for future events.

Define what success looks like and offer recommendations on the metrics that will help measure it.

Why? Event marketers know determining the sales and marketing objectives before an event are critical to understand what to measure. This will show that you're thinking more broadly with a clear understanding of the end goal. Use your even tech and data savviness to lay out the metrics available to you and how they'll be used to determine ROI.

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During the Event

Use check-in technology to find out more about your attendees' preferences and interests.

Why? Check-in is a critical time to be able to gather additional intelligence on attendees' specific interests. Asking questions like, "What panel, speaker or session are you most interested in hearing or attending?" will allow for real-time engagement and more personalized follow-up to get real results and impress executives in the process.

Personalize the experience in real-time to engage with your attendees during the event.

Why? Real-time engagement is a strong way to show the C-Suite why an event was the right marketing avenue to reach new prospects (as opposed to another channel). Event marketers can measure real-time results that show if more attendees went to a session after receiving a push notification based on their interests, for example.

After the Event

Focus on long-term metrics that measure results 30, 60 and 90 days after an event.

Have a follow up strategy that builds on the momentum realized from the event.

Why? Beyond attendee data, event marketers can also use their knowledge of event tech solutions to share important factors that matter for the efficiency and success of the company (i.e. how much employee time was saved thanks to an automated tech solution, or how much shorter the lead follow-up process was as a result of better data from an event tech platform.) With this knowledge, event marketers can position themselves as strategic experts on important decisions relating to the tech stack.

Why? Post event it's easy for attendees to settle back into their day-to-day and forget a lot of what they saw and heard at the event. Savvy event marketers should have a well crafted event follow up strategy that allows them to build on the momentum from the event and deliver relevant and timely content to the based on the intent and interests captured unique to that attendee.

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Tips and Tricks on How to Prove ROI from Events

Events continue to be a core part of the marketing mix since they provide the opportunity to host hands-on experiences where customers can connect with brands differently than they do online. And yet, one of the industry's greatest challenges is proving ROI on events. It's something companies and brands still struggle with today, but it can actually be done efficiently and properly, especially given advancements in technology and data solutions.

Measuring Event Outcomes

Tracking key metrics around demand and pipeline creation is important to show the C-Suite how events deliver on overall business goals and the bottom line. Yet, too often, planning for how to measure event results comes up after the fact. First and foremost, teams need to clearly define what success looks like: driving more sales, increasing awareness, building a partner relationship?Knowing the objective upfront will help decide how you'll measure it.

Now let's get to the metrics. These are the key types of modern metrics to look at when proving ROI and taking your event to the next level – more specifically, how to tie your events strategy to pipeline creation, influence and acceleration. These metrics should be used as a jumping off point, to then create the specific outcomes that are meaningful for each customer.

67%
of B2B marketers say ROI is the top metric they will be measured by this year.

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Event Revenue

OUTCOMES

INPUTS

Ticket Revenue ◀

▶ Fees paid per attendee, includes promo code administration.

Sponsor Revenue ◀

▶ Packages for sponsorships.

Certification Revenue ◀
(e.g. if developers pay for any technology certifications)

▶ Certification levels and associated fees.

Brand Awareness & Affinity

OUTCOMES

INPUTS

Share of Voice ◀

▶ With communications team and/or PR agency, measure share of voice for the company and/or products before/during/after events.

Purchase Intent ◀

▶ Use technology to measure purchase intent by product before/during/after events.

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OUTCOMES   **Demand Generation**   INPUTS

Net New Leads ◀ ▶ Number of net new leads.

Engaged Leads ◀ ▶ Number & percentage of existing leads that are re-engaged before/during/after event.

MQLs ◀ ▶ Number & percentage of MQLs created as a result of the event, time-stamped in the event window and tied to the event campaign. Typically leads will score into MQL status. Event actions must be incorporated into the scoring model for this to take effect.

Target Accounts ◀ ▶ Number and percentage of MQLs that match the target account or named account list and/or match as a lookalike account. This helps marketing show that events are generating demand in the accounts that are important to the business.

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OUTCOMES   **Engagement**   INPUTS

Through surveys, before/during/after events:

Net Promoter Score ◀

▶ Measure NPS overall and/or by product.

Customer Satisfaction ◀

▶ Measure CSAT overall and/or by product or business unit.

Customer Engagement ◀

▶ Measure engagement overall and/or by product or business unit.

OUTCOMES   **Operational Efficiency**   INPUTS

Speed-to-Lead ◀

▶ Decrease in hours or effort between capturing a lead in marketing automation to routing that lead to sales.

Man Hours Required ◀

▶ Decrease in man-hours and/or headcount required from operations to manage event execution.

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OUTCOMES — Revenue Creation — INPUTS

SQLs ◀ ▶ Number and percentage of SQLs created as a result of the event, time-stamped in the event window and tied to the event campaign.

1:1 Meetings Completed ◀ ▶ Number of 1:1 meetings completed at the event and/or as a result of the event.

Pipeline Creation ◀ ▶ Number and dollar amount of opportunities created at the event and/or as a result of the event.

Pipeline Influence ◀ ▶ Number and dollar amount of opportunities touched at the event and/or as a result of the event.

Pipeline Acceleration ◀ ▶ Number and dollar amount of opportunities that advanced a stage at the event and/or as a result of the event. Could be measured for the whole sales funnel, from stage to stage, or at a particular point, or measured just by deals that enter a late stage.

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Proving ROI in Action

Quality Data

Establishing a comprehensive metrics strategy is the key to measuring ROI for your events. But without quality data to inform those metrics, marketers are missing an essential piece of the puzzle.

For example, Rockwell Automation, a Fortune 500 provider of industrial automation and information technology plays host to over 200 events and over 30,000 event registrants per year – in nine different languages.

Struggling with fragmented and inconsistent data between their global teams, the company was in need of a well-defined strategy for attendee engagement data before, during and after events.

By employing Certain's event automation platform and mobile app, Rockwell's marketing operations team was able to develop and implement a series of processes to help transform the company's event data.

Rockwell is now capturing a consistent set of data that delivers results. By automating a number of previously manual processes including event communications, lead capture and input, their global event teams are now able to focus on higher value activities, such as the content delivered in an event and ensuring that attendees have an incredible experience.

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Proving ROI in Action

Increased Engagement

Valuable data collected before, during and after your event leads the way to meaningful engagement with prospects. A deeper understanding of your attendees' goals and interests enables sales and marketing to better plan for the conversation. It's this act of heightened engagement that ultimately drives pipeline.

For example, Oticon, a leading hearing aid manufacturer, run a number of audiology conferences across the globe annually to support their innovative and cutting-edge solutions to hearing loss.

Oticon leveraged their mobile event app, Certain Touchpoint, for live-polling, surveys, lead retrieval and gamification.

As a result, they saw a dramatic increase in attendee engagement, reporting a more than 97% download rate for the app and record participation from attendees, and delivered 3.1k booth check-ins — a record high for their event sponsors.

In addition, Oticon's events team was able to gain greater insights into their attendees' interests, and gather feedback on their events in real time, informing their post-event follow-up and future event planning.
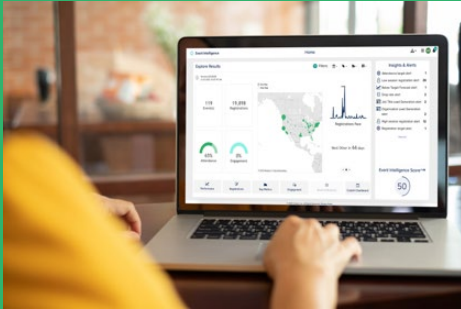
oticon

3.1K
booth check-ins
(a record high for the event)

97%
event app
download rate

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What to Expect from Events Over the Next Year and How to Prepare

With the events industry showing no signs of slowing down, marketers need to stay on top of their strategy in how to most effectively reach customers and ask themselves: "How can I help the business get more out of events?"

Event marketers need to truly begin to master the practice of meaningful engagement. Marketers concerned with creating the ultimate customer experience and real brand loyalty are getting smarter about employing a data strategy as the undercurrent of their events to leave lasting impressions – both with customers and all the way up to the C-Suite.

In this next section, we gathered tips, insights and predictions from leading experts in the events industry to help you prepare and get ahead of the curve in 2020.

1. Center your event marketing strategy around capturing intent data

From the very first event awareness campaign, to the registration form to session check-ins at a conference – marketers have a playground of data to connect the customer journey to content, product, sales and customer success teams.

Event marketers can stand out as business strategists by ensuring their event data powers not only the event experience, but the customer experience that follows the event too.

"Companies today need to put the customer at the center of not just storytelling, but also in the products that the organization builds and each of the touch points with the customer. This includes everything from the market touch points to sales, support, product, and more."

— Chris Capossela, CMO, Microsoft

2. Map event interactions to the revenue funnel

Events small and large contribute to pipeline creation, acceleration and revenue. Whether it's field marketing events or a large annual conference, it's important to understand very early on in the planning cycle all of the touchpoints where customers are interacting with product content

For example, when a customer attends conference sessions, event marketers usually capture session check-in data. Marketers can now take that a step further by tagging every session by product and by funnel stage, to help inform the next best actions for sales and product teams. By doing that, event marketers are helping tie the experiences they create directly to revenue results.

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3. Supercharge Data Flow

One of the scariest moments as an event marketer is to know you are capturing valuable data from your customers, but don't yet have the resources or technology to move that data throughout your organization to power the wave of next steps that generate pipeline. Having data sit stagnant and not be enabled to drive future actions is one of the biggest issues event marketers face.

If event marketers can put data into action to inform the next steps not only in marketing, but throughout the sales, customer success and product teams, they will prove event ROI to the business.

Easier said than done! One way to accomplish this is to invest in technology that enables event data to seamlessly move from system to system.

4. Make Your Marketing Ops Team Your BFF This Year

The need to capture and enable data from events is what makes having a killer relationship with marketing operations a key priority. Relationship building should be constant, and way in advance of event execution.

Marketing operations today is operating as the backbone of marketing, ensuring technology is enabling the flow of data throughout a company.

The key is to work with marketing ops early to map out how data can be used during and after events to make next step recommendations.

5. Stay on Top of Data Regulations

Another reason why marketing ops should be your BFF this year? Data regulations.

The last two years have had marketers a utter complying with data regulations including GDPR. This year there's another regulation being enacted called the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) and it goes into effect at the beginning of 2020. Similar to GDPR, this regulation enables customers and prospects who are residents of California to control their data more closely, whether that is through accessing, deleting or opting out of sharing or selling their information.

Ensuring event registration forms and event data is in compliance with CCPA, similar to GDPR, will be crucial in 2020.

Event Tips & Predictions

The Experts Weigh In

Tailored In-Person Experiences

"With the growing importance and interest in face-to-face meetings, prospects and customers will demand tailored experiences when meeting in person, either in 1-on-1 meetings or even within larger events. Expectations are rising when it comes to how brands interact in person with customers and prospects. Event marketers have an opportunity to really make an impact by having a comprehensive data strategy in place to deliver a truly informed, personalized experience for attendees."

James Huddleston, VP of Marketing, Certain

Single Platform Event Technology Adoption

"When it comes to events, people don't want to juggle three or four different technologies and try to understand how they work in concert, so there's either going to be some kind of an API solution or more human beings included the process. That, or the single platform solution is already out there - it's just going to significantly improve in the year ahead."

Nick Borelli, CEO & Founder, Borelli Strategies

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Rise of Event Mobile Apps in Place of Social Media

"When it comes to events, there's much more to social media than posting on Twitter or Instagram —and not everyone wants to engage on those spaces as representatives of their business. Having an event mobile app that can also act as a social media platform for your event is key for 2020. It creates a safe space for the event, while also providing important data specific to that event."

Merideth Ranahan, Sr. Manager of Executive Event Production, Capital One

Focus on the Follow-Up

"As event marketers, we need to be sure we're providing a very tailored nurture experience and post event follow-up process. This starts by ensuring we are getting the appropriate data and attendee interests over to sales so they can personalize their follow-up to their key accounts and customers in attendance. Marketing can complement the outreach by monitoring attendee behavior at the event and research post-event to customize the messaging and spark action with our high value accounts."

Beth Tiltges, Director of Field Marketing, Demandbase

Results Drive the Strategy

"Marketers will focus their dollars on events that have proven pipeline and revenue impact and not just MQL volume. Marketers are realizing that MQLs can be useful as part of the funnel, but using the metrics to justify marketing spend at specific events that in the past have driven a high volume of MQLs but little revenue is misleading and can impact the overall ROI from their event strategy."

Charlie Saunders, Co-Founder and Strategic Marketing Consultant, CS2 Marketing

Marketers in the new decade of events have the opportunity to truly step up and shine as strategic leaders for their business, and with the modern resources and access to rich intent data that are now available to businesses, now is the time to carve out a seat at the decision-making table.

Need help getting started with your event data strategy? Certain can help by sharing some of the best practices customers like Microsoft, Disney and National Instruments have enacted. Set up a time with us and we'll make recommendations that are relevant for your business.

CONTACT US

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