



WHITEPAPER

Scaling Event Intelligence for Business Success

A Blueprint for Informed Decision-Making
Across Your Entire Event Portfolio



As technology advances, businesses are presented with both unprecedented opportunities as well as challenges. Amidst this shifting landscape, marketing events emerge as essential drivers of revenue for organizations across many industries. They provide a unique platform for connecting with potential customers, influencing purchase decisions, and driving sales. The key to navigating this landscape successfully lies in the ability to harness the power of event intelligence—a strategic approach that empowers decision-makers with data-driven insights across their entire event portfolio.

Many organizations are laser-focused on ‘the next event’ and miss the forest for the trees with their data strategy, resulting in operational inefficiencies, misallocated investment of tight budgets, and even lost revenue.

Truly harnessing event data means understanding it in the context of your entire event program.

This is in part because many stretched corporate event and marketing teams have to contend with a combination of internal events, customer-facing events, and participation in other industry events like trade shows and conferences. Add to this a combination of event formats – almost half of all events **are virtual or have a virtual component** according to Skift research – and you end up with data that is often siloed and difficult to collate.

In fact, 47% of marketers indicated their data was “siloed and difficult to access” **according to Arm Treasure Data research**. But a more strategic role, such as a marketing director, VP of marketing or CMO, requires a bird’s eye view of all of the events within a line of business – and ideally across an organization.



4 Steps for Scaling Your Event Intelligence

When it comes to developing a scaled event data strategy – especially within a marketing team with limited resources – there are four strategic actions to consider:

1) Centralize: Integrate all data across events into one source to avoid having to reconcile siloed data sources in different programs all over the tech stack during the analysis.

2) Standardize: Structure the data collected to make it consistent and easier to collate to avoid getting bogged down comparing apples to oranges.

3) Visualize: Use techniques to make the data easily accessible, understandable, and communicable to stakeholders above and tactical resources below.

4) Contextualize: Use your data to tell a story across your event program so you can understand performance metrics in the grander scheme of things.

Establishing a data strategy that covers these four pillars will empower marketing professionals to answer higher-order strategic questions about their event program:

- › Should we keep running the same events year over year?
- › How do these events move the needle on larger objectives within the marketing team? The organization?
- › Which formats are the most effective in delivering value to all stakeholders?
- › How do I track the performance across my event program so I can make data-driven decisions?
- › Can any of the events in our program be improved, culled, or merged?
- › How can I communicate this data to my stakeholders to get the support and resources I need?



The Challenge: When It Comes to Data, Are You Missing the Forest for the Trees?

According to **research from Aberdeen Strategy & Research conducted in 2023**, only 35% of companies are “fully satisfied with their ability to use data to make effective decisions.”

Within a rapidly changing event industry, marketing and event teams are often stretched thin. Marketers often don't have the time, resources and domain knowledge to move from basic data capture to insight-based event intelligence.

As a result, they are relegated to spending resources on outsourced IT personnel who are frequently unfamiliar with events and whose analysis may not account for the unique needs of their industry.

Only 35% of companies are “fully satisfied with their ability to use data to make effective decisions.”

Source: Aberdeen Strategy & Research, 2023



Embracing Program-Wide Event Intelligence

According to **Experian's 2022 Global Data Management Research**, organizations with “a fully developed data management program” are 25% more likely to “surpass their goals” than those that lack “a fully functioning data team, process, or technology.”

Organizations with “a fully developed data management program” are 25% more likely to “surpass their goals.”

Source: Experian's 2022 Global Data Management Research

Understanding and communicating the benefits of strategic insights will help marketers to have more meaningful conversations with their stakeholders about how to best invest in the marketing function and structure their teams and their tech stacks to provide those insights, which in turn leads to much-needed resources.

This process starts with a shift from a rudimentary case-by-case ROI assessment to a larger, more holistic event intelligence strategy that entails evaluating your annual event program's performance as a whole. Only then can you identify program-wide opportunities for improvement and make critical, data-driven decisions about which event assets to invest in.



Trends Over Time

Once you've centralized your data collection, the most basic way to begin scaling your data strategy is to establish benchmarks, and a great way to contextualize the data for any given event is to track it year over year.

Historical information is valuable because it can enrich your understanding of whether your event is really doing well in serving your customers or surviving on momentum.

Certain has incorporated the need to track performance across all event instances into its event intelligence platform, which allows administrators to easily

access events from previous years and pull historical data into dashboards for events that are ongoing. Combined with the ability to integrate data from a myriad of marketing tech sources, this makes it easy to pick out patterns in the event's performance and combine that data with qualifying information to develop a fuller picture of the event's ROI.

Trends Across Events

Trends over time establish a trend in the performance of particular events, but scaling your data strategy also requires looking at the performance of all a marketing team's events and

comparing events across teams, departments, lines of business, etc. This will give you an idea of which of your events best serve the stakeholders who rely on them and the organization's larger goals.

Trends Across Formats

A key benefit to having a platform that serves tech requirements across all event types is the ability to easily collate the data for events in different formats. Different formats may be better suited to different audiences, different customer commitment levels, and therefore different stages of the funnel.



Trends in Data Lead to Inspiration

While granular data about a specific event can begin to answer some fundamental questions, you need the macroscopic view to identify problem areas in the first place.

The difference in performance serves as a guiding light that shows marketers where to drill down into the particulars of each event to identify opportunities in the way content is delivered, networking is facilitated, and customers are nurtured.

It's critical to remember that trending data is not a basis for reprimanding, but for teaching. It's about learning how to go above and beyond and getting inspiration for your event design.

Highlight high performing teams and give them a platform for sharing their learnings within the organization.





Integrated Data Means Better Team Coordination and Better ROI

A study by Experian Data Quality found that 99% of organizations believe that data is essential for revenue growth, with data integration being a critical component.

This is because an integrated data strategy can support both better budget expenditure based on richer performance analysis and the reduction of operational inefficiencies.

Being able to look to other teams and events within the organization for inspiration is one way to use a macroscopic view of your data, but scaling your data strategy is about much more than just improving particular metrics of particular events.

Being able to visualize your spend across events and the ROI they generate allows you to look programmatically at what you're doing to figure out what's working on a grander scale.

If there are discrepancies in the revenues or expenses, those can flag events or areas you should investigate to identify any bottlenecks. In this way, you can look at how your different event teams operate, offer training, and explore more favorable partnerships accordingly. Use your position to determine where you can draw from one part of your organization to support another.

How to Scale Your Data for Cross-Stack Insights

Centralization: Breaking Down Silos Starts in Your Tech Stack

A significant challenge when trying to establish a holistic view of your entire program's data is data silos. Indeed **a third of B2B marketers struggle with siloed or inaccessible data, and 30% cite incomplete data as an issue.**

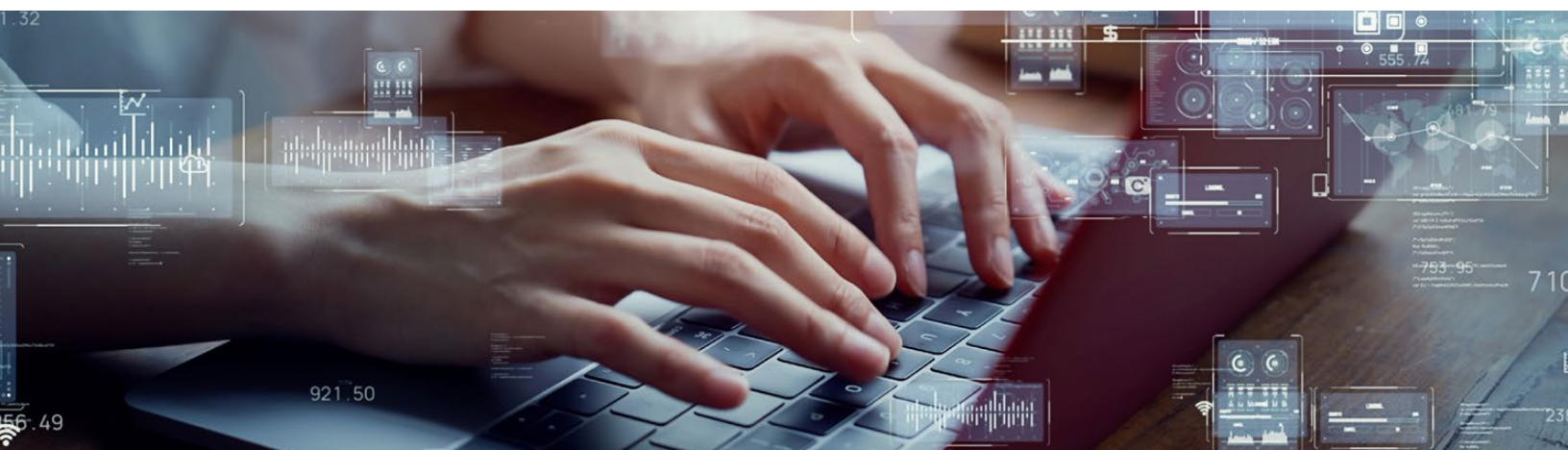
Event data siloed in different vendor solutions can be useful but requires a significant lift to analyze because of the burden of having to collate everything and keep multiple systems in view at once in order to tether insights together. It's a bit like having to plot a path while looking in different directions at the same time.

This is consistent with **research from Forbes Insights**, which found that **72% of marketers are "still focused primarily on knowledge gathering rather than making real and actionable use of their data."** Slightly over half also struggle with **"complex technical solutions" and find data silos, unintegrated systems, and "time-consuming aggregate metrics" to hinder their operations.**

As such, data silos often prevent marketers and event professionals from making good use of the data they collected. They also reinforce the tendency for event owners to narrow their crosshairs on event-by-event targets. As such, the first step to scaling your event data strategy is to consolidate your data collection.

The easiest way to do this is to plan for it from the beginning of the process. For example, ensure that any tech provider used will either integrate with other tools in your tech stack or provide data in a format that is consistent and compatible with the data provided by all your other vendors.

Alternatively, a simple solution is to invest in a single end-to-end event management platform like Certain to manage your in-person and virtual event technology. This will ensure that all your data is not only consolidated but specifically designed to be conducive to one cohesive analysis. Some will even furnish you with event intelligence dashboards that structure this information into useful insights for you, which can then be exported for easy reporting.



Standardization: Consistent Data Formats Support Smoother Analysis

Not only do disparate systems typically entail problematic data silos, but that data often is not formatted consistently and in a way that is easily compared.

Enterprise-level corporate event teams often manage events, and the teams responsible are themselves often siloed in their operations, so the use of disparate tool sets across a given organization has become commonplace.



In fact, the issue is so widespread in the event industry that it has inspired some to create industry-wide standards: the **VSeF/RSDE** (Reporting Standards for Digital Events) administered by **BPA Worldwide** was established for this purpose, and many tech partners have already signed on.

However, a top-down solution many organizations take when they don't want to vet every single tech provider and supplier for their adherence to VSEF is to just use one comprehensive event management platform for their events organization-wide. This ensures that all their data is collected in a consistent format as well as in one place.



Visualization: Relevant Reporting Supports Intelligent Conversations at Scale

One feature to make sure is included in your event management platform is deep reporting and flexibility in types of reports and dashboards.

Dashboards are essential for marketers and event professionals alike – especially those without a strong technical background or dedicated data analysts within their team structures. Technology plays an important role in filling this gap and making it possible for busy senior marketers and event professionals to actually act on their data.

That is why every major marketing technology provider allows highly customizable dashboards combined with recommended setups that help marketers make sense of their data, and event tech platforms that prioritize event intelligence have begun to follow suit.

For example, Certain Event Intelligence suggests dashboard templates that provide event owners with data sets that speak to a range of common event key performance indicators (KPIs).

However, one dashboard layout won't fit every event, nor every question you might need data to answer. Different stakeholders may be interested in different

levels of insights, and insights into different event features or KPIs. For this reason, dashboard customization is a huge boon to scaling your event intelligence. The ability to quickly pick out the metrics that speak to different stakeholders' priorities will help you to connect with them in informed, data-driven conversations about your needs.

Moreover, the ability to design dashboard widgets around specific needs enables stakeholders to conduct this research and analyze data themselves, if they choose, and in real time.

Contextualization: Getting Data Across your Martech Stack to Tell a Story

As discussed in the first section, understanding the performance of your events across your entire organization adds context to the data that can depict both positive and negative trends.

Your tech should facilitate this not only by bringing the data in, but by rendering it and analyzing it to provide fundamental insights.

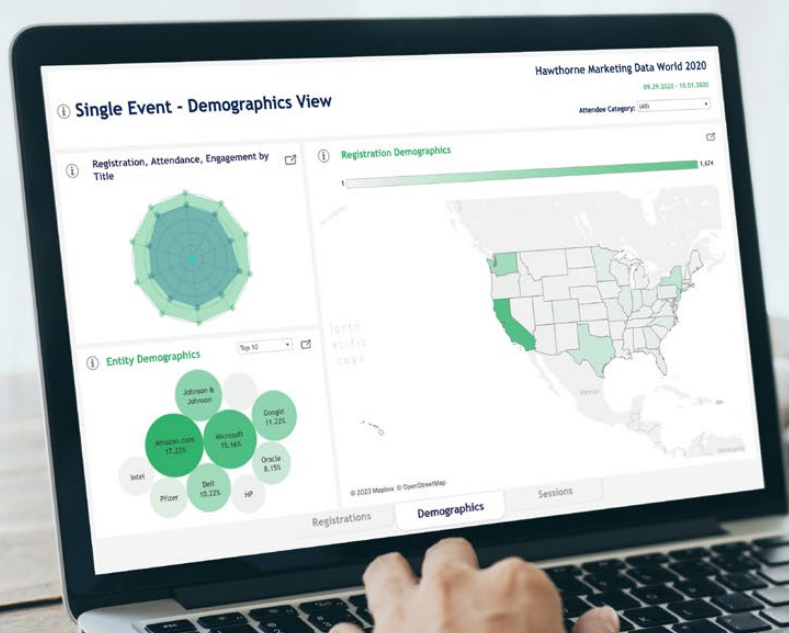
For example, Certain offers an ROI calculator that lets you input data points related to your attendance, event costs, and revenue, and combines this information to calculate the ROI per attendee automatically so you can see it at a glance.

Every marketer will have particular needs and will need the flexibility to easily flip between data sets. Thus, another advantage of using a single platform is the ability to bring in data from across your program into the dashboard *and* to easily switch between dashboards and events without having to log into several disparate systems.

For example, if an event owner discovers that an event is performing poorly year over year or compared to others in the organization's larger program, but they're not exactly sure what needs to change, real-time insights can support A/B testing to trial and error different solutions while they hone in on which event elements really move the needle.

Event trend analysis is not only advantageous for high-level strategic decisions, but can also empower planners on the ground when paired with real-time insights.

To facilitate this, Certain's "no-code" integration support allows event owners to connect to a variety of other event technology solutions using their API. For example, event owners can integrate with a polling solution to collect real-time feedback that can help them conduct a sentiment analysis in real time.





Communicating Event Insights to Spur Meaningful Actions

Integrating data from across the technology stack into one place should make it easy to visualize that narrative and produce reports for key stakeholders, but also to communicate across the organization based on the discussions taking place.

Who needs the insights and how do you communicate them? More importantly, how do you make them actionable?

The marketer who sits at the decision-making table needs to be able to have strategic oversight over the event program and to contextualize the data in order to do both of the following:

- ▶ **Generate reports for stakeholders to substantiate ROI and secure top-down support**
- ▶ **Communicate data insights and rationale to tactical resources who support event execution on the ground**

We already discussed how customizable dashboards and advanced reporting capabilities support the former: communicating findings to stakeholders. However, the need to communicate high-level rationale to tactical resources is often overlooked.

Event planners are often shoehorned into marketing teams despite little overlap in their formal training or experience. Moreover, many marketing teams have de facto event planners who are responsible for managing that function on an ad hoc basis in addition to their other responsibilities. As such, there can be a lack of communication about how to reconcile practical event planning concerns with higher-level organizational goals.

Your event intelligence should align the whole team around a more data-driven strategy by helping tactical staff to understand the reasons behind the targets they've been given. Bringing them into the conversation is a way to fill the skill gap, supplement their education, and help them to understand their own performance in a way that is not just based on "this doesn't work, change it" constructive criticism.

This allows them to understand the broader challenges and targets, and to think about how to solve / realize them in a practical sense. A tactical resource who is aware that an event is trending downward, for example, may feel more inclined to pay attention to how granular design decisions might impact that.

Moreover, involving the people with actual experience executing the higher level strategy at the discussion stage can help everyone establish more reasonable expectations from the beginning.

To support your future in-person and hybrid events, [Certain Event Management](#) offers a unified, branded, and scalable attendee experience throughout your event planning, registration, and execution cycle. Certain's AI-powered event intelligence capabilities enable marketing professionals to seamlessly capture insights and buying signals from all types of attendees, be they in-person or virtual -- and share them across their enterprise technology stack to drive revenue and customer success.

Learn More



eBook

Event Intelligence Playbook

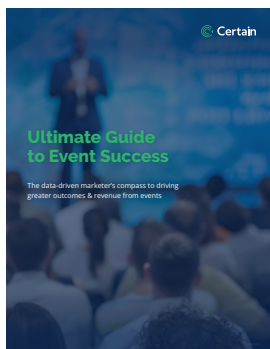
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Certain provides the leading intelligent enterprise event management solution that powers personalized event experiences and meaningful connections that deliver greater business outcomes and revenue. By seamlessly capturing and transforming event data into actionable insights at scale, Certain enables event professionals to integrate buying signals into other technologies in real-time. With Certain's proven SaaS-based technology, cross-functional event teams collaborate, streamline processes, and reduce costs while executing flawless events with operational excellence. Our digital event solution allows event marketers and planners to better capture insights and buying signals from all attendees-in-person or virtual- and share them across the enterprise technology stack to drive revenue and customer success.