

# 5 Steps to Marketing a Successful Event

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When you work so hard to plan an event, of course you want a great turnout and return on investment. How can you ensure your event will be a hit? It's all about marketing. A campaign that targets and appeals to qualified leads is the first and most important step to event management success. We'll break down key factors that encourage attendee interest and spike event enrollment.

**Step 1—Identify qualified contacts and leads.** To begin a marketing campaign, you need an audience to reach out to. Create a contact list that focuses on your key demographic. If your event theme or topic doesn't apply to a portion of your customers, don't bother sending them invitations- it will be junk mail to them and their lack of response will hurt your success rate (and your reputation for delivering valuable information). Segment customers or contact who would be interested in your event and build a qualified leads list. If you've hosted events previously, remember to invite former attendees. A mix of familiar and new faces means more networking opportunities.

**Step 2—Determine your means of promotion.** Event promotion can take on a variety of forms and you need to determine what best fits your needs and budget. This could include email campaigns, online ads, personalized letters, postcards, phone calls, newsletters or social media. In this digital age, online marketing and social media campaigns tend to be more effective than direct mail. This strategy poses a major advantage for event hosts; not only are online and social media tools affordable (often free), but they are trackable. There are several companies and online platforms with tracking tools that measure your marketing success, with reports on- open rates, click rates, "Likes," "Retweets," overall return on investment, and more. These real-time promotional tools are incredibly helpful, efficient and give event planners more insight into their customers than ever before.

**Step 3—Leverage your event website.** Your event website is your biggest promotional tool. The most important aspect of the site is registration. Event registration should be fast and easy for you and your future attendees. (There's plenty of event registration software available for this process.) Offering deals like group packages and early bird discounts can also greatly increase your number of registrants. Your site should also contain an event schedule, session highlights, sponsors, and contact information. Overall the site needs to be easy to navigate, and should be visually interesting. If you've hosted the event before, include photos or video clips from last year. Anything that will entice and motivate your future attendees can help, which leads us to step number 4.

**Step 4—Offer something attendees can't resist.** There are dozens of ways to make your particular event irresistible. For instance, everyone loves free swag. Merchandise such as t-shirts, coffee mugs, water bottles, or reusable bags with your event name or company logo are always appreciated. You could use free or discounted goodies to further promote your sponsors or event speakers. Give away advanced copies of a book penned by a featured event speaker, or tickets to one of their future seminars if possible. Offering social events with free food and cocktails could also increase attendance; it's another opportunity for networking, and a fun, relaxed one at that. Featuring high-profile speakers and revealing new products are irresistible as well. Your attendees will love being in-the-know in their industry.

**Step 5—Follow up post event.** Once your event is finished, don't cut ties with your attendees. Distribute post-event surveys to find out what worked well and what didn't. It will remind your attendees that their opinions matter and you can use the feedback for your benefit. Use data from the surveys to analyze and compare metrics to improve your future events. (Several event registration software platforms can assist in this process.) Finally, send personalized thank you notes- another task your computer can do for you. Your attendees will appreciate the thought, adding to their overall satisfaction regarding your event. The more customer satisfaction you receive, the more loyal attendees you'll gain.

With the right approach, you can easily and affordably market your event to make it a success. These five event management steps are just a few of the things you can do to get event exposure, but they are sure to help boost your registrations and increase revenue.