

THE 2021 EVENT MARKETING PLANNING GUIDE

# IDEA TO EXECUTION TO ROI



# AFTER WHAT SEEMS LIKE FOREVER, MARKETING EVENTS ARE BACK!

2021 isn't the same marketing event landscape that we left over a year ago, however. While many are ready and willing to be back in crowded ballrooms or mingle at face-to-face networking events, there are new guidelines to consider when dealing with in-person events. In addition, the rise of virtual events over the past year has opened an entirely new world of hybrid and tech-first events for marketers. Simply put, it's a whole new world out there.

If you're like most marketers, you're looking for new ways to come back with a bang. Why should attendees—some of whom may not have traveled for the past year or so—choose to come to your event? What's the 'big draw' to get people there? How are you going to break through the noise and capture the market's attention? How will you leverage the new technology and digital platforms that have cropped up over the past year?

The answer to all of these comes down to planning. Asking these big picture questions early on in your event planning process—then making strategic decisions to drive the proper outcomes—can help ensure your team gets back on that event horse without a hitch. Since planning is such a critical part of the marketing event process (especially this year), we've developed the ultimate event marketing planning guide for your team.



# THE PLANNING GUIDE

There are some steps to marketing event planning that will be present for every single event you plan, regardless of channel or audience . . .

# EVENT GOALS AND KPIS

Every event needs a goal (or goals) before planning can kick-off. Is your team trying to bring in new leads for your sales team? What about upselling current customers on a new feature? Get these goals out in the open first thing.

Then, put objectives and KPIs around each goal. How many leads are you expecting? What is the actual number of upsells you want to close? Establishing these goals first thing can help direct the rest of your planning initiatives down the road.



# ESTABLISH A BUDGET

Before you even start dreaming up grand booth ideas or trendy virtual networking giveaways, you need a budget. Establishing a budget gives your team guide rails for planning moving forward—especially helpful if this is the first big event you've planned in a while.



## SELECT YOUR EVENT CHANNEL

While virtual events were a 'thing' before 2020, they were primarily associated with webinars or pre-recorded panel interviews. Now, however, virtual events are as expansive and engaging as in-person conferences and networking events. A big part of your planning process will be selecting which channel your event will take advantage of in-person, virtual, or hybrid. From there, you can move on to the fun part!



# PLAN OUT YOUR LOGISTICS

This is the big picture 'planning' piece of setting up a marketing event. From venue(s) to branding to speakers to sponsors to content, the logistics of your event are what make it pop.

While most of your planning time and efforts will be focused here on the logistics, it's important to remember that every decision and selection made during this stage should relate to your original event goals and KPIs. This will help ensure your event is a success both in-person and on paper.



# ENGAGE YOUR AUDIENCE

Promoting your event is the only way to drive registrations and attendees. This part of your planning process should include things like the different channels you'll use to engage potential attendees (social media, email, advertising, etc.) as well as the audience profile you're hoping will attend.



Next, you can customize your event marketing plan by pulling in different steps or aspects that may pertain to the type of event you're hosting. These planning aspects will probably be housed under one of the larger buckets above, such as logistics or audience . . .

# CONFIRM YOUR TECH STACK

Depending on the type of event you're planning and the program that you've decided on, you may need specific technology to make things work. Part of your planning process must confirm that these tools work, that the right people have access, and that everyone knows how and what to do to be successful.



# ADDRESS HEALTH & SAFETY ISSUES

A new area of focus for 2021 is health & safety issues. If you're hosting an in-person event, you need to have some plan in place to make it a safe place for people to attend, whether that means providing PPE supplies for attendees or putting social distancing guidelines in place. Like it or not, this is something people will expect, so it's a good idea to get ahead of things early on.



# DETERMINE HOW YOUR EVENT IS UNIQUE

Identify what sets your event apart from others in the same industry or space. What is the big draw for attendees? This should be used across all of your promotional efforts to highlight why people should choose to attend your event, especially if this is their return to events.



And finally, it's important to remember that your event marketing plan shouldn't simply end once the event itself is over. Make sure you add post-event actions to your marketing plan for full circle follow up . . .

## GATHER EVENT DATA

You should have confirmed the processes and technology in place to gather event data and metrics well in advance by planning and putting in the effort. If these are spread across multiple platforms, now is the time to gather all of your data in one place. Having a clear look at all of your data from your event can help you make the right decisions.



# MAKE STRATEGIC CONCLUSIONS

And now for the fun part – calculating ROI! Using the objectives and KPIs you established before your event, as well as the data you collected post-event, you can calculate whether you met your goals and generated a return on your investment.

One of the most important things to remember during this stage of the event planning process is to look past the numbers to make strategic conclusions. For example, suppose you brought in 18% of your registrations through email and 47% through social media. In that case, the conclusion here is that social media is an excellent resource for event promotion and should be used heavily for event marketing moving forward.



## SHARE WITH STAKEHOLDERS

While event marketing is traditionally bundled together with other marketing initiatives, programs with such a high budget need their line item when it comes to marketing operations and corporate activities. Event marketing leaders should make a point to gather event takeaways and ROI data after an event and share them with other key stakeholders in marketing, sales, and even executive roles.



# PLAN YOUR ULTIMATE MARKETING EVENT WITH CIRCA

Circa is the only event marketing platform designed to drive sales and ROI for field marketing and demand gen teams. From virtual to in-person meetings, we help marketers connect with customers anywhere, any way they gather.

Circa allows event marketers to fully integrate their event marketing initiatives into more extensive marketing strategies, building a more comprehensive and transparent look into the role event marketing plays in driving ROI and conversions for organizations.

You can learn more about Circa and how to plan your ultimate marketing event this year.

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