The Future of Event Marketing

2nd Edition

How to win more attendees in 2019 and beyond
Copyright

All rights reserved. No part of this report may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means whatsoever (including presentations, short summaries, blog posts, printed magazines, use of images in social media posts) without express written permission from the author, except in the case of brief quotations (50 words maximum and for a maximum of 2 quotations) embodied in critical articles and reviews, and with clear reference to the original source, including a link to the original source at www.eventmanangerblog.com. Please refer all pertinent questions to the publisher.
# Table of contents

**Executive Summary**  
4

**Five overarching trends impacting event marketing in 2019 and beyond - Julius Solaris**  
5

**Quantitative research: What event marketers say is working.**  
10

**Qualitative research: Tools, Challenges, Internal Selling and ROI - # experts weigh in**  
13

**Before we jump into tools and tactics - Miguel Neves**  
26

- The event’s story  
26
- The communication timeline  
27

**What still works in 2019?**  
29

- Video  
29
- Live Streaming  
31
- Remarketing  
32
- Pop-ins and Exit Intent  
33
- Beacons and Smart Badges  
34
- Long-form Content  
35
- Growth Hacking  
36

**2019 and Beyond: The Event Marketing of the Future**  
37

- Community Management  
37
- Design the User Journey  
38
- Micro-influencer Marketing  
39
- Chatbots/Automated Messaging  
40
- Data Privacy  
41

**In Conclusion**  
42

**About the Authors**  
43

**About EventMB**  
44

**A Note from the Sponsor**  
45
Quite a lot has happened since the first edition of The Future of Event Marketing.

Here is a summary of the most significant changes:

• Events are the most sought after marketing channel for 2019.
• Organic social media is slowly dying, leaving space for mostly paid initiatives.
• Organic marketing opportunities exist on search engines and with video.
• The rise of experiences has opened new marketing possibilities for event professionals.
• Last minute decisions are increasingly popular, making moment marketing more relevant in 2019.

The second edition of The Future of Event Marketing will help you navigate through these overarching trends, with a twist.

We are introducing a new wealth of quantitative and qualitative research as well as an update on our tools section, looking back at what is still relevant in 2019 and what will be relevant going forward.

The structure of this report:

• Five overarching trends impacting event marketing in 2019 and beyond
• Quantitative research: What event marketers say is working.
• Qualitative research: Tools, Challenges, Internal Selling and ROI - 7 experts weigh in
• The Event Story - Strategy Before Tools
• Event Marketing Tools - What still works in 2019
• Event Marketing Tools - 2019 and beyond
Five overarching trends impacting event marketing in 2019 and beyond - Julius Solaris

At EventMB we have carried some of the largest pieces of research in the event industry.

The results of our qualitative and quantitative research, in addition to constant feedback from experts and suppliers, helped us shape the following trends, impacting the way you market events.

1. Events are the most sought after marketing channel for 2019.

We reiterated this vision in our annual trends report. Marketing budgets are coming in masses to events. More marketers are using events as their preferred marketing tool.

Face to face has proven to be extremely effective to develop customer interactions. Very few saw this trend coming.

In an increased social media and digital-driven world, many believe that time was up for the physical world.

Nothing further from that, through. With Amazon leading the trend and opening physical stores, face to face seems to be the go-to channel to give tangibility to online interactions.

The connection here is very simple. The more we interact online, the more we feel an urgency to meet. And when we do meet, we have a lot of context to refer to in our interactions, making face to face meetings enjoyable even for the most introverted attendee.

This trend is further fuelled by the rise of experiences. As events are evolving into experiences, they become the perfect playground for brands to interact with customers on a personal level.
2. Organic social media is slowly dying, leaving space for mostly paid initiatives.

Our research is strongly suggesting that social media still remains the go-to channel for event marketers. The (wrong) concept that social media is cheap or free to use is definitely dead.

Even the most inexperienced social media practitioner will know that generating organic (as in not paid for) traffic or engagement is close to impossible. Yes, you could always go viral, but the chances are similar to winning the lottery.

While there is still room for organic initiatives, getting share of voice is becoming a monumental task for events which traditionally peak and then go silent for the rest of the year. The myth of the year-long engagement is still a myth, with very few events actually mastering a year-long engagement strategy, the main requirement for organic traction.

Should we discount social then? Absolutely not.

The paid opportunities on social media actually make this tool still a viable one, even though costs are rising pretty quickly. Once your event passes the cost wall, then the opportunities are very democratic.

Social media is still alive and kicking, but extremely different from what it used to be. The skills required to use social media as a marketing tool have also changed. Tones of voice are always strong elements of a sound social strategy but technical and analytical skills should be present in your social media team.

If you work with agencies, prefer suppliers with data-driven approaches to those that implement high-level engagement strategies. Higher level strategies are usually very tough to achieve and justify ROI for.
3. Organic marketing opportunities exist on search engines and with video

Do we have to give up the ability to gather organic (free) traffic for our events in 2019? Nope. Social media used to be the free go-to option for event marketing. Everything was cheap, great memories! Google used to be the go-to place to unload marketing budgets and capitalize on Pay Per Click (PPC) initiatives.

In an incredible twist of events, Google has become the go-to platform for organic opportunities. Recent research says that Google passed Facebook in terms of referral traffic:

When researching attendance-to-business events, Google still largely wins and offers the strongest organic opportunities. Which doubles if you consider YouTube. Video is still a strong playground for discoverability and marketing activities, especially for events where the visual impact can make waves.
4. The rise of experiences has opened new marketing possibilities for event professionals

It’s all about experiences. You’ve heard it through 2018 and you will hear it even more for the next three years. What we are not realizing as an industry, though, is that the profound nature of events is being changed.

If you take for example the traditional structure of ticketed events, the rise of experiences is bringing incredible disruption to ticket options.

Premium ticketing options and exclusive upgrades are becoming more common across all event types, with attendees looking to elevate their experience even further. Event planners are getting creative with the different tiers of packages available to exploit VIP, upper-tier pricing and strategically create a limited supply, special product, with the scarcity of the package pushing up the level of demand.

The recent Taylor Swift Reputation tour will be remembered as a cornerstone moment of how we market events. Taylor Swift announced a new way to buy tickets for her upcoming tour that resulted in the tour not selling out in minutes as in the past but quickly becoming one of the highest grossing in history. “Taylor Swift Tix” gave fans a greater chance of getting pre-sale tickets by proving their loyalty in a number of ways. One of the ways for fans to increase their chances is by buying merchandise. This means fans that spend more will have a greater chance of acquiring tickets.

Not all events face the same demand levels, yet discounting, discounting, discounting seems to be a trend of the past. Sure there will always be a space for early birds but can we upsell rather than downsell? This seems to be the marketing mantra of the next three years.
5. Last minute decisions are increasingly popular, making moment marketing more relevant in 2019.

Impulse decisions and the drive to satisfy needs and wants fast, via experiences, are deeply changing the way we market events. No waste of time there.

The reward of getting what we want fast is incredibly satisfying. When we don’t get what we want, we get angry and we either move on (leaving a slow web page for example) or experience massive Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), for example in the case of an event we can’t attend.

So how does moment marketing affect your event and what can you do about it?

Moment marketing has several implications for event professionals. Before the event, it gives you the opportunity to quickly convert attendees searching for ‘what is happening today’ or ‘what is happening this week’ or ‘what is happening near me’.

These are atavic questions that event technology has not been able to respond to and that Google is now focusing on. The trend of impulse decisions is confirmed by an industry-wide tendency of late registrations and more last minute decisions.

The opportunities are endless within the event itself, in terms of creating moment-worthy spaces where attendees can share their instant gratification with the rest of the world, making only spectators feel they are missing out (and hence consider an in-person participation next year).

Moment marketing has been embraced by large scale events, with appearances by VIPs at conferences that spark incredible attention on social media as all attendees are ready to capture the moment.

In 2018 we conducted one of the largest pieces of event planning research ever completed. With 2,400 contacts and over 1,000 qualified respondents.

Here are the most relevant indicators for the future of event marketing

Social Media is the Most Effective Tool for Event Marketing

73% of event planners believe social media to be the most effective tool for marketing events.

As we anticipated, that may change pretty soon due to how social networking giants are changing the dynamics of their products.

Email marketing is still a firm favorite for many, with 65% listing it as one of their most effective tools. Nevertheless only 47.4% of surveyed admit analyzing the data from their email marketing software, with 53% of our sample checking it either sometimes (35%) or never (17.6%). How event planners will action email data will create a strong competitive advantage going forward.

A strong website is still a powerful weapon to convert attendees with almost 60% of respondents selecting it as the most effective tool for their event marketing efforts.
Facebook is the Most Popular Network for Event Promotion

With regards to social networks, Facebook is the most popular (88% reportedly use the platform). Over half (52%) agree that Facebook is the most effective social media platform for promoting events. LinkedIn is the second most effective social media channel (26%), followed by Twitter (13%). Instagram seems to be the missing piece of the puzzle with only 6.2% event professionals investing in it.

Early Bird Rates Remain Most Popular Tactic

Time-limited offers reign supreme, with early bird rates being the most effective tactic for selling tickets and increasing registration. Almost a quarter state that discount codes are their most effective tactic.

Content is the Main Reason That We Attend Events

When it gets to attending events, what makes people click is the topic of the event (62%). Content planning will become an even more important element of our marketing mix. Long gone are the days of randomly putting programmes together trying to chase the buzz of the moment. Careful content planning seems to be a priority for most event marketers.

Speakers/Performers are also an incredibly popular element that drives decisions in the marketing arena (59%), followed by the authority and the brand of the event (50%). The venue and the format of the event also seem to have a strong influence in the decision making process of attending events.
Confidence in Experiential Marketing is Gaining Grounds

Almost a third (32%) said that experiential marketing was a priority. Although almost the same number said it wasn’t a priority, the majority (58%) feel that demand for experiential is increasing.

Social Engagement is the Vital Ingredient of Events as a Marketing Tool

The majority of event planners feel that the key ingredients of a successful experiential campaign are a happy client, a strong message, and (with over 75%) social engagement.

Slow Growth in Influencer Marketing

Only a quarter of event planners said they plan to invest in influencer marketing. Despite this being one of the fastest growing tactics for online marketers, adoption amongst eventprofs is slow. A third said that they would not be investing in influencer marketing. Over 40% didn’t know if they would be investing or not, possibly indicating that the eventprofs are not yet familiar enough with influencers as a marketing tool.

More Event Planners are Embracing Video

66% of event planners and marketers are already using video as part of their marketing strategy. Despite the rising trend, there is still some resistance with over a quarter (28%) not using the medium.
Qualitative Research: Tools, Challenges, Internal Selling and ROI - # Experts Weigh In

To add more depth to our quantitative research, we asked some of the most senior and influential event marketers to share their perspective on four key questions event professionals from all over the world will relate to.

**The questions are as follows:**

- What is the biggest challenge of using events as a marketing tool?
- What tools are you investing in for 2019?
- How can we sell events better as marketing tools to decision makers?
- What are the tools you use to show event marketing ROI?
"Use technology to quantify ROI"

As Channel Program Manager for the Americas Channel at Siemens PLM Software, Brenda is responsible for partner communications, creating collateral for partner marketing local sales initiatives, and project managing the annual Americas Solution Partner Conference.

What is the biggest challenge of using events as a marketing tool?
Balancing cost with verifiable ROI. The cost of executing an event has increased for the past four years. To attract sponsors and justify increasing sponsorship cost, event managers need technology to engage and drive relevant leads (attendees) to sponsors. Sponsors that return to an event obviously enjoyed significant ROI, but how can event managers show the value of events through the life cycle of a new customer? The digital threads that tie event cost to ROI are improving, but there are still many missing and frayed threads.

What tools are you investing in for 2019?
We are starting to add more integrated tools such as appointments booking and I am a strong advocate for RFID technology to track the attendee journey. I believe that Augmented Reality will be a game changer for engaging attendees and driving the right niche traffic to sponsors. Similarly, I believe Chatbots will increase attendee satisfaction by providing a friendly and rapid method for attendees to find the information they need to maximize their experience at an event.

How can we sell events better as marketing tools to decision makers?
By understanding and tailoring our pitch on the priorities and concerns of the decision makers. This means asking more questions and having deeper conversations with them. By doing this, an event manager can provide verifiable data, including industry case studies and event ROI reports, to prove that events are an ROI-generating strategy.

What are the tools you use to show event marketing ROI?
I created a survey that covers about 15 discrete elements and uses a 5-point Likert scale for measurement. The survey is just long enough to be completed with low abandonment rates and is configured to easily provide metrics.

Brenda Ainsburg
Channel Program Manager
- Americas, Siemens
I also create post-session surveys to collect feedback on individual sessions on common elements (presenter, materials, relevance, pace, etc.). I also provide live polls for presenters to use in their sessions to increase in-session engagement as well as mine for data.

The registration website provides registration attendance and demographic data. The conference app provides engagement info – sponsor banners tapped, session survey data, live poll data. The post-event survey reveals overall satisfaction levels and indicates items which we could improve for a spectacular attendee experience. Comment fields on surveys can be used to provide customer testimonials on the critical importance of events as a marketing strategy.
"Digital Marketing has priority in 2019"

As Marketing Director at Cisco Systems, Gerd De Bruycker is responsible as the CMO for Northern Europe and leads the EMEA Events Team. He specializes in how event marketing integrates into the overall marketing mix as part of customer journeys and audience touchpoint strategies. Gerd and his team are responsible for Cisco’s top events in the region, like Cisco Live, Cisco’s trade show participation, event strategy and country event enablement services.

Before joining Cisco over eight years ago, he worked at Microsoft for almost a decade, mainly in event marketing roles on a country, regional and worldwide level. He is also a guest lecturer at a high school in Belgium and speaker at conferences.

**What is the biggest challenge of using events as a marketing tool?**

The biggest challenge I see is that events are still too much of a silo within the overall marketing mix of a company. Events (physical, virtual and hybrid) should support certain marketing objectives and be fully integrated into your customer journeys and touchpoint strategies.

**What tools are you investing in for 2019?**

We are mostly investing in digital marketing related to events. Next to collecting data for event analytics and insights. My latest addition to the team was a digital marketing expert with no real event marketing experience, for example.

**How can we sell events better as marketing tools to decision makers?**

In my view, we do not have an issue in selling events as a marketing tool to decision makers. The issue is that for each marketing challenge decision makers want an event. We need to reduce our event spend and find the right balance with the other marketing tools and tactics.

**What are the tools you use to show event marketing ROI?**

We have our own build set of metrics for events. We use a template where we choose our metrics depending on the marketing objectives for the event (from NPS to Sales Qualified Leads).
"Use GDPR to Redefine Your Marketing"

Whitney Klepadlo runs global corporate marketing and events at Workable, an all-in-one recruitment software. Prior to that she worked for a subsidiary of Intel, managing the events and programs for the IoT vertical for North America, and North America field marketing for Brightcove, a video platform company.

What is the biggest challenge of using events as a marketing tool?

The biggest challenge is ensuring the content and promotion is intended for the audience you are trying to attract. I think as marketers we constantly think like marketers and how we would react or interpret something. I am constantly challenging myself and my team to think like our customer; what information do they need? How do we provide value? How do we continue to be more helpful? Tying together these needs and values to your promotional materials, your channels of promotion - all the way down to the venue and food are truly what sets apart an incredible event from any other.

What tools are you investing in for 2019?

We have been continuing to invest in tools to increase our database integrity and engagement. The GDPR legislation has really forced us to take a critical look at not only who we are currently marketing our events to, but how and why. Marketing automation has also been a big piece of technology that has been crucial in ensuring that our event invitations and promotional emails fall in line with the other marketing functions needs. Brand exposure is going to be big for us in 2019 and being able to analyze and understand this data is also going to be a big initiative.

How can we sell events better as marketing tools to decision makers?

We live in a world where everything is digital now. You don’t even need to do your own grocery shopping or speak to a person to order your pizza on a Friday night. Event marketing is truly unique in that rather than technology becoming the WAY to do it, technology simply allows us to better communicate the in-person benefits. There is no other marketing function that gets like-minded people in a room to meet, speak to, and learn from each other. Your events are not just what you are trying to say but who you are as a company.
What are the tools you use to show event marketing ROI?

I use our social media (paid/organic) impressions and CTRs, as well as our MAP to show ROI on open rates, click-through rates and conversions. My CRM is critical in showing pipeline-generated and increase-in-sales cycles as prospects or customers move down the funnel. Churn rate in continuing to keep customers happy is an additional metric that we are working to better understand and run reporting on.
Jesus follows a continual learning strategy to bring market intelligence to Morley personnel so they can better serve clients and customers. He investigates what clients and key competitors are experiencing, finds key learnings in the context of the industry’s ever-changing technology/digital landscape, and shares relevant insights and experiences with Morley’s marketing and sales teams so they remain up-to-date with what is going on in the market – what’s new, what’s next.

What is the biggest challenge of using events as a marketing tool?

An event is a vanishing experiential product that is best consumed live. Therefore, all events rely on the same basic premise to motivate an audience: the fear of missing out (FOMO). The value of an event as a marketing tool ties directly to the target audience’s FOMO, and our biggest challenge is to transform FOMO into action.

Morley converts invitees to attendees by ensuring that all event communications fit the company culture and delivering content that heightens expectations – and then exceeding those expectations on site.

Take an incentive event like a President’s Club, for example. From a communications perspective, there’s likely already a strong base of “awareness” and “interest” (in reference to the AIDA marketing model). FOMO comes from the “desire” to win (recognition) and taking “action” to experience a once-in-a-lifetime trip (reward). To help convert participants into winners, communications might hint at the hidden benefits of winning, like the chance to rub elbows with senior execs.

The same is true for a sales, marketing or internal corporate meeting. The event invitation demonstrates an employee’s value to the organization (recognition). Hearing firsthand the plans for next year – or better yet, helping to form those plans – is incredibly professionally satisfying (reward). FOMO is a clear motivator for most professionals as they decide their desire to attend and take action to register.

What tools are you investing in for 2019?

Technology remains the king of new investment. Our focus is on cloud-based tools that directly affect the participant experience. This makes the biggest possible impact for our clients.
Today, event participants expect a seamless and integrated experience that includes registration, air, hotel and ground reservations.

To achieve this type of high-quality customer service interaction, we continually improve the workflow technology surrounding our meeting management process, which includes the registration process, meeting apps and vendor coordination tools that naturally integrate into the event agenda.

In our case, we have defined 299 critical steps that could be part of any program – as well as the customer service elements associated with those steps. Getting this right is how we WOW our clients’ event participants. Using digital tools directly related to the participant experience gives us a clear operational path for every event, and begins to delight attendees even before arriving on site.

**How can we sell events better as marketing tools to decision makers?**

The most important variable to emphasize to decision makers is that nothing can bring an experience to life better than an event.

Even as video becomes more prevalent and many advertisers utilize new and “old” social media tools to present experiences to their consumers/clients - nothing can compare to a “vanishing experiential product that is best consumed live,” to quote my introduction to question number three.

**What are the tools you use to show event marketing ROI?**

For our type of events - participant and sponsor satisfaction is the number one metric we utilize - this information is gathered via polling tools but the most important one is the repeat business from our corporate clients.
As an influential B2C & B2B marketing executive, Beth has extensive experience branding consumer goods, entertainment technology, technology sector products and software, with companies that included Macy’s, L’Oreal Professional, and currently Informa Global Exhibitions, one of the leading producers of tradeshows and content platforms. Beth builds brand awareness with innovative, multi-platform campaigns that include web, social media, print, video & event marketing.

**What is the biggest challenge of using events as a marketing tool?**

There are so many variables in the exhibiting process, that determining the ROI and maximizing the leads captured is one of the most daunting challenges of event marketing.

Marketers need a clear goal of what they would like to accomplish (leads, branding, press, etc.), and determine how to measure that success to stakeholders. This needs to be followed with a plan of how to distribute and follow-up with leads after an event, instead of dumping them into a database without a second thought.

**What tools are you investing in for 2019?**

In 2019 I am looking to invest in more tracking technology, including the use of RFID and cell phone tracking, to determine the areas of interest for attendees.

I have also been experimenting with chatbot show apps and AR programs to increase customer engagement, and create an experience that can extend outside of the trade show floor and conference rooms.

**How can we sell events better as marketing tools to decision makers?**

We need to show them the ROI that comes with face-to-face interaction, especially in industries where the end user does not normally have a chance to interact with products or services in the real world prior to making a buying decision. We must create opportunities that allow the exhibitors and attendees to engage in networking events on site, that promote that personal connection that makes event marketing so valuable.
We need to provide them with turnkey tools to promote themselves, before, during, and after the show, and this can include creating easy to use graphics, "tweet-sheets" and social media posts, plug and play email templates, and then we need to engage them afterwards, to provide continued support to allow them to continue the conversations they started on show site, with advertising and PR.

**What are the tools you use to show event marketing ROI?**

We use a combination of event stats that we communicate to exhibitors and sponsors in a dashboard; year-over-year increases, percentage of first-time attendees, floor-traffic patterns, and survey results.

We then follow-up with them throughout the year, as our markets have long buying cycles, to make sure that they are seeing results throughout the year.
"ROI is not just about spreadsheets"

Dana Moberly, CMP is the events marketing manager at Spiceworks in Austin, TX. She’s been planning events internationally and domestically for seven years and has been in marketing for 11 years. Dana has worked in a variety of industries ranging from finance and publishing to technology (currently). When she’s not researching fresh ideas for her next event, you’ll find her enjoying breakfast tacos with her husband and 1-year-old daughter.

What is the biggest challenge of using events as a marketing tool?

Resources. Although events can provide the biggest impact, they also require a huge amount of resources, time, budget, and staff. It can be challenging to get company decision makers and stakeholders behind expending all the resources required to put on an effective event.

What tools are you investing in for 2019?

We’ll be investing in events, event management and related tools, digital and social media, integrated marketing automation, and CRM. This list doesn’t include our planned investment in internal development efforts to personalize the onsite experience and promote our events to potential sponsors and attendees.

How can we sell events better as marketing tools to decision makers?

ROI is important, but event value can’t be measured by a spreadsheet alone. We pour over the survey data that we gather onsite and post-event. Anecdotal feedback and interactions with attendees and sponsors is key in helping us know if initiatives we implemented worked or not. Additionally, events are a driver of many things including revenue, brand awareness, product feedback and for our company, they are galvanizing from a company culture perspective. Executives need to look at event value through many different lenses to see the complete value.

What are the tools you use to show event marketing ROI?

- Budgets
- Survey data and feedback
- Registration numbers/attendance (attendee and sponsor)
- Integrated marketing automation & CRM. These provide us with a good sense of what a sponsor was spending before the event and then after; future revenue potential as well as helping us promote, assess, and measure our engagement and event impact with customers.
Loretto Kane is currently the Senior Executive Producer on Microsoft Corporation’s Internal Event’s portfolio, where she is responsible for driving overall strategy and incubation, ensuring event alignment with business priorities and brand. Prior to this role, she served as Executive Producer for MS Ready, Microsoft’s largest internal event with fiscal responsibility of $70M and influence on $200M+ of company spend and assets. Over the span of 15 years with Microsoft, she has successfully produced events for up to 40,000 attendees as well as delivering digital broadcast experiences worldwide for 100,000+.

What is the biggest challenge of using events as a marketing tool?

The biggest challenge is actually a mix of the following:

1. **MEASUREMENT** - what are the right KPIs to measure brand impact and sales, and how is this captured (evals, feedback, etc)?

2. **CONTENT** - developing the right level of content for the attendees and in the right medium (eg, keynotes, presentations, Ted Talk theatre, hands-on, networking, etc) that carries business value

3. **INNOVATION** - there is a vast range of events that a prospective attendee can choose from. How do we make our events stand out and make them worthwhile? How do we innovate creating an experience of brand, business or networking value?

What tools are you investing in for 2019?

Top 5 tool investments for 2019 include:

- A mobile app that drives networking & connecting our attendees to drive community. Includes gamification.
- Digital Experience. The large scale events allow pre- and post-opportunities of learning, networking and community building.
- Registration to capture attendee information to better build and drive target experiences as well as how to use this information compliant to privacy laws.
- As a Fortune 500 company driving large scale events around the world, leveraging a standard system in areas of registration and content management which can be scalable across different events, e.g., build a single system and add or remove the modules related to size and audience.
- Eval and measurement - what kind of tool or app can better capture immediate and relative feedback.
How can we sell events better as marketing tools to decision makers?

Demonstrate the value of putting a face and experience to the brand. Connect the dots on sales impact.

What are the tools you use to show event marketing ROI?

• Evals specific to content & brand.
• App downloads.
• Number of networking connections made (tracked via event tools).
• Peak sessions and what content associated as part of the digital content/online access with codes unique to in-person event attendees vs those who participate online only.
• Tracking first time attendees vs event alumni (who returns and why?) during registration.
• Track sales quota and pipeline for internal event attendees (e.g., do they hit goals sooner?).
Having a clearly defined event marketing strategy is crucial, never start without it. Before we get dazzled by the latest shiny lights, we should build out our event marketing plan.

This takes our strategy to the next level of detail so that we can really apply the strategy. Each event is different, it has different audiences, different content and different culture. Therefore it deserves to be marketed in its own unique way.

Some strategies to consider are the story, and the timeline.

**The Event’s Story**

It’s crucial to get the event’s story clear; ideally in a way that is easy to grasp for everyone. That “everyone” includes the event veterans of the last 10 editions to the recent graduates who have no idea about the event.

This does not have to be complex, in fact, it should be very simple. It should really answer one key question, what’s in it for me?

Additionally, the narrative of the event should ideally resonate strongly with everyone from the student to the veteran, from the faculty member to the corporate sponsor.

Storytelling is a very effective way to market events. All events have a story, yet some are better told than others. Good storytelling goes beyond talking about the features of an event, it invites potential event participants to envision how they can personally benefit from being part of the event. This is both more memorable and more compelling.

Keep in mind that we have different bits of information at different times, so as much as we would like to have all the information in advance so that we can fully plan out the marketing, the details will only come at a later stage, so the story cannot be fully written from the start.

**As we tell the story of the event, we explicitly or implicitly answer some key questions such as:**

- What is the objective of the event?
- Who is the event for?
- Who has participated in this event before?
- What takes place at the event?
- What does it feel like to be at the event?
We must also make sure that answers to practical and logistical questions are easy to find. How much does it cost to participate (as a participant or a sponsor), when and where does it take place? These details must be clear on the event website or registration page, but normally only play a small part in the story.

**The Communication Timeline**

This is a timeline for marketing an event to a few different groups of people

1. Relevant people who don’t know about your event yet
2. Relevant people who know about your event
3. Registered event participants

The event marketers “game” is to try to move people from level 1 to level 3.

There is also a level 0, the people irrelevant to your event. They may be outside the industry or will never register or be a sponsor of your event. Nor will they help you market to the people in levels 1 and 2. For whatever reason, they are not relevant, so acknowledge this and avoid wasting resources marketing to them.

Thought-leadership content, perhaps through an event blog and community engagement via social media, should be a constant. Sharing good quality content and having regular interactions with the community play an important role in indirectly marketing the event.
This event marketing plan is overly simplified but offers a good overview. You can start at any time; for cyclical events, the starting point is at the end of the previous event or even before. This is a key point in time that should not be underappreciated. It will take almost another full cycle for the community’s attention to focus on your event, so if at all possible use the end of the previous cycle to market for future editions and if possible offer special “FOMO rate” pricing.

Throughout the cycle there are key points that may be marketing driven or depend on the availability of new information. Confirmed keynote speakers and program features will largely dictate the timing of these key points.

Event marketing tends to increase in intensity as the event date approaches. Keep in mind that the bandwidth of the target audience may be saturated as the event approaches, depending on the intensity and quality of the event marketing. Plan accordingly.
What Still Works in 2019?

When we look back at how we marketed events, it is clear that wholesome marketing that offers value to customers continues to work. Gimmicks and distractions don’t.

Marketers are always on the lookout for ways that will make our product shine in a crowded marketplace. We have an advantage, at least for a while, when we adopt new tools or techniques early in the game. When everyone else follows suit, we may still have an advantage if we have learnt how to fine-tune our tactics. However, if this tool or technique is detrimental to the customer experience, it can have the opposite effect and hurt our performance on the longer term.

Take the example of sending marketing emails from a personal email address rather than a company address, thereby tricking the customer into opening a marketing email thinking that it is a personal email. This works once, maybe twice. After that, the customer knows what is happening and, if they are annoyed about this little trick, they might unsubscribe altogether from receiving emails from you. This little trick can cost you a valuable email subscriber. Was it worth it to momentarily increase your open rate? I think not.

So what continues to work in 2019 that we covered in Edition 1 of The Future of Event Marketing? Let’s take a look.

Video

Absolutely.

We consume more videos than ever. 66% of event planners and marketers are already using video as part of their marketing strategy. As our devices and internet speeds improve, so does our consumption of videos. It is also easier than ever to create videos with any budget, since most smartphones can create high-quality videos.
How to Make the Most of Video for your Event Sizzle reels and promotional videos

1. Invest in high quality video, spectacular (and legal) drone shots edited to trendy music.
2. Make it obvious what the event is about in the first few seconds.
3. Show event features and transmit the event’s culture or the feeling of being at the event.
4. Don’t squeeze in every feature, this video is about impressing rather than providing detailed information.
5. The videos can be used across all channels at almost any time in the event marketing.
6. If possible, create different versions focusing on the latest updates as you get closer to the event.

Speaker or thought leader interview

1. Capture these at a video booth at your event or in advance remotely.
2. Prioritise clear audio over the perfect image.
3. Make sure there is a strong link to the event and industry, but make the content timeless. This will allow you to edit the footage later in any way you see fit.
4. Use a professional host to conduct the interviews, if possible, and make sure all topics are thoroughly researched beforehand.
5. Add captions to your video so that it can be consumed without sound, this gives viewers everything they need to watch the video regardless of their surroundings or devices.

Session recordings

1. Make sure to get permission to record speakers, panelists and everyone involved in the session.
2. Session recordings offer a great long-tail search based discovery mechanism, so make sure you include a full session and event description on YouTube.
3. This is type of content is a great value to the community and there is a clear sales message inherent in the content.
4. Add accurate captions to your videos for maximum impact.

User generated videos

1. Create a competition around a key event topic that only accepts offers by videos on social media using a unique hashtag.
2. Offer complimentary registrations as other event related prizes.
3. The content may be outside your control but in exchange, you get content focused on your event.
4. If appropriate, you can compile the videos into a best-of video post on social media or use on-site to show your appreciation.

Preview videos

1. A few days or even hours before an event, a behind-the-scenes preview video works well on social media.
2. It doesn’t have to be professionally produced, keep it short and personal.
3. Tease the audience and offer them an unusual look at the event.
Live Streaming

Yes, but...

Live streaming now seems normal. Twitch is no longer an underground platform and most online video stars are using some form of live streaming.

Live streaming for event marketing is still developing. Q&A sessions with engaging event speakers previewing sessions and live streams of thought-provoking keynote sessions work well when carefully planned and the online audience is engaged. Celebrity appearances are also a natural fit that benefits from the instant appeal impact.

Unfortunately, many live streams are low-quality handheld feeds from a dark venue with no audience interaction and completely unusable after the live stream ends. The smart event marketer will recognize that these are actually a drain on resources and bandwidth.

How to expand your reach with Live Streaming

1. Think about the production value. It’s OK to go low budget, but if you have a huge stage production and capture a low quality live stream of it on a handheld smartphone, it won’t send the best message to your audience.

2. Consider your platforms carefully. It may be best to live stream to your most popular social media channel. You can even stream to all at the same time.

3. Engage your audience while you are live, this is what makes live streaming unique. To do this well, you may need a dedicated online host.

4. Decide if you want to reuse the content and keep this in mind while you are live streaming, as it may affect your production.

5. Tell your followers in advance or they may not join you. Don’t rely on push notifications that your followers may or may not receive.
Remarketing

Yes, but…

Remarketing can be incredibly efficient for event marketing, but it can also be highly intrusive. We are now used to being “chased around the internet” by flight offers based on our search terms, but we are not as comfortable with an early bird offer for a scientific congress chasing us in the same way.

There is no question that remarketing is incredibly powerful, but with the data privacy concerns raised by the Cambridge Analytica scandal, it’s more important than ever to use these tools wisely and most of all tactfully. After all, we have nothing to win by eroding our event’s brand equity.

How to win at Remarketing

1. The Facebook pixel will allow you to create a custom audience for Facebook ads of only people who have been to your site, and therefore know your event.

2. Trigger a specific tags for abandoned registrations and completed to create more specific audiences for Facebook ads.

3. Use the LinkedIn Insights Tag to get impressively detailed demographic information about your website visitors and use this information to fine tune your LinkedIn ads.
Pop-ins and Exit Intent

Not so much.

The battle for our attention online rages on. The battlefield is filled with shiny colours, moving images and large buttons, as well as pop-ups, pop-ins and others. Some are very efficient, others are overkill and will annoy even the most patient surfer.

First and foremost the focus should on creating a well-designed website or registration page. This is ideally an introduction to the event that uses concise copy that resonates with the target audience supported by images that clearly illustrate the event. In combination, this should leave no doubt in the consumer’s mind if this is the right event for them. Only once this is achieved can a carefully placed pop-in be a valuable way to highlight a call-to-action. Never before.

Fine Tune Your Exit Intent Strategy

1. Prefer exit intent to pop-ins, they are less intrusive and only appear before someone is leaving your registration page.

2. Offer a tangible discount with your exit intent pop-up.

3. Create a strong call-to-action or compelling offer to go along with the pop-up.

4. Set up cookies to 90 days in order to avoid offering the discount to users already registered.
Beacons and Smart Badges

Yes, but...

Beacons and smart badges continue to be the darlings of event technologists. Their potential is undeniable. The rich datasets that can be compiled and analysed in real time are impressive. However, most events simply do not have the capacity to make significant changes in real-time based on this data. It is undeniable how they can provide value after the event, to measure ROI. This is very obvious by our qualitative research.

In 2019 beacons and smart badges will become better integrated and event marketers will start to take full advantage of them to enhance the on-site experience. In turn, event participants will be comfortable enough to rely on these systems. This is when the vision of the event technologists will be fulfilled; a vision of participants focusing on face-to-face interactions while being passively aided by technology.

Make Smart Badges Work for You

1. Comply with GDPR and obtain permission to use smart badges data.
2. Tell event participants what to expect. For example, if they are using a passive tool that will provide them with a report post-event, knowing this in advance will affect their behaviour on site.
3. If you want to use beacons and smart badges to make real-time changes on site, make sure you have the human and IT resources to be able to do so.
Long-form Content

Absolutely.

Content is a crucial lifeline of event marketing. Event marketers have a responsibility to develop and use good content in their event marketing. Long-form content such as content videos or blog posts may take more resources to develop, but in most cases, it is well worth it. Poor content, in any format, quickly loses viewers or readers. In 2019 there is no excuse not to create professional content that is relevant to your event’s target market.

Long-form content allows for deep analysis of one topic or a wide comparison between key topics. It also allows for all types of repurposing, which is particularly useful for social media. As more long-form content is developed, the opportunities multiply as this gives you the ability to cross reference and combine content into further content.

Long-form content is alive and well, and event marketers are more creative than ever at using and reusing it.

Leverage Long Form Content

1. Map out various topics of interest to your community that are linked to your event. It’s worth considering your event site’s SEO when planning content development.

2. Research each topic in detail. Consider collaborating with speakers, authors or influencers to add more depth.

3. Create the content to the best of your ability and include links to any relevant good quality content, particularly relevant links to other pieces of your long-form content.

4. Adapt your long-form content to other formats. After all, you want to give your audience as many opportunities as you can to consume your content. For example, a blog post can also become a spoken word video and a podcast.

5. Share widely, using your own email and social media channels as well as any other relevant channels, including Facebook and LinkedIn groups where permitted. Repurpose the content into concise social media posts, such as image quotes, video highlight clips, poll questions for Facebook or Twitter.

6. Update your content periodically and share it again.
Growth Hacking

Yes, but…

Many clever event marketers use automation and machine learning to grow communities, gain followers on social media and fill up events. The tools available are constantly improving and techniques are never far behind. Growth hacking involves constant experimentation and testing with plenty of risks along the way.

Growth hacking will undoubtedly continue to grow in 2019, but as consumers become more concerned about their data privacy, questions on the marketing techniques used will continue to be raised. Event marketers that rely too heavily on the wrong type of growth hacking risk alienating the community around their event. The smart event marketer will use wholesome tools and techniques that offer clear value to the event participants.

Growth Hack Your Event Marketing

1. Take full advantage of all stakeholders including participants, sponsors and exhibitors. Make it easy and rewarding for them to help you grow your event.

2. Measure everything! Review analytics regularly so that you can understand where you are performing best and double down on that.

3. Keep asking questions and looking for ways to fine tune your content and your website based on your actual data.
2019 and Beyond: The Event Marketing of the Future

Community Management

Human-to-human community management is nothing new, in fact it is probably the oldest technique of event marketing. Event marketers must take the time to engage with the communities that their events serve. With the bright lights of mass online marketing, we often forget how important it is. 2019 will remind us of that.

In an overwhelming world filled with events of variable quality, event marketers who focus on the specific community they are serving will come out on top. While using machine learning and growth hacking has its place, events are all about people making real connections with people.

The same applies to event marketing. We must make our core community feel connected well before they come to the event, they should get the same feeling as we communicate with them and market the event.

Help Communities Connect

1. Join and contribute generously to relevant LinkedIn and Facebook groups. When you find an opportunity to mention your event, do so tactfully and follow the group’s rules. It can be a great way to generate interest.

2. Consider creating your own LinkedIn or Facebook group for event participants. Nurture the group and make sure the participants benefit from being a part of it. Don’t sell to the people in this group; use it like an advisory board or a sounding board made up of industry peers. If the group members feel taken care of they may just become the best advocates for your event.

3. Invest in your social media followers all year round by regularly, daily if possible, replying or commenting on their posts. Create a private list on Twitter to help you keep track of only your most-engaged followers.

4. Share good (relevant) quality content, from any source, and add a comment about why you like it. The community will appreciate the content and you get extra credit for being the one sharing it.
Design the User Journey

User experience design is a crucial component of good web and app design. It’s all about making the user’s journey as smooth and frictionless as possible. The same applies to just about every touch point for event marketers. From podcasts to tweets, every piece of the event marketing puzzle must be carefully designed to deliver value to the consumer. In 2019, every online action must be optimised to provide a smooth experience for our target audience.

Consumers no longer accept a website that is not responsive or a social media post that links to a generic homepage. When we make their lives easier we win.

The same thing applies on-site and even after the event. How we receive participants on-site, how we deliver content and how we get them to interact are all part of the same UX. Our community not only deserves, but expects that every touch point is intentionally designed.

Invest In Better UX

1. Test and retest your event website on every device and browser before you go live.

2. Use deep links to specific pages in your social media posts. For example, link a post about a keynote speaker directly to the speaker page.

3. When posting images on social media create different sized images for each social media channel to be sure it will look great on any device.

4. Create custom graphics with event information that can be quickly understood and post them on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn without any links. Consumers will appreciate not having to navigate away from their favorite social media channel.

5. Use LinkedIn or Facebook pre-filled lead generation ads to collect data that only require the consumer to confirm contact details rather than fill them out manually. This saves everyone time, prevents errors from manual data entry and makes you look professional.

6. Use only one event app at the event, if you need additional functionality integrate it as seamlessly as possible into the main event app.
Micro-influencer Marketing

In 2019, influencer marketing should not be news to any event marketer. But who are the influencers in your specific market? How should you work with them? The answers to these questions are different for every event and change over time.

While some of us market events that attract celebrities with mass appeal, most event marketers focus on niches where influencers are not so obvious. The good news is that everybody can be an influencer, or at least have some form of influence on their peers. While strategic influencer marketing can work for any market, all event marketers can start by focusing on peer-to-peer recommendations.

When we tell one or more of our peers that we have registered for an event, this has a significant impact. Whether this leads them to register as well will depend on many factors, but the knowledge that a respected peer is investing in an event is undeniably a valuable “stamp of approval”.

So, what makes someone tell others about an event? This, above all, is the key question.

A good place to start is for that person to be passionate about the event itself. This is much more likely if they are involved in the creation or delivery of the event in some way or when such an event supports a cause or mission that resonates with that person. As event marketers we should make this process as simple and effective as possible. We can even go further, and possibly viral, by providing a financial incentive in the form of retrospective registration fee discounts or other incentives to the influencers.

How to Leverage Influencers

1. Invest in social registration for your event or influencer marketing tools that can make sharing event participation easy and exciting for all event participants.

2. Research your community for those who are most active and have a large following on social media. Focus on those who are most engaging and be on the lookout for bloggers or anyone creating their own content regularly.

3. Open channels of communication and try to understand their particular interests. A non-financial offer of special access to a speaker, priority seating, or similar can go a long way.

4. Having an influencer take over one of your event’s social media channels is a great way to connect both audiences. This type of influencer marketing will almost certainly involve a fee so keep in mind that any sort of financial exchange must be publicly divulged.

5. You may want to consider using an agency or service dedicated to influencer marketing depending on your industry and the nature of your event.
Chatbots/Automated Messaging

While email newsletters continue to be one of the most effective event marketing tools, most event marketing campaign open rates and click through rates make for dismal reading.

Facebook Messenger offers an alternative way of delivering marketing messages. There are technical differences and it’s not simply a case of copying the same content from email newsletters, but a similar type of communication can be delivered. The best part is that open rates are reported to be 80% (source); this is not surprising as most users of these apps keep push notifications turned on.

The stakes are high. Opting out is instant and any sort of abuse report can lead to a business being shut out of the platforms altogether, a huge risk for any organisation. There is also an expectation of instant messaging directly with the consumer, so these channels must be managed around the clock. There is also a case to be made for consumer saturation being just around the corner, so just like with any new marketing channel they should be approached carefully.

How to Do Chatbots With a Soul

1. Give potential consumer a good reason to opt-in, such as access to unique content and make sure you can regularly offer them value.

2. Split your communication into small text-message-like sections, this will feel more natural to the platform.

3. Take full advantage of the platform by using videos or Facebook Messenger functionality, this will really impress your audience.

4. Ask for permission regularly so that your audience feels like they are willfully interacting.

5. Never pretend that there is a live human interacting, the audience should understand that these are automated messages.
Data Privacy

2018 brought us various data privacy scandals as well as GDPR and California’s Consumer Privacy Act. Concerns over data privacy are not going away and we are likely to see more scandals and perhaps the first fines relating to new legislation. This presents a bit of a paradox to all marketers. While we love using tools that give us extra information about our target market, we are also consumers who know a lot more about data privacy than most and we hate having to give up our personal information online.

The knowledge we have and the work we do means we have a moral and legal obligation to market our events in the way that we want to be marketed to as consumers. While it may be tempting to take shortcuts and use tools that blur the lines, deep down we all know good event marketing when we see it, and it doesn’t need to challenge data privacy to succeed. We must work towards our own high water mark of event marketing and then go beyond.

A User Centric Marketing Approach

1. Read up on all privacy laws, even if you think they don’t apply to you. If at all in doubt, seek legal advice.
2. Clearly notify users of your website of you data policy and include any cookies or pixels that you use.
3. Make sure you know the source of all your email lists. If you are unsure about the source it’s best to ask for permission to use them for marketing purposes.
4. Be extra careful about how data is collected and displayed at and around events. Events are data rich and therefore an obvious target for data piracy.
5. Look into any marketing tools you use and make your own judgement about their legality and morality.
In Conclusion

The future of event marketing is very bright. Information and technology overload is driving planners and marketers to have a more human approach to the way we market experiences.

It’s an outcome that nobody expected to see. While many pundits envisioned interactions happening almost exclusively online, in reality, the exact opposite is happening.

Tools come and go, and we feel we have given you some of the best tactics to use them:

- Community Management
- Designing the User Journey
- Micro-influencer Marketing
- Chatbots/Automated Messaging
- Data Privacy

Having analysed thousands of answers from event professionals from all over the world, as well as providing the thoughts of some of the most expert event marketers, we feel that once again event marketing is about creativity.

Yes, budgets will never be enough, yet there is no excuse for not being creative in 2019 and beyond.

We are marketing our events with unprecedented access to tools, technology and reach. Let’s make it count by surprising our attendees and providing the most exciting event experience.
About the Authors

**Julius Solaris** Julius Solaris is the editor of Event Manager Blog. Started in 2007, Event Manager Blog is the number one blog worldwide for event professionals. He is the founder of the Event Innovation Lab an immersive training program for Fortune 500 companies and high growth event teams.

He has been named one of 25 most influential individuals in the Meeting Industry for the past 5 years.

**Miguel Neves** is a passionate social media advocate and experienced events professional who consults, trains and speaks on digital marketing and event technology.

Miguel has focused on online engagement for the events industry since 2009, and from 2011 to 2017 he managed the IMEX Group’s social media strategy and implementation. In 2017 he created his own micro-agency dedicated to helping other organisations be social on social media.

Miguel sits on the International Board of Directors of the Meeting Professionals International. He is a member of the Events Industry Council’s Industry Insights Committee and holds a master’s degree in Conference and Events Management from the University of Westminster.
About EventMB

Event Manager Blog is the most influential website in the meeting and event industry. It offers education, innovation, and inspiration through regular articles and industry reports.

Founded in 2007, EventMB has been widely referenced as the go-to resource for innovative event professionals wanting to learn more about trends in the event planning industry.

EventMB releases industry reports and intelligence about event technology, social media, and engagement at events.

Thousands of event professionals have downloaded EventMB free reports at www.eventmanagerblog.com.
A Note from the Sponsor

Aventri is the first true live connection management platform. Continually transforming the way event managers execute their events while transforming the market, Aventri allows clients to create valuable in-person experiences, grow influential communities and expand brands. The comprehensive integrated solution starts with meeting request to venue sourcing, to every component of event management including registration, event marketing solutions, travel management, mobile apps to the all-important “experience” at the event with badges and onsite solutions. The platform connects event attendees and drives real-time attendee engagement while capturing meaningful data and analytics to help understand an event’s success and provide real-time ROI.
CMP Credits

EventMB is a CMP Preferred Provider accredited by the Events Industry Council and provides Continuing Education credits for learning activities.

This report is worth 1 CE Credit.

To acquire CE credits through this or other reports, webinars and reading material from EventMB, please refer to www.eventmanagerblog.com/cmp.

For more information about the CMP credential or Preferred Provider Program, please visit www.eventscouncil.org/.

Disclaimer

While this report has been sponsored, EventMB’s analysis is completely unbiased.

Publishing date: January 30, 2019.