

REINVENT YOUR EVENT MARKETING FOR HIGHER ROI



How to Create
A Remarkable
Trade Show
Presence and
Measure It

••• A publication of

HubSpot



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REINVENT YOUR EVENT MARKETING FOR HIGHER ROI

By Rachel Sprung

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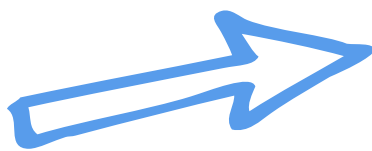
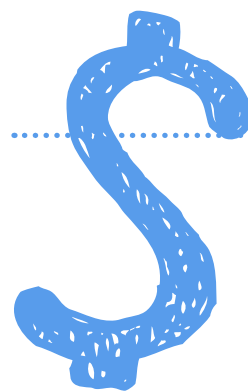
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“*Make sure everything relates back to your business goals.*”

Planning for a trade show doesn't start a month in advance. It doesn't start two months in advance. In fact, it can take anywhere from six months to a year of planning to do it right.

Trade show marketing is a very strategic process. You have to come up with your strategy and messaging, and make sure everything relates back to your business goals. This includes all your online and offline promotions, any handouts and even the giveaways you distribute. It is no simple task and not every trade show is the same, but this guide can help you take it one step at a time to have a successful inbound trade show that achieves high return on investment (ROI).



Most important, once you figure out how the trade show can meet your business's goals, figure out if the cost is worth it. Will you make up for the money you spend on trade shows on new customers and increased revenue? Figure out the ROI of sending your staff to the trade show. Could they be doing something else that is cheaper and more effective to generate leads? If a trade show still meets your needs despite the cost, keep reading.

Will you make up for the money you spend on trade shows on new customers and increased revenue?



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CHAPTER 1

SETTING GOALS & PICKING CALLS-TO- ACTION



“How do I figure out what my goals and metrics are?”

Your marketing campaigns should help your business achieve specific goals and metrics. Trade shows are no different. Trade shows present an opportunity to get quality leads, spread brand awareness and meet other objectives. The goals of trade show marketing can include:

- AN INCREASE IN NEW LEADS AND SALES
- AN INCREASE IN ORGANIC AND DIRECT TRAFFIC
- AN INCREASE IN SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWING
- AN INCREASE IN EMAIL AND/OR BLOG SUBSCRIBERS

As you set your goals, make sure you have access to metrics that will enable you to track progress. Ensure that your marketing system can measure these channels and provide evidence to management about the performance of your event.



HubSpot's all-in-one marketing software includes [an analytics tool](#) that measures social media reach, landing page conversions, new leads and customers. [REVIEW ITS CAPABILITIES!](#)



IDENTIFY THE CALL-TO-ACTION

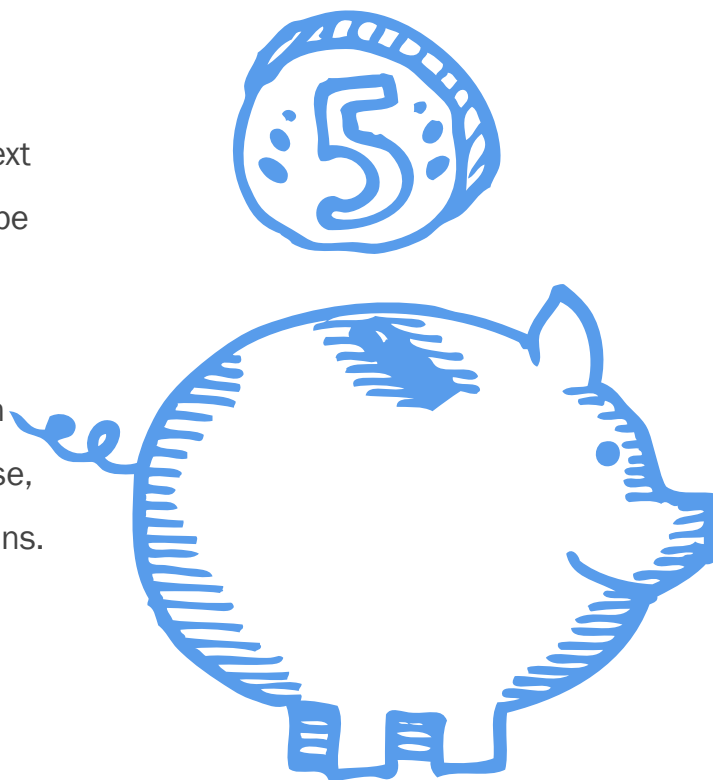
Once you set your goal and decide what metrics you will use to track progress, you will need to figure out how to get there. What will be the means of achieving your goal?



Do you want the main draw to be about whatever you hand out? Or do you want your signs to get people's attention? Is there something interactive in your booth that will bring visitors in?

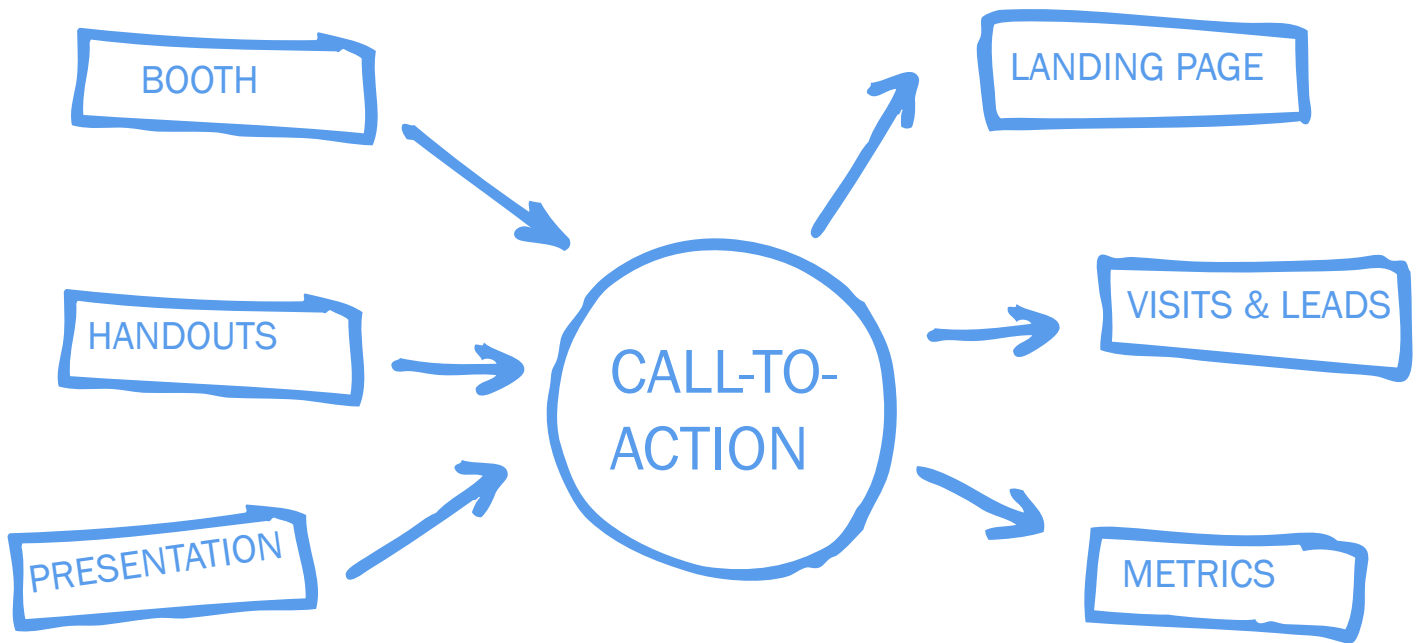
While you are creating your strategy, make sure you are thinking about what your [call-to-action](#) (CTA) will be. Your CTA should be integrated into every aspect of your strategy because, ultimately, it will be the key to reaching your goal. Consider the CTA's role in everything, including your signs, landing page, booth, goals and metrics.

As a reminder, a call-to-action (CTA) is an image or text that prompts visitors to take action, such as subscribe to a newsletter, view a webinar or request a product demo. CTAs should direct people to landing pages, where you can collect visitors' contact information in exchange for a valuable marketing offer. In that sense, an effective CTA results in more leads and conversions.



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In trade shows, as in all other marketing campaigns, the call-to-action remains the key element connecting your marketing goal with the means of achieving it.

Pull in people from different areas of your company to brainstorm on what your message will be. Your marketing goals are important, but you may be surprised to see the extent to which other parts of your company can benefit from a trade show. Simply including them in the process to figure out your strategy can really improve your presence at the trade show.

After you figure out your main attraction and messaging, your overall strategy can come together. Everything from the signs, handouts, giveaways and activities will relay back to your messaging and goals.

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CREATE A CUSTOM LANDING PAGE

As we have already established, the most successful usage of calls-to-action is when they link to a [landing page](#) that is tightly connected to the overall campaign. Your landing page could offer a free material, such as an ebook or whitepaper, relating to the messaging of the trade show. That is why you need to ensure that you can [easily customize the language](#) on your landing page.

CALL-TO-ACTION



Sending trade show attendees to a landing page on your website will also provide you with an opportunity to [gather information](#) about them. Monitor the conversion rate of that landing page and if that is lower than your average, consider ways to optimize the page and make it even more appealing, e.g. by shortening the form or including a video and testimonials.

You want to be able to keep tabs on who is interested in your company and how you can follow up with them, especially after they speak with potentially hundreds of companies at the trade show. So your landing page form can include trade show-specific questions that will make it easy for your sales team to follow up with the most engaged leads.

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Your CTA should have a lasting impact. When people attend trade shows, they may get caught up in the moment and seem excited about your company. However, when they leave, that excitement may falter. If your CTA brings them back to your company's website after the trade show, you are more likely to convert them from a lead into a customer.

Your CTAs should be everywhere. They should be on your signs, handouts and giveaways. They should be mentioned in conversations when people visit your booth. Everything you say and do at a trade show should bring you back to your CTA.

So before you continue with planning your trade show marketing, you need to be fully aware of what your CTA is and what it's prompting visitors to do. Knowing this will bring your whole campaign together.



“Your CTAs should be everywhere.”



HubSpot's campaign at Dreamforce, the leading cloud computing event, revolved around [free unicorns](https://www.hubspot.com/freeunicorns).

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FOCUS ON AN **INBOUND** APPROACH

Everyone has a cookie-cutter booth. You put your logo in a few pre-assigned areas, place your handouts in the stand and have your LCD TV show images of your product or service. If you look at the booth next to yours, you see the same thing. The only difference may be that your neighbor is handing out branded magnets and you are handing out branded pens. The key to making your trade show marketing successful is to do something that makes your stand out.

“*Create a memorable experience and lasting impression.*”

Start with the booth. Do you need to have the booth structure? Or can you create something that stands out? Maybe you can have a lounge or activity area that completely ignores the booth structure but achieves the same goals that you have set for the trade show. It may cost extra to have something “different,” but the price is worth it if it attracts passers-by. You can then create a more memorable experience and lasting impression so people are talking about you way after the trade show is over.



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Next think wardrobe. The majority of people there will be in business suits. Integrate your wardrobe into your messaging. You may be concerned that it is not as professional and will not be accepted, but really it will fit into your strategy even more. Anyone walking by the booth area may ask you why you are dressed differently: another excuse to talk about your theme and message.

Decide on what type of signs you may have. The biggest trade show sponsors will have large signs hanging from the ceiling. Other sponsors may have a sign near the aisle, so people will see it as they pass by. But what can make your sign really stand out? It may be the message that gets the attention of people as they pass by. Or you may not even hang your logo from the ceiling but something else that will attract people to your area. Be creative. Think outside the box. Do something extraordinary.



These photos illustrate HubSpot's presence at Dreamforce. HubSpot employees were dressed in orange jumpsuits and our unbooth unicorn posters helped made our lounge area interesting and fun.



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MAKE YOUR **HANDOUTS** ONLINE FRIENDLY

Though handouts bring the risk of getting lost amongst all of the other papers that companies hand out at trade shows, some people request them. Often, someone will go up to your booth, ask for information in the form of a handout, and leave if you do not have it. So to be safe instead of sorry, it is best to have handouts handy but not rely on them as part of your core strategy.

How will your handout stand out? Include a QR code on it. Create a hashtag to include on the handout to encourage others to give you feedback while they are at the trade show about what they want to see and hear. Take that feedback and incorporate it on the go into your strategy.



HASHTAG

QR CODE

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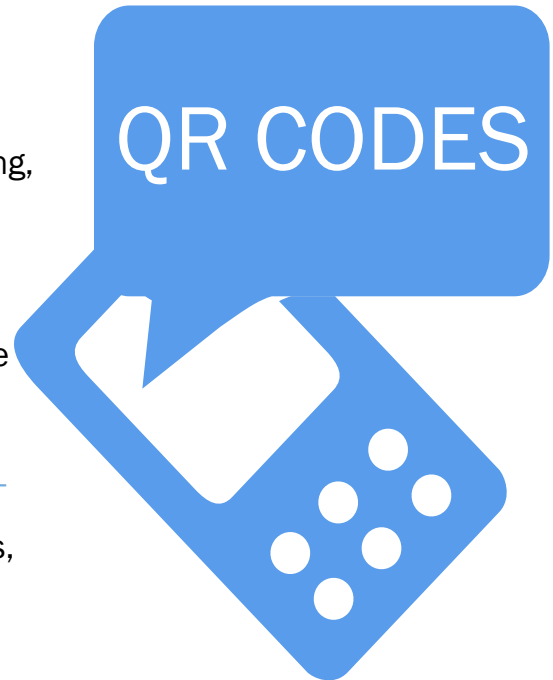




OPTIMIZE CTA FOR MOBILE

Take your call-to-action a step further and make it more easily accessible and irresistible. Instead of simply saying, “Go to my website,” turn it into a [QR code](#).

Not everyone will be able to read the QR code, but those who do, will appreciate it being in this form. To create a QR code, you can visit websites such as [Kaywa](#) or [Microsoft Tag](#). Put it on all your resources, including handouts, presentation slides and even non-paper materials.



Test it out to make sure it works by downloading any QR Code reader on your smartphone. Simply hold up your phone’s camera so it looks like you are about to take a picture of the QR code. It will then lead you to a website ([that should be optimized for mobile devices](#)). For people who rely on their smartphones for everything, this can be a great way to give them the resources they want and prevent them from losing your company information.

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ENCOURAGE INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

It is important to ask others in your company for their input on the trade show. You will most likely hear ideas that the marketing department may not have previously considered and find new ways to incorporate your business initiatives into the strategy.

As you are planning these discussions across the company, encourage people from different departments to attend. Every team can bring in a new perspective and enrich the trade show planning experience. Before you leave for the trade show, have a dry run and go through everything that could go wrong. This may sound pessimistic, but it can actually be very valuable. Generally, only a few people are completely dedicated to preparing for the trade show. Getting an outsider's view can help to think of other angles that may not have been taken into consideration.



Finally, make sure everyone at your company knows why you are going to the trade show and why it is important. Companies spend a lot of money on trade shows, and it is helpful for employee morale to explain why it is an important business initiative.

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CHAPTER 2

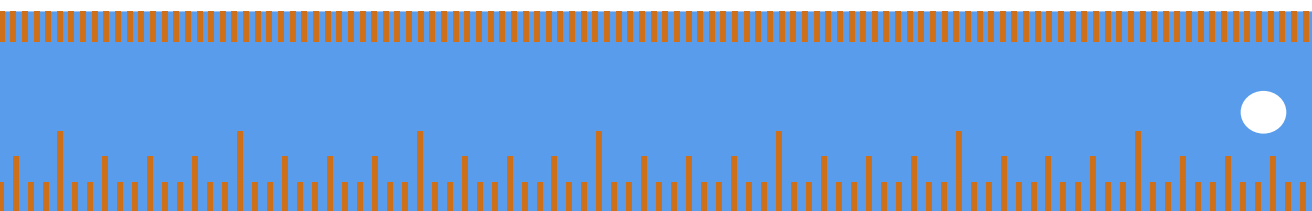
HOW TO PROMOTE THE EVENT SOCIALLY



“Keep your over arching goal
in mind every step of the way.”

After you have decided on a [call-to-action](#) and mapped out your messaging around the trade show campaign, you can focus on promotions. As you start that process, don't lose sight of your main goal.

If you decided to have your CTA lead to a landing page, create the landing page. [Come up with an offer](#) that you don't think trade show attendees will be able to resist. For instance, the offer can include remarkable (and free) content, a chance to participate in a contest or win a giveaway. Whatever you pick, make sure it is valuable enough for visitors to fill out a form to access it. That is the transactional step which will enable you to [gather data](#) about your trade show audience.



It is important to keep your over arching goal in mind every step of the way. This includes the offer itself. Whether you decide to offer a webinar, ebook, whitepaper or something else, you need to make sure that the information you are providing helps you achieve your goals. It should further expand on the message you are trying to convey at the trade show.

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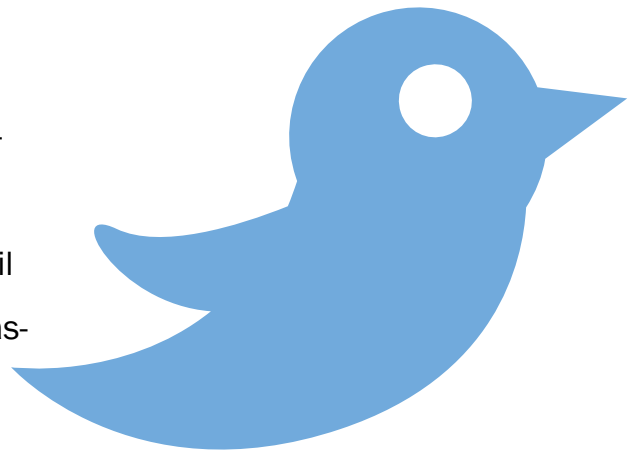




START SOCIAL PROMO **EARLY**

After you have nailed down your call-to-action and prepared your offer and landing page, you need to start getting the word out. This process cannot start early enough.

Thankfully, social media provides a great platform for this early promotion to take place. Channels like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Google+ will enable you to complement your other promotional efforts, such as email blasts and press releases. In fact, social media can be easily incorporated in all exiting initiatives and give them an extra boost.



For instance, you should remember to add social media sharing links on your trade show registration page. Make sure you include social buttons that include counts to build social proof:



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CONSIDER LAUNCHING A CONTEST

If you are launching a contest or a giveaway, you should also bring a social element to it. Encourage people to start spreading news around your event and brainstorm some ideas to reward them for their evangelism.

There is nothing like a little competition to get people excited. Creating a contest to attract attendees to your booth area is a great way for people to learn about your brand in advance and be more excited before they walk into your space.



Remember to have the contest relate to your overall strategy. If you have a product sample you can give out, reward people with that. If you provide a service, give people a chance to try it out. If possible, try giving out something unique that other companies cannot or don't offer. For instance, you can create a book bundle that has been customized for the taste of your target audience and handpicked by your CEO. Another easy-to-accomplish reward idea is to design your own T-shirts with a witty or entertaining message that people would love to show off.

Now let's explore how exactly you can use the five big social media channels out there to spread the word about your upcoming trade show presence.

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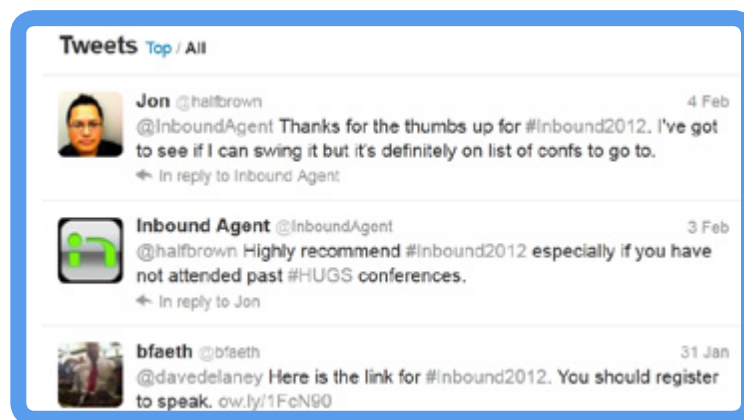




TWITTER

Start by creating a Twitter hashtag and whenever you tweet about the trade show, include both the hashtag and a link to the registration page.

Write and schedule a ton of tweets leading up to the conference. Naturally, the language you use in your Twitter message a few months before the trade show should be different than the message you send out a few days before the trade show. In the beginning, you need to keep people on the edge of their seats in the hopes that they continue to watch your Twitter account to get more information. You don't want to spoil all of the surprises you have in store, but you want people to know that you are about to announce a lot more information.



Make sure you are responsive to people who ask you questions on Twitter. Showing that you are engaging on Twitter goes a long way with people. Take it a step further and show your industry knowledge by tweeting about other relevant content. Remember that people don't want to just hear about your company. They want to hear about the industry and see that you are a leader. Throughout the promotion process, keep it inbound.

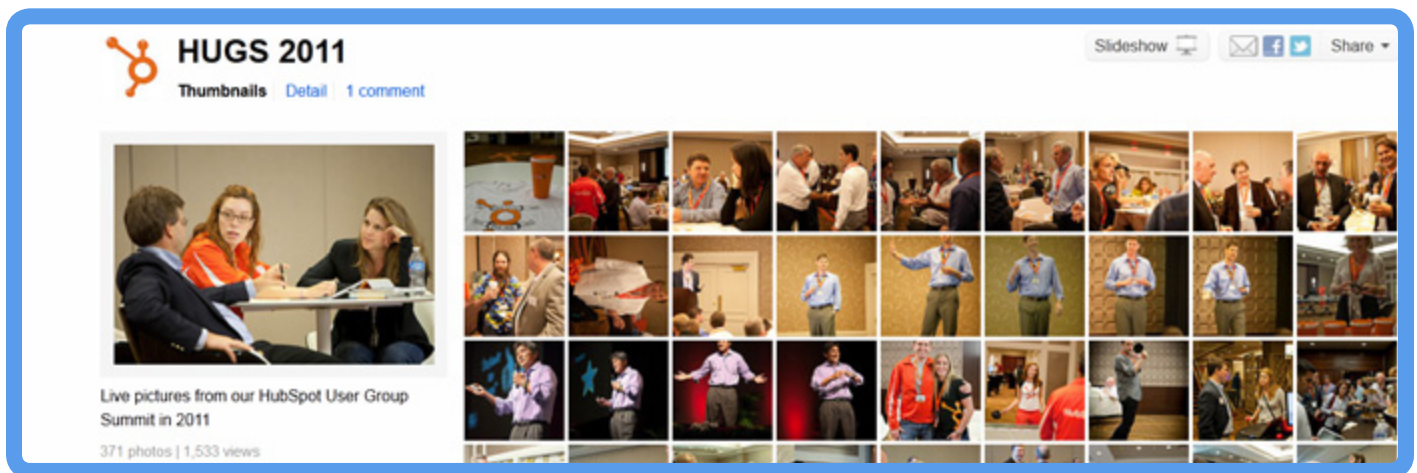
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FACEBOOK

Facebook events are great to remind people of dates and times of events, but they should not be the only way Facebook is used for trade show marketing. A lot of people will not take Facebook events seriously, so the social network needs to also be used to publish short messages relating to the trade show. Post updates about the trade show, but also include links to other promotional materials, whether it is a video or your landing page.



Images receive a pretty good clickthrough rate on Facebook, so consider posting images of previous events on your company page. Flickr and Google+ are other channels that are great to post photos to. Of course, make sure the description of these images include a link to your event!

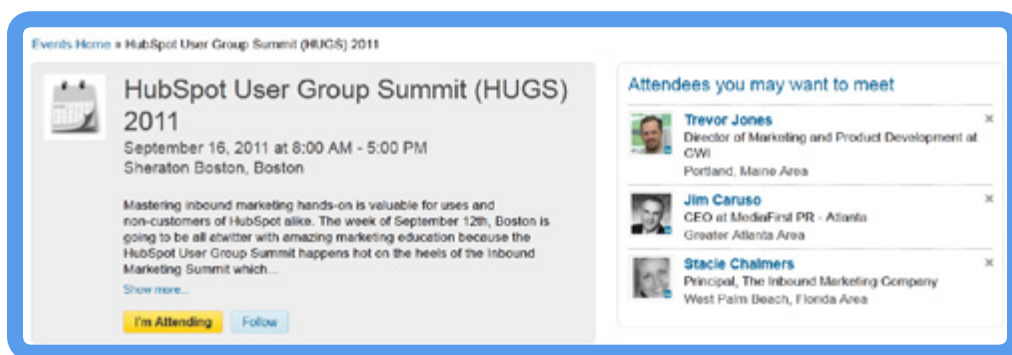
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LINKEDIN

On LinkedIn, you can use a similar tactic as in Facebook by creating an event and publishing updates. The professional network enables you to go one step further by posting information in groups that are relevant to your trade show.



If you are going to a trade show with a lot of marketers, look for groups that target marketers. LinkedIn may even prove to be more beneficial than Facebook because it is looked upon as a way to network and learn more about your industry. For instance, [we recently found](#) that LinkedIn is 277% more effective for lead generation than Facebook and Twitter.



GOOGLE+

Don't forget about the newest network on the block, Google+. Even though it is a new platform, it can still be very valuable to get in touch with some of your audience. Google+ is a marketer's dream to really segment messaging depending on who you want to get in touch with.

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Utilize Google+ *Circles* to segment between your different audiences. For instance, you can share specific messages about the event with people who are in the same geographic area. The network's strong tie to SEO will also help you increase organic traffic to your trade show page. If you want to learn more about how to use Google+ for business, [download our free ebook](#).

YOUTUBE

Another way to quickly grab the attention of a new audience is to create a video and publish it on YouTube. You can even use a screenshot of the video to include in your email campaign. The videos can be promotional but then even be adapted to play in your booth during the trade show.



Not sure what your video should feature? Include footage of your guest speakers or interviews with past event attendees. Whatever content you feature, don't forget to include your call-to-action in the video itself.

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CHAPTER 3

7 TIPS TO EXECUTE ON EVENT SITE



“After all your hard planning work is over, you can begin to worry about the trade show itself.”

After all your hard planning work is over, you can begin to worry about the trade show itself. Be prepared for long hours spent on site, exhaustion and a lot of detailed questions from people who have been bombarded by companies all day.

TIP #1

COLLECT LEADS IN AN INBOUND WAY

When you get to the trade show, you will be given a lead retrieval scanner. Even though they are effective and a lot of people expect to be scanned (and will even ask to be scanned if they are interested in your company), scanners are not inbound.



Try to find a different way to find contact information for a person. For example, create an interactive contest in your space, in which you can find out information about the attendee while giving them a glimpse at your company.

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TIP #2

CONNECT WITH YOUR BOOTH VISITORS

Get to know the people who come up to your booth area. Ask them what challenges they face at their jobs and figure out how your company can make their lives easier. Connect with them in a personal way so that you become more memorable to them.

Don't forget to take notes on some of the topics you have talked about with people who come to your booth. That information will be vital when you follow up with them in the future. In addition, you can use your notes for potential blog articles or other marketing content.



TIP #3

MAKE YOUR BOOTH WELCOMING

Make your area alluring, but not just physically. Sure, paying more for awesome signs and decorations is a great first step, but it might not help you stand out from the crowd the way you want. Your booth space should exude welcoming vibes and make people want to meet you and not necessarily because of what you are going to give them.

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TIP #4

EXPECT SOMETHING TO GO WRONG

Something is going to go wrong. It is just how events go. But you can react differently when things go wrong to ensure that your presence at the trade show is still successful. Part of your planning phase was figuring out how to react in situations if something went wrong.



Stay calm, and put that plan into action. Many times you will be the only person to notice that something went wrong. Continue executing your plan professionally and with poise, and you have nothing to worry about.

TIP #5

DON'T BE AFRAID TO MAKE CHANGES

The trade show attendees may react positively to parts of your strategy and negatively or neutral to other parts. Don't be afraid to focus your efforts on what seems to be working and cutting the other parts. You ultimately want to maximize your ROI, and if that means cutting something that took a lot of time and money, you need to do that.

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TIP #6:

MONITOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Make sure you have someone monitoring your social media accounts. Many times, a person's first instinct when they have a question for you is to get in touch with you via social media. Have someone monitoring your Twitter account and hashtag for the trade show. Make sure you are consistently checking for people's comments on your blog posts promoting the trade show, Facebook and Google+ posts and even YouTube.



Someone may be interested in coming to your booth but have trouble finding it. Of course, there are maps at trade shows, but it is very handy to be able to immediately give people information about your location.

TIP #7

KEEP YOUR STAFF ENERGIZED

With the long hours and few to no breaks, you need to make sure your staff is energized throughout the whole event. Have an emergency bag on hand with water, granola bars, sugar, tissues, breath mints and other items you think your staff might need on short notice. You will be surprised how big of a difference having these on hand will make.

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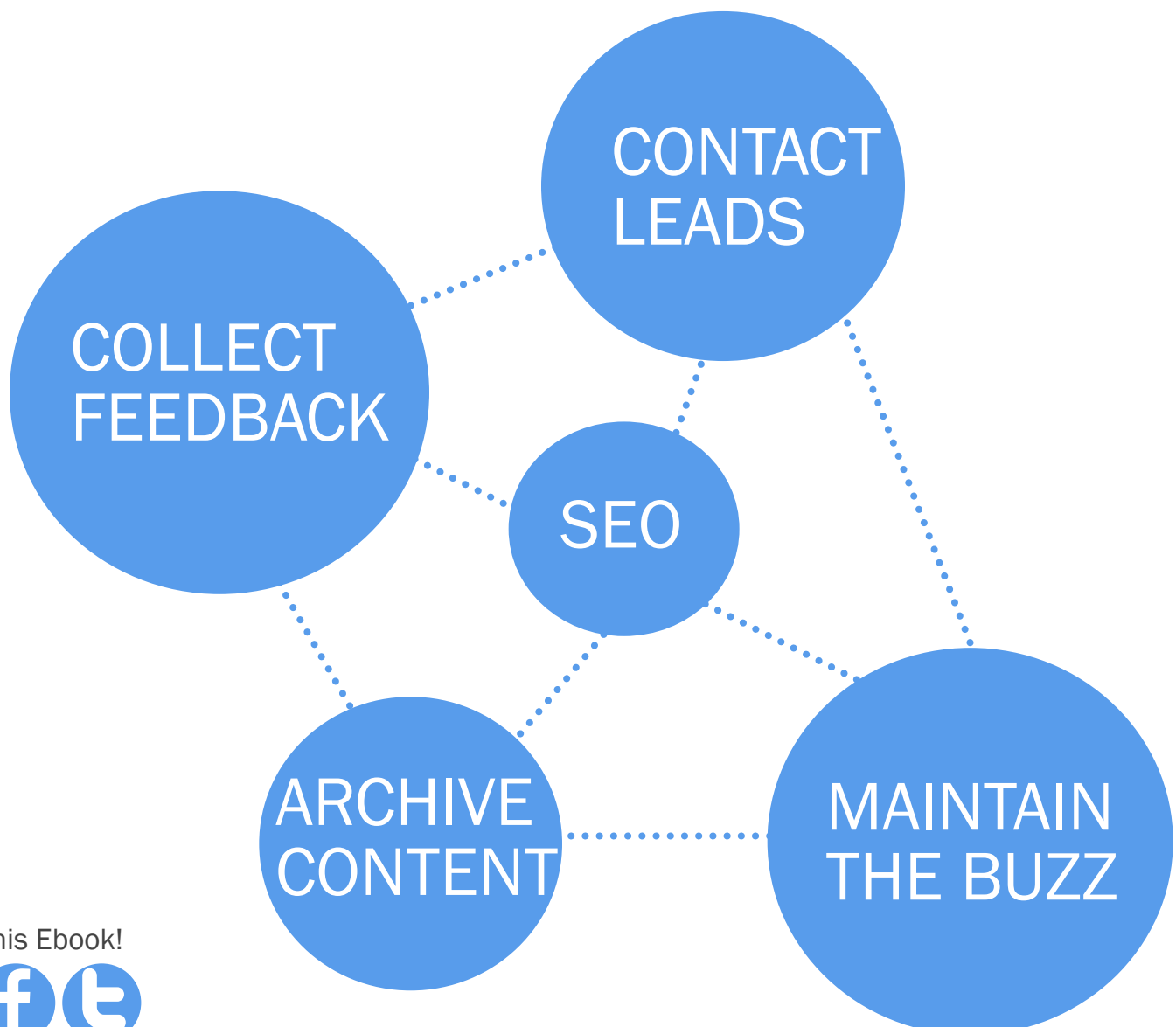
CHAPTER 4

TRADE SHOW POST-EVENT CHECKLIST



“Just because the event is over doesn’t mean your work is over.”

Just because the event is over doesn’t mean your work is over. In addition to figuring out your ROI for the event, you have to figure out whether or not your presence was successful. You want to follow up with the people you spoke to. ROI is not dependent on just the events at the trade show, but on many events that happen afterwards.



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COLLECT FEEDBACK

First, see what people said about your presence. Did they tweet using the hashtag? Did they check in to your Foursquare location or post about you on Facebook? Most importantly, were their comments positive or negative? Collect constructive insights by emailing a survey or launching a Facebook poll question.



Get in touch with the people who wrote about you, and thank them for being part of your trade show experience. Keep in touch with these people even if they are not leads. They are helping you generate brand awareness and exposure and will continue to do so if they are treated well.

FOLLOW UP WITH YOUR LEADS

Next, follow up with your leads. Having the face-to-face contact from the trade show is so helpful to get your foot in the door to sell to them. Look over some of the notes you took at the trade show, and make initial contact soon after the trade show. You may have a long list of people you need to contact, but you or your sales team should get in touch with them in the first two weeks after the event. The leads you get from trade shows will be highly qualified, and it is important to make them a priority.

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ARCHIVE RESOURCES & CREATE NEW CONTENT

As you continue to see what people are saying about the event and follow up with your leads, generate your own content about the trade show experience. What do you think was successful, and what do you think needs help for the future? What advice can you give to people who are just starting out at trade shows? Take the opportunity to show off your knowledge on the subject.

4 Event Marketing Lessons From @HubSpot's Dreamforce Strategy #DF11

Posted by [Rebecca Corliss](#)

Fri, Sep 02, 2011 @ 07:00 PM

[Comments](#)

Back in early 2010, I wrote a blog post called "[Why HubSpot Won't Exhibit at Tradeshows Anymore.](#)" However, any of the 45,000 Dreamforce '11 attendees could tell you we indeed were a sponsor and exhibitor this year, and we wanted to make as large of a contribution to Dreamforce as possible. We were honored to receive amazingly positive feedback on our presence, and the creation of our event strategy was based on those very same concepts we use for our online marketing every day.



An example of [a blog post](#) we published after Dreamforce.

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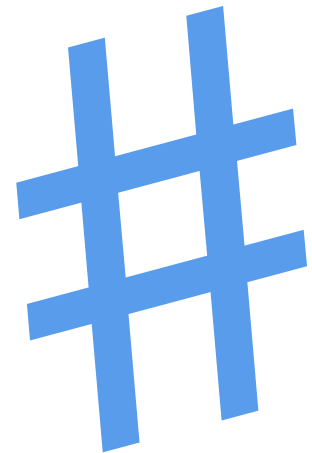


ACCUMULATE SEO POWERS

After the event is over, you should also make sure you update your registration page. Include links to some of the articles that were written about the trade show that just took place or perhaps change the wording to reflect information about a future event you are hosting. Make sure that the articles link back to your website for additional inbound links. It is important to keep the same website with updated information to build SEO authority.

MAINTAIN THE BUZZ

And finally, continue the conversation on social media. Monitor the hashtag. See if people are looking for answers to questions about your company. Months later, there could be more valuable content that comes up on social media. You put in a lot of time and effort to make your trade show successful, and you should continue to get as much out of it as you possibly can.



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CHAPTER 5

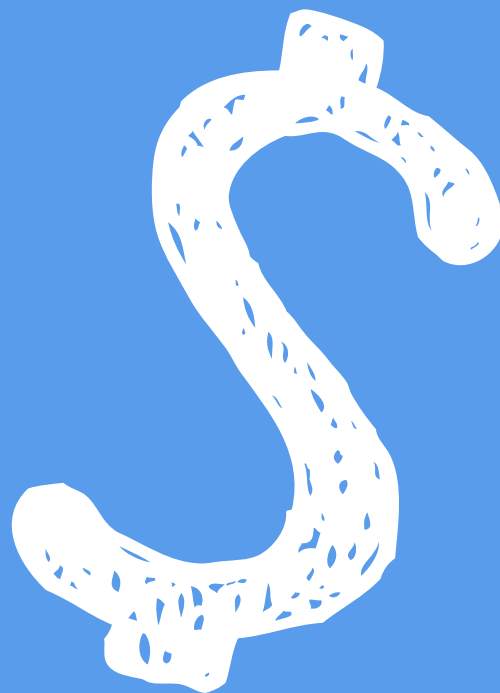
HOW TO MEASURE YOUR TRADE SHOW MARKETING



“How do I measure whether or not my trade show was successful?”

Part of determining whether or not your trade show presence was successful is measuring your results. You should walk away with not only contact information but specific data that can help you figure out what worked and what didn't work. What is more, you'll need to know whether you are getting a good return on the investment and efforts you spent for the trade show.

In this section of the ebook we will look at specific metrics you should monitor in order to track progress.





NEW CUSTOMERS

Did your trade show marketing result in any new customers? You can tell that by looking at the life cycle of event registrants. You need to implement [closed-loop marketing](#) in order to look back and track the evolution of registrants into customers. You should be able to look at the trade show registration page, with all its submissions, and dive into the number of new sales that resulted from them.

The top goal of almost every trade show exhibitor is to make more money for his or her company and sign on more customers. By using [closed-loop marketing](#), you will be able to convert visitors to leads and customers. After the next sales cycle ends, take a look at how many of the trade show attendees became customers. Figuring out the ROI this way can help you convince your boss that the trade show was worth it and you should do it again in the future. Keep in mind that your initial investment may be a lot, but the long-term results may be beneficial for your company. Be patient and wait a reasonable amount of time to see whether or not the trade show was worth it.



HubSpot's landing page analytics gives you data on number of new customers from a single landing page.

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NEW LEADS

If the goal of your trade show marketing efforts was to expand your database of leads who you can then [nurture and push down the sales cycle](#), make sure you are measuring that number of new leads generated. Again, if you are using [sophisticated marketing software](#), you should be able to tell what portion of your submissions are totally new to your system.

For instance, we at HubSpot can look at our individual [landing pages](#) to evaluate their performance based on that metric. Here is an example of an offer that we know has performed really well for us:

Name	Views	Views to Total Submissions	Total Submissions	New Leads
Free Guide: How to Use Google+ for Business	138,171	56.5%	78,061	16,780

By focusing on this metric, you can identify the types of offers and content that attracts a new audience. For instance, such intelligence can help you determine what topics and speeches to plan for your next trade show. For this purpose you can also look at your visitor-to-submission conversion rate and make sure that doesn't drop below your average. As you are measuring your performance, be sure to optimize your [landing pages](#) for the next event.

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DIRECT TRAFFIC & ORGANIC SEARCH

Part of having a successful trade show presence is making sure your company gets a lot of brand awareness. One way to measure this metric is to look at your direct and organic traffic that is coming to your website. Just as your CTAs should be everywhere, your brand should be everywhere.

By **direct traffic** we mean, people directly typing in your company's URL in a web browser. By **branded organic traffic** we mean visitors who arrive on your site by searching for your company in search engines. A trade show should impact both categories. As more people encounter your brand and CTAs, you should see an increase in direct traffic and organic search to your website.



The screenshot above is an example of how we at HubSpot measure spikes in traffic using [the marketing analytics part of our software](#).

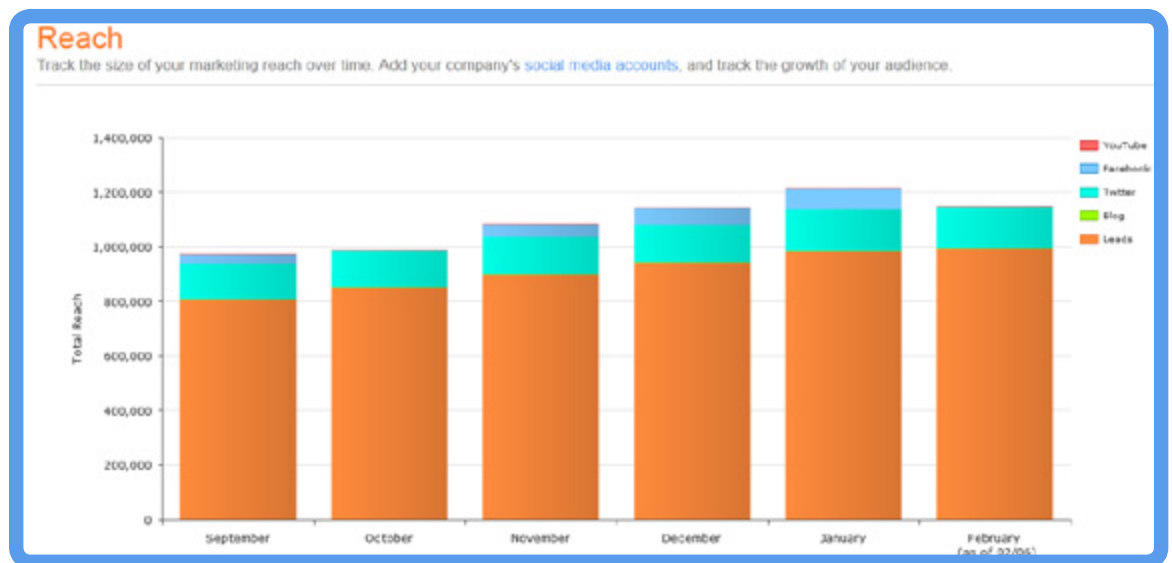
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SOCIAL MEDIA REACH

Did the trade show help you meet your social media goals? Have you noticed an increase in the number of followers you have on different social networks? After the trade show, take a look at what channels were the most successful. See if there was a noticeable spike in Twitter fans, Facebook followers and members of your LinkedIn page. The screenshot below is of [HubSpot's social media intelligence](#) and shows how reach changes overtime:



Identifying which channels were more successful can be helpful as you figure out what to spend the most time on. Checking analytics and testing certain channels over others while at the trade show is a great way to get the most out of your time and become better at prioritizing effort at the next event.

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Naturally, you have access to other social media analytics that can also prove helpful. You can learn a lot about what worked and didn't work from social media. People will also always tell you what they really think about your campaign online. For instance, you can check:

- How often was your Twitter hashtag mentioned?
- Were certain parts of the day more popular than others?
- What are people saying on your blog posts?
- Are your links being shared on personal social media accounts?
- How popular were your YouTube videos?

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CONCLUSION



“Was your time well spent? Did you meet your goals and objectives?”

In this ebook, we walked you through the process of planning, executing and measuring a trade show. We placed the most emphasis on the importance of setting the right goals, keeping them in mind while the event unfolds, and then following up on these goals by tracking their metrics.

Through this structure we wanted to prompt you to ask some questions that are key to trade show marketing success. Was your time well spent? Did you meet your goals and objectives? Did you get any new customers in a normal sales cycle? WHAT WAS YOUR ROI?



Continue to assess the impact of your trade show a few months after it is over. As you answer the questions above, figure out whether or not trade shows are the best option for your business. Often trade shows seem alluring because of the number of people who attend, but they don't always help your business. With careful monitoring, you can figure out whether or not trade shows are the right business move for your company and plan accordingly for future events.

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