

OVERVIEW

In-person and virtual events, including webinars, are a staple of B2B organizations marketing mix. However, they are often planned and executed separately, when there is immense opportunity for unification of data and amplification of content. Organizations must quickly find synergies in these programs to improve ROI and reduce time to implement with decreased investment in physical events.

Looking for ways to unify these tactics, physical and digital experiences, became an area of exploration because of the rise of account-based marketing (ABM) practices. These marketers would look at ways to create consistent and personalized experiences for the buying committee, since it is not realistic or feasible for each team member of a buying group to attend a physical event, they would recreate those physical experiences in digital format via webinars. These initiatives have generated best practices that can be applied today.

OUTCOMES OF THIS PLAY



Consistency in Brand Activation

Marketing leaders are not fully in tune with the technology gripes and successes their teams have on a daily basis. By evaluating technology against a consistent scale, you will uncover gaps and opportunities in your team's daily workflow.



Improved ROI

Overall, both physical and digital experiences will see improved ROI by simplifying and streamlining many of the marketing and logistics activities that are necessary leading up to each event.



Physical-Digital Alignment

The result of these actions will be improved alignment amongst disparate teams and programs within the marketing organization. This will allow for improved communication and for the teams to develop new approaches for measuring activities. This will be more critical than ever for when in-person events return in some capacity.

PROCESS

Pre-Event Activities

- **Attendee Communication.** It is critical that you communicate early and often to event attendees. In the event that a physical event is switched to digital or vice versa, registered attendees can't be left in the lurch. Companies must not wait until final decisions are made to communicate either. It is critical to communicate to attendees about when a decision will be made.
- **Event Registration.** It is emerging as a best practice to use the same registration page regardless of event types. This can be done by relying on your marketing automation platform to house event registration, so that if a change does occur, the information is stored in a system of record rather than needing to be exported from an event management technology. In the event that it was created in a physical event system, splash a banner on there that directs people to the updated landing page for registering. As many companies are using disparate technologies for the landing page and registrations for event types, there is benefit in creating a consistent template for use. Having a consistent template will ensure the data being captured can be appropriately integrated in marketing and sales systems. Additionally, internal stakeholders should agree to the minimum profile data that needs to be captured pre- and at event (including compliance for future marketing) and the capture of contextual information to aid post event follow up and user experience.
- **Name and Branding Conventions.** There doesn't tend to be a major business reason for changing the name of an event that is moving between hosting formats. Consider adding virtual or digital to the name. Often times companies are well unified on messaging that runs across

program families but lack consistent naming across event types. Consider using a consistent name and theme across event types, leveraging the event taxonomy to draw distinctions between how the event is being delivered and to better report on how themes are performing. This benefits attendees to understand which events they should attend in a series (i.e. an attendee interested in agile marketing can see there are webinars, roundtables, etc. on the topic).

During Event Activities

- **Cross-promotion.** As there are an average of 17 interactions in a B2B buyer journey (source SiriusDecisions Buying Study 2019), events also offer the opportunity for a call to action from an event to be another event. An example of this would include registering for a webinar that includes an in-depth product demo after seeing a brief demo at a tradeshow. Additionally, as many event types aren't finalized for 2021 and beyond, it is a best practice to ask attendees of one event to sign up for a mailing list to be notified about upcoming events in their area or related to the topic they are interested in.
- **Attendee Journey.** Especially if you're moving a traditionally-held physical event into a digital medium, don't lose sight of that attendee journey. This may require you to rethink your agenda because you may have a smaller amount of time with people, or to rethink how to structure the sessions and timing. This is an important area to test and ask for feedback on during and at the conclusion of the event as well. but also ask for feedback on this.
- **Social Media.** Many B2B brands use in-person events as the center stones in their social media strategy. With any changes from physical to digital, there are actually more opportunities for social media engagement via digital platforms. One way is to include social media engagement

techniques to allow for networking and sharing of social content from within a digital experience.

Post Event Activities

- **Event Presentation Reuse.** Marketers should explore opportunities for leveraging the same content and presentations at various event types. For example, taking a presentation from a tradeshow and using it as the backbone for content on a webinar. This approach can be particularly useful if there is minimal overlap in the target attendees and audience for the events. This is also helpful if a similar event is being run in multiple geographies—regardless of medium.
- **Content Capture and Activation.** Content that is secured at one event type can be leveraged and activated across event types. For example, video from a webinar can be on a display in a company's booth at a tradeshow. Another use is taking content from a virtual event and re-running it as a webinar series over the course of several weeks or months.
- **Buying Committee Data.** The importance of understanding as much as possible about the team that is buying your solutions can't be overstated. The portfolio of events that organizations run are sure to touch the various members of a buying team. It is critical that the data on attendance and interaction at these events are leveraged in marketing and sales systems to better inform follow up actions.

DATA

- # of physical events
- # of webinars
- Marketing budget spent on company-hosted webinars
- Marketing budget spent on sponsored webinars
- Marketing budget spent on partner webinars
- Marketing budget spent on tradeshows
- Marketing budget spent on field events
- Marketing budget spent on customer events/ user groups

NEXT STEPS

One of the opportunities that the digital-first revolution in marketing has led to is having digital experiences programming live up to the available technology. For example, webinar technologies have had the capabilities of having presenters on video. But the majority of webinars pre-pandemic didn't use this feature. The need to advance human interaction through digital delivery mechanisms is changing that and digital events are now feeling more human. This shift also opens the opportunities to try out new presentation and content formats that have become common place during in-person events, like a panel discussion or interview, neither with any presentation slides. Using these techniques will allow you safely navigate this digital-first marketing world, while also finding new best practices to leverage for physical events when they return.