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LIVE EVENT PLAYBOOK:

GETTING BACK IN THE GAME



HAMILTON

The pandemic upended the events industry as in-person gatherings were put on pause. But the event industry is resilient and organizers, managers, brands, and attendees found new ways to connect and engage with each other.

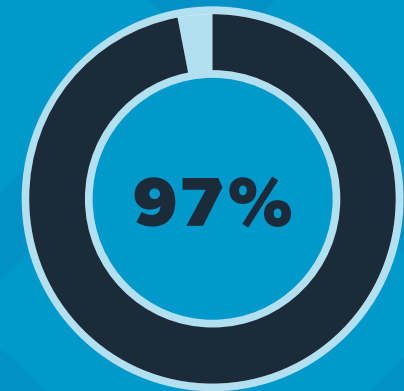
For much of 2020 and into the early months of 2021, events moved online and brands used new technologies and tactics to connect with customers. Virtual events rewrote the playbook for brands, forcing them to rethink strategies to continue delivering valuable business impact. But as in-person events slowly begin to return, one question is on everyone's mind: what's next?

As we embark on "the next era" of event marketing, business leaders are going to face questions of when and how to participate in in-person events. While the answer varies for every business, there are steps exhibitors can take to prepare to take part in live events again.

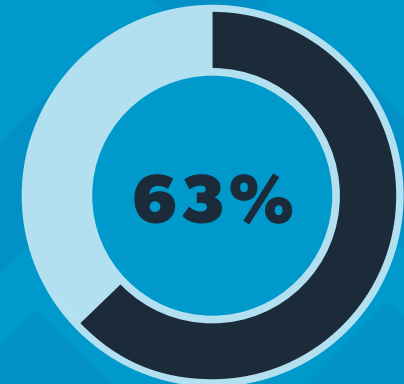
In this playbook, we'll guide you through each step of the journey back to live events and provide helpful tips for you to:

- Identify your "why"
- Create a memorable experience
- Engage customers
- Continue the conversation with your audience after the event ends
- Evaluate your event marketing strategy performance

Let's get started.



97% of B2B marketers believe that in-person events have a major impact on achieving business outcomes.



63% of event marketers are planning to resume in-person events in 2021.

Source: Bizzabo

IDENTIFY YOUR “WHY”

Before a developer begins building a house, they create a blueprint to guide their work. As we return to in-person events, it’s important for exhibitors to take time and develop a blueprint of their own.

DISCOVERY

One of the most important steps for exhibitors is determining the “why” for their event marketing. What do we mean by the “why”? Think of it as your brand’s purpose — the reason you are participating and the reason people want to interact with your experience.

Consider these questions when discovering your “why”:

- What are the goals of your event marketing strategy?

- Why would an attendee want to visit your booth or virtual experience?

- What can you accomplish through event marketing that you can’t through other channels?

DEVELOP A INTEGRATED PLAN

Now that you have your “why,” it’s time to drill down deeper and turn your purpose into a fully integrated event plan for your experience. This will help guide your content and gives participants an idea of what they can expect to learn.

Ask yourself the following questions to help determine your plan:

- What is the overarching message of your experience?

- What is the key takeaway for attendees?

- If you had to describe your brand in three words, what would they be?

CREATE A MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE

With your event marketing blueprint in place, you can begin bringing your vision to life. The value of live events lies in the experience — attendees get a chance to get away from their desks and email inboxes to interact and connect with brands and one another.

Creating a memorable experience for event attendees builds excitement around your brand and boosts the business impact of your event marketing efforts.

ENTICE

Pre-show marketing is just as important, if not more important, than the event itself — your brand experience will only be successful if people show up. Consider how you are going to drive attendees to your experience and what value you provide that will entice them to show up. Then, decide what marketing tactics you can use to reach your audience, including:



Social media



Email marketing



Sales promotions



Sponsorships



EDUCATE

Event attendance is primarily driven by access to educational content and keeping up with industry trends. As such, it's important for exhibitors to think about what they want their attendees to learn from their experience. Having a firm understanding of your products, specifications, and the value of your brand can help you stand out as a thought leader on the show floor.

ENTERTAIN

The hallmark of live events is the interaction between brands, attendees, and other stakeholders. Unlike emails or video calls, in-person experiences offer brands the chance to wow attendees and garner valuable attention by creating an impactful exhibit design.

When creating your experience, consider how you can take it up a notch by providing a unique experience that your guests won't expect. You should also think about how you can use a hybrid complement to your live experience to entertain a remote audience as well. Simply put: never settle for the status quo — attendees are more likely to remember an entertaining experience than a dull one.

IN ACTION



The Brand:

Mailchimp

The Approach:

Mailchimp created an interactive experience where guests could bring illustrations to life on the exhibit's "wonder wall."

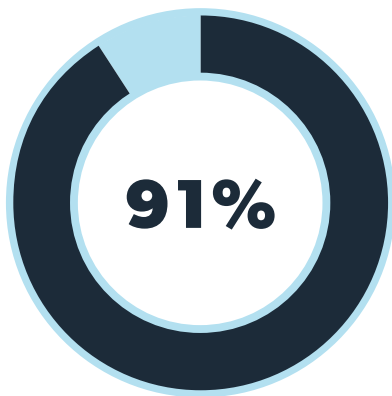
The Outcome:

The excitement of the "wonder wall" captured attendees' attention, giving the Mailchimp team opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations about their services.

[READ MORE](#)

ENGAGE CUSTOMERS

Attendee engagement is a key factor in helping meet brand leaders' number one expectation from events: sales lead generation. Thirty-two percent of brands say lead generation is the most important outcome from event participation, and how you engage your audience is critical to your success.



of B2B buyers prefer interactive and visual content.



As we return to live events, exhibitors will need to think about how in-person and remote audiences will engage with their brand. The hybrid event model offers the opportunity to reach a wider audience, but you'll need to rethink your content to make sure every attendee is engaged. Here are three steps you can take to rethink your engagement strategy:

1. INCORPORATE INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS.

Giving event attendees something to do is one of the easiest ways to capture their attention and get them to engage with your brand. Consider adding an interactive element to your experience that taps into multiple senses and creates a memorable moment for your audience. Demo stations in your booth or even gamification of your content on an experience website are all ways to get attendees engaged both in-person and remotely.

2. ENCOURAGE CONVERSATION.

One of the most important aspects of event marketing is the ability for participants to engage in dialogue to learn more about specific topics, products, and services. For in-person audiences, incorporate educational components in your booth to act as a launching pad for further conversations about your product or service. Special chat features can also be integrated into your virtual booth environment to enable dialogue between remote attendees and exhibitors.

3. MAKE YOUR CONTENT ACCESSIBLE.

The core of any event is the content that is delivered to attendees, which means you want every attendee to have access to it, regardless of their location. Making your content available on-demand through a microsite or experience site gives in-person and virtual attendees the ability to access it at their convenience and a chance to revisit the information later.

HAMILTON ENGAGEMENT SERVICES

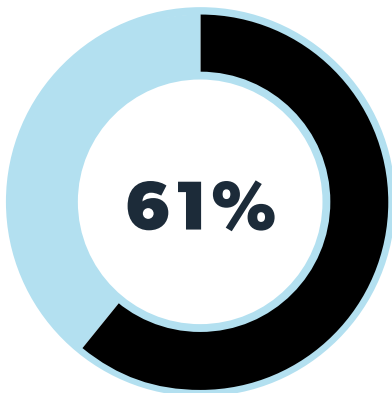
We provide solutions that attract, engage, inform, and motivate your customers. Combining intelligent interactivity with a solid understanding of the attendee experience, our team brings your content to life through:

- Animation + Video
- Digital Content
- Immersive + Projection Technologies
- Live Presentations
- Games + Interactive Solutions
- And more!

[LEARN MORE](#)

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

Your event marketing strategy shouldn't stop when the doors have closed and attendees are on their way home. Brands need to think long-term about the attendee experience and figure out how potential customers can continue to engage with the brand after the event ends.



of event marketers believe that events are a critical marketing channel for meeting key business objectives.



THE NEXT STOP

Trying to cram all of your content and interactions into the short timeframe of an event can lead to missed opportunities to engage your customers and close more deals. Having a robust post-show strategy is a valuable way to continue delivering engaging content to participants while also giving your brand a chance to nurture and grow leads.

A virtual event platform like [Hamilton EXTEND®](#) gives your audience a place to go after the event ends to learn more about a brand's product or service and engage with curated content. These virtual environments offer brands the opportunity to extend the consumer experience beyond the show floor and drive valuable engagement.

GENERATE LEADS

Hybrid events allow brands to capture important insights about their consumers. Virtual event platforms allow brands to see what participants do while on the platform, which content they engaged with, and what product or services they showed interest in.

Using these metrics gives brands a powerful set of information they can use to move potential customers into the sales funnel for follow-up while providing sales reps with key insights from your lead capture efforts. Sales reps can then continue the conversation with a sales strategy tailored toward each customer.

IN ACTION



The Brand:

Broan-NuTone

The Approach:

Broan-NuTone created a virtual experience in the Hamilton EXTEND® platform to promote their new products and allow attendees to explore "virtual rooms" where they could learn more about the product offerings.

The Outcome:

The site allowed Broan-NuTone to tailor content to individual attendees based on their profession, and the live chat feature made it easy to facilitate 1:1 interactions and move customers through the sales funnel.

[READ MORE](#)

EVALUATE AND EVOLVE

Now that the event has ended and new customers are in talks with your sales teams, it's time to evaluate your event marketing performance and identify opportunities for improvement at future events.

MEASURE SUCCESS

Specific KPIs and other metrics of success can be compared against the event marketing objectives and goals outlined in the initial stages of your planning. Hamilton's reporting services make it easy to evaluate event performance against a number of metrics, including:



Booth
Engagement



Follow-up
Requests



Online material
downloads



Time spent in
your experience

OPTIMIZE FOR THE FUTURE

With a better understanding of your marketing performance through key metrics, the last step of your event marketing process is identifying areas for growth at your next event. Hamilton works with your team to develop a plan to apply key learnings from your event participation to future planning and optimize event performance.



BRING YOUR EVENT EXPERIENCE BACK TO LIFE

The return of live events brings new challenges for exhibitors and brands, but they also present new opportunities to engage and excite your audience. In fact, **95%** of marketers believe in-person events have a significant impact on achieving primary business goals. But live events aren't the same as they were pre-pandemic, and brands have to take new steps to create a memorable and successful experience.

As you start down the road back to live events, it's important to:

- Identify your "why"
- Create a memorable experience
- Engage customers
- Continue the conversation after the event ends
- Evaluate your event marketing performance

To learn more about how Hamilton can help you make your in-person event a success, schedule a discovery with one of our team members by [contacting us](#) today.

[CONTACT US](#)

