

How to Maximize Results from the Most Effective B2B Content Marketing Tactic

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Plan for Success

It starts with a dose of planning. Yes, I know you're likely already spending a lot of time on everything that's highly visible at your events—the booth, giveaways,

entertainment, food, drink and presentation. After all, you want to wow your prospects and customers and outshine your competition at the tradeshow or conference.

At many companies, event planning is all about the sizzle. But who is taking care of the steak—your plan for lead generation and turning prospects into clients?

Think about who you want your company representatives to interact with at the event. You may have some ideal prospects and key customers with whom you'd like to deepen your relationship. So don't just *hope* that they stop by your booth. Be proactive. Send an invitation. How you send it is up to you. You might choose email, or to make a bigger impact, you could send a physical letter. Since so few companies are sending snail mail anymore, it may give you an advantage.

Don't rely on the written invitation to do all the heavy lifting. Reinforce it with a phone call. This one-on-one interaction gives you the opportunity to have a conversation, find out the prospects' needs, explain the relevance of meeting with you at the event and book appointments. Don't forget, it's not only the impressive booth, well-catered cocktail party and engaging presentation that make you stand out, it's also adding a human touch.

When you plan ahead, think beyond the event. Be prepared for post-event follow-up. Research shows that the vendor who responds first is going to attain 35 to 50% of the sales. Hopefully, you are going to collect a lot of leads. What do you plan to send them? If you want to send an e-book, white paper, brochure or newsletter, you'll need to create it before the event to ensure fast response.

Follow Up or Fail

If you lack a systematic plan for lead follow-up, all your hard work could go to waste. Surprisingly, the statistics show that salespeople don't follow up with 70 to 80% of leads. That's because they want the leads that are ready to buy. Realistically, that may only be a small portion of the names you collected at the event. You will need to nurture many of the leads before they are ready to be turned over to a salesperson.

Think about what you need to know about each of your leads to follow up effectively, making sure that you provide relevant information. To do so, you may need to ask questions at the event and tabulate the answers. If you need detailed

information, put together an attendee questionnaire that will enable you to gather it in an organized way.

Your first step after or during the show is to prioritize your leads. You should have a sense of whether they are hot, lukewarm or cold. Sort them to make sure you follow up first on those that are furthest along in the buying journey.

Determine how you plan to nurture your leads. It likely will take a series of steps, each contingent on prospect needs and where they are in the buying cycle. So, decide how you're going to use emails, phone calls, content, sales calls and more to educate and convert leads.

To learn more about getting the most out of trade shows, conferences and other B2B events get your free white paper: "The Complete Guide to Calculating and Maximizing Event ROI."

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