

LinkedIn™ Marketing Solutions

THE
Sophisticated
MARKETER'S

— Guide to —

EVENTS

Australia

A note to Australian Marketers



Nell Norman-Nott

Head of Marketing

LinkedIn Marketing Solutions ANZ

Why events?

Chances are, as you read this, you have just completed a marketing event or have at least one lined up in the next couple of months.

In Australia last year, 72% of marketers used events to further their marketing goals. This year, 37% of you predict that events will be critical to your marketing success.*

Whether it's an executive roundtable for 15 high-powered decision-makers or a major conference for hundreds of clients, you invest time, effort and resources into organising marketing events for one reason — because they work.

Events are regarded as the pinnacle of face-to-face marketing. They are an invitation to your target audience to take a step closer, to physically engage and forge an emotional bond with your brand. This makes events a powerful marketing tool to accelerate the sales cycle and build brand equity.

But events are not without risk. Given the manpower and financial resources that go into an event, getting them wrong is a costly mistake we would all prefer to avoid.

We've put together this guide to help you run successful events whatever your marketing objectives may be. Inside, you'll find tips for every stage of the event lifecycle, from planning and budgeting to promotion, on-site management and post-event follow-up.

We hope that this guide will add to your arsenal of knowledge and give you the confidence to keep creating impactful and effective events.

Regards,

Nell Norman-Nott

Chapter 01

The Plan



Plan: Starting Out Right

A good start is half the battle won. It's important to know exactly why you're holding an event and what you want to get out of it before you even get started. The event planning phase involves asking yourself some difficult questions but once you have the answers, it makes subsequent decision-making that much easier.

Know Your Reasons

Let's start with objectives. When we consider the 'why' of marketing events, the question invariably leads to 'who' as well. Your objectives need a clear audience whether they are existing customers, prospects or the media.

SOME OF THE TOP REASONS WE'VE COME ACROSS INCLUDE:

- **Accelerating the sales cycle** through lead generation and lead nurturing
- **Promoting your brand** for top-of-mind awareness, to encourage loyalty and to secure earned media
- **Launching a new campaign, product or service**
- **Engaging and educating** your target audience and positioning your brand as a thought leader in a crowded marketplace

You also need to think about how an event will fit with your current marketing strategy. For all the resources that you're about to pump in, it needs to complement whatever you're already doing.



What does a live event offer that other marketing and information channels do not?

This is a key question that you need to answer as part of the critical analysis process.

Prepare Your Financial Firepower

When putting together your event budget, it's a good idea to factor in event ROI. Do you intend to measure the event's success in terms of lead generation, conversion rates, deepened relationships or earned media, for example? Bear this in mind as you work through the dollars-and-cents questions, such as:

- What type of event are you holding?
- How many people are you targeting?
- What are your setup requirements? For example, live feeds and experiential stations will cost more than a roundtable set-up for a meeting.
- Will you have guest speakers and will they require an honorarium?
- What's a suitable venue for the size and nature of your event?
- Is your event date fixed or flexible? This could affect your negotiation power with venues.
- How do you intend to promote the event?
- Do you need the support and expertise of a professional event agency?

Make a Plan & Stick to it

For each event, you should have a detailed project and financial plan that breaks down all your activities into timelines, resources and responsibilities. This helps you keep track of everything that needs to be done and when who needs to get it done. It also helps you keep a close watch on your budget and resources.

You can choose to use a simple Excel spreadsheet, a shared Google Sheets or any of the many different project management tools available. The point is to ensure that your plan is kept up to date and shared with the rest of your event team so everyone's on the same page.

A common mistake that marketers make is underestimating the time needed to achieve certain milestones and allowing slippages. Much of your event's success hinges on how well you manage your time until event day, so make a plan and stick to it!



**CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD AN
EVENT PLANNING TEMPLATE
WE USE AT LINKEDIN**

THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOL SHORTLIST

ASANA

Asana is a simple, streamlined project management tool with reporting features to help you monitor progress. It has built-in reminders to keep everyone on track and supports custom fields for each event.

BASECAMP

Basecamp is great for larger projects and enterprise teams. We love its 'Campfire' feature, which lets you to schedule group chats to bring the team together in real time, regardless of location.

TRELLO

Trello is a visually intuitive project management app that uses cards and columns to organise tasks. It also supports integration with Evernote, Dropbox and other commonly used tools.

Chapter 02

The People



People: Teaming up for Success

This should come as no surprise — people are your single most important asset in delivering a smooth event. When building an event team, from your own staff to your event agency and all the vendors and suppliers that you'll be working with, you should be looking for people who look and behave professionally. They need a can-do attitude and ought to be able to think on their feet and take action quickly. Every attendee who comes into contact with your team should walk away feeling impressed.

Engaging an Event Agency

Be realistic about what you can handle on your own and what responsibilities you need to delegate. If you've decided that an event agency is on the cards, here's what we think you need to consider:



Relevant experience

given the scale and nature of your event and the industry you're in



Industry reputation

since any company doing good work should have client testimonials to show for it



Concept proposals

are good way to tell if an agency understands your objectives and knows how to help you achieve it

Experiences can, and should be measured. Make sure your agency is delivering value by supporting your channels to market. Agencies no longer simply do events, they should focus on brand activations that can deliver measurable results. ROI should be a central outcome of all experience marketing activities because benchmarking and analysis provide a window into the future.

Caleb Bush, Managing Director, George P. Johnson

Managing Stakeholders

You may lead the event but, more often than not, your stakeholders play a large part in determining its outcome. Communication is key to managing both internal stakeholders (your sales team and senior management, for example) and external stakeholders (your event agency, attendees, sponsors, vendors, suppliers and more).

Accept that every stakeholder has their own priorities and point of view. Your role is to drive collaboration among all stakeholder groups so that you achieve your marketing objectives and they get what they need out of the event. Which brings us to our next point...

Briefing the Team

Most times, the complexity of an event means that challenges may occur along the way. This is when a strong, skilled and, most importantly, well-briefed team really comes into its own. Briefing meetings should happen at regular intervals in the lead-up to the event. This helps ensure that team members are familiar with the decision-making structure and know what to do in case of an emergency.

THE FOUR 'R's OF BRIEFING MEETINGS

Reset the tone

so that all team members feel safe and empowered about voicing their opinions, raising issues and offering suggestions.

Review progress

against the event plan. Identify problems and bottlenecks that need to be resolved and brainstorm for effective ways to do so.

Refine the plan, if necessary

to ensure that team members have the information and resources to complete their tasks on time.

Recap the event objectives

so that everyone is aligned and committed to achieving the same goal.



In a good team, all the members know their role, have defined processes and clear objectives. Leadership supports a positive team culture, emphasising motivation and encouraging collaboration, creativity and expression. Any challenges that present themselves are handled by the team together.

Amelia Lydon, Events Marketing Manager, Gartner

Chapter 03

The Content



Content: Giving it meaning

The unique value that events provide over any other marketing channel is the possibility of live interaction, and much of that interaction is centered on content. The promise of amazing content is a powerful draw for your target audience. If you deliver on that promise by giving them content that they care about, they'll not only be engaged, they're also likely to amplify your message by sharing it.

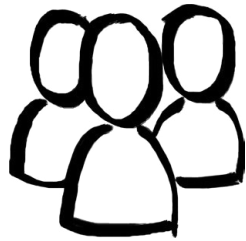
Seeing as how **71% of Australian marketers** already view content marketing as an ongoing business process*, the idea of creating engaging content that gives an audience new insights should come naturally to most of you.

*Content Marketing in Australia 2017: Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends,
<http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2016/11/australian-content-marketers-research/>

Developing an Event Content Strategy

When coming up with a content strategy for your event, it's vital to consider the messages that you want to send, the content that your target audience is keen on and how to bridge that gap, if any.

Relevant Content



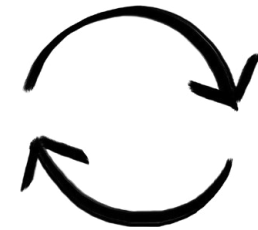
resonates with people, so understand what makes your target audience tick

Timely Content



is a way of contextualising your content to make it part of the conversations that people are having now

Consistent & Coordinated Content



gives your event a content theme and helps reinforce the messages that you want people to come away remembering.



In our CMO Study, we found that **63%** of CMOs believe that delivering deeper, richer customer experiences is a top marketing priority. At IBM, we believe that cognitive intelligence — using marketing automation to ‘listen’ in on what customers want and leveraging data insights to personalise content — is the way of the future.

Mari Kauppinen, Head of Marketing Demand Generation, Digital and Events, IBM



Designing the Keynote

A keynote address, delivered by an internal speaker, an industry leader, a best-selling author or a professional speaker, is often regarded as the content highlight of an event. It can make or break an event right from the start, so take care when planning yours.

Your event content theme is a good starting point. You'll also want to do your homework, lest you end up with someone pitching from the podium.

At the end of the day, the keynote should focus on what you want your attendees to get out of it. Their reaction and their learning should be your priorities when choosing a keynote speaker.

Running an Expert Panel Discussion

Another popular content tactic is the panel discussion format. To get this off the ground, you'll want to identify three or four speakers, each with a different and interesting perspective that relates to your content theme. A diverse panel is more likely to create a robust conversation that will keep your target audience engaged.

The host also plays an important role. You're relying on them to lead the discussion and yield the spotlight to the panelists, so work closely with your host to design the discussion flow.

Briefing Your Speakers

It's worth remembering that your speakers are also stakeholders in your event's success. Like with all stakeholders, communication is key so take the time to brief them. Speakers need to know whom they'll be addressing and what these people want to learn, so give them that information.



**CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD A SAMPLE
SPEAKER BRIEFING DOCUMENT THAT YOU
CAN ADAPT AND USE FOR YOUR NEXT EVENT!**



Having conversations with your host and panelists will help them understand the objective of the discussion and where each of them comes in. A set of guiding questions can also be handy as they prepare for their session.

Chapter 04

Promotion



Promotion: Building Buzz

It's time to get the word out about your event. Remember to give yourself sufficient lead-time to get your message across and get people excited. While the nature of your event, your target audience and the resources you have at your disposal will dictate your event marketing approach, here are some basics that you should cover.



Have an Event Landing Page

Your event deserves an online home that people can turn to for more information. Articulating a compelling value proposition here is vital, since this is where you want to drive sign-ups. Content on your event landing page should be concise but be specific about the benefits for each type of attendee. You should also be using this platform to shout about your great content and speaker line-up — this is usually a magnet for sign-ups, so don't forget to include a registration form. When you write the copy for the landing page, be sure to include SEO-friendly keywords to increase your chances of exposure.

THE EVENT LANDING PAGE TOOLKIT

UNBOUNCE

Unbounce is a great content builder tool that lets you pick a template and drag and drop elements to quickly create a mobile-responsive event landing page. You can edit it further to get exactly what you need.

INSTAPAGE

Instapage is simpler than Unbounce, which makes it easier to use but the trade-off is a lesser degree of customisation. It still produces a mobile-responsive event landing page that you can publish directly to your website.

LEADPAGES

LeadPages offers a great selection of templates that have been rated on potential conversion rate. Its Leadbox feature also allows you to create pop-ups on your event landing page.

Talk About it on Your Blog

Your blog is another opportunity to create buzz and get SEO traction. Have a content calendar and drive event sign-ups by linking each post to your event registration page. There's plenty to talk about — announce the event, feature expert interviews, share guest posts from speakers and offer content teasers about the topics that attendees can expect at your event. Share these posts on social media too and increase your chances of generating interest. After the event, don't forget to highlight key takeaways and share event photos and videos.

Hashtag it!

Depending on your event and target audience, platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter may be effective in getting the word out. A unique but simple-to-remember hashtag could do wonders at this stage — and all the way through to the event day and post-event.

Make sure your attendees are familiar with the event hashtag (include it on event badges, signage and presentations) and encourage them to share and tag on social media. It's good practice to have a team member take charge of social media management during the event - to monitor the hashtag, provide real-time replies, and share updates as the event happens.

Reach Out via LinkedIn

Reach your target attendees and inspire them to register for your event via LinkedIn.

Sponsored Content allows you to share directly in their LinkedIn newsfeed and pique their interest in your event content or speakers. Be sure to include visuals to grab their attention! LinkedIn is especially powerful for event registration when Sponsored Content is combined with **Sponsored InMail**. With Sponsored InMail, you can send personalised invitations at scale through LinkedIn's messaging environment. InMail can be longer and provide deeper details than a newsfeed post but remember to keep it concise because most people read InMail on their mobile device. They'll also receive notifications on desktop and via email, which is probably why InMails have a 500% higher response rate than regular emails!

PRO TIPS: RESEARCH & INVITE ON LINKEDIN

1

Define
your target
attendees

2

Run advanced searches with
over 20 demographic and
firmographic filters using
LinkedIn Sales Navigator

3

Save and tag contacts
as 'Invited' to easily
track invitation
process on LinkedIn

To learn more about *LinkedIn Sales Navigator*, visit business.linkedin.com

Make Use of Facebook & Instagram



These social media platforms are great for spreading awareness about your event. Take advantage of all the work you put into creating the right event ambiance by sharing it on Instagram — which can be especially useful on the event day if your location is iconic, unusual or well decorated.

Start Chatting on Twitter

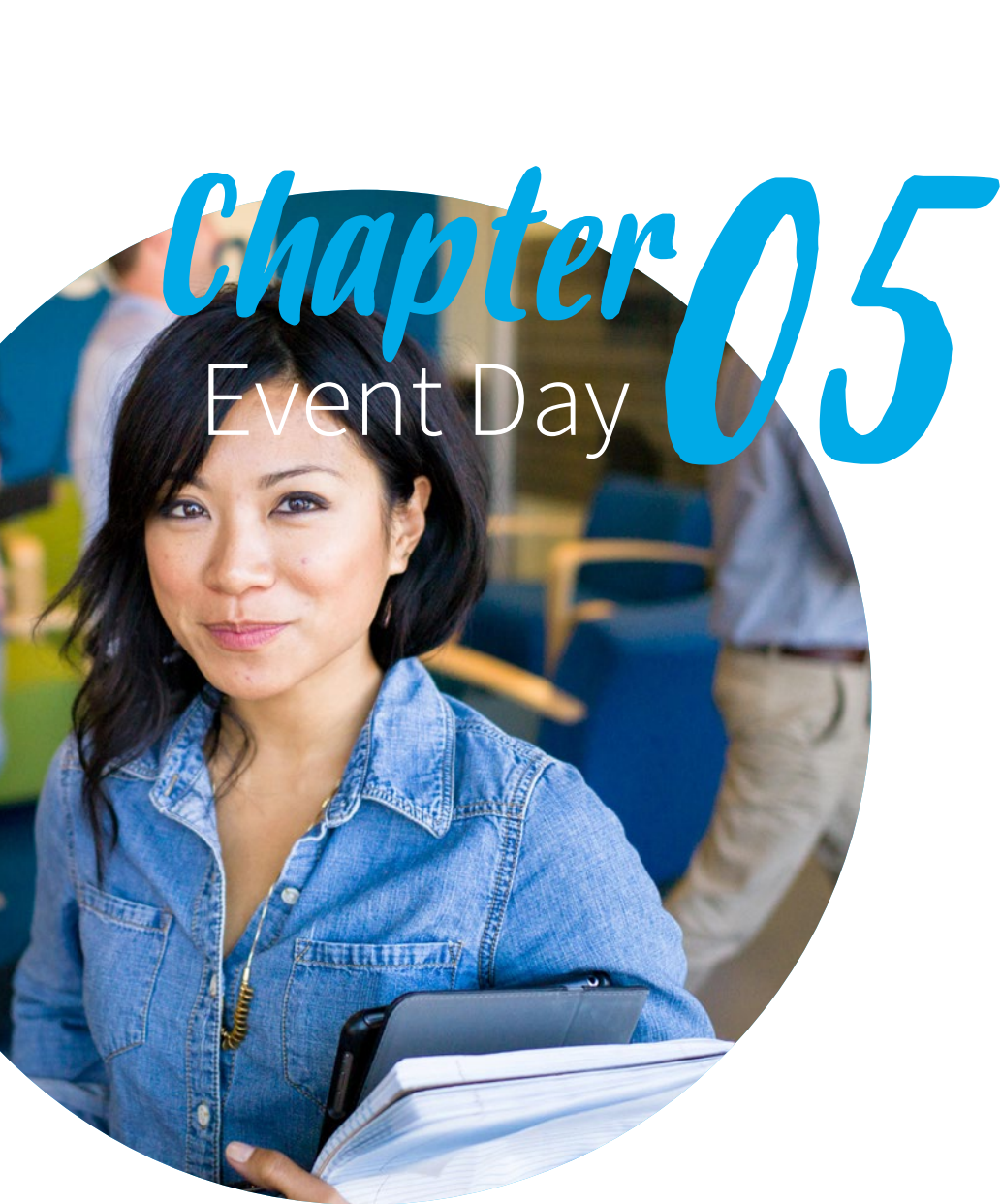


Twitter is great for sharing live coverage during your event to scale brand awareness beyond your attendees. In the event lead-up stage, you can prime your followers to 'watch this space' for live event coverage. Additionally, don't forget to ask your guest speakers to tweet a link to your event landing page and use the event hashtag in their tweets.



Go Direct with Email Marketing

Your event marketing mix should include email marketing as well. Develop a timeline and content plan for your event emails and personalise them if you can. You can start a few months in advance with a Save the Date invitation, speaker and agenda announcements and early-bird registration discounts. As the event date draws closer, you'll want to send reminders and share tips to help attendees maximise their time at your event.



Chapter 05

Event Day

Onsite: Managing the Big Day

After all that work, the big day has finally arrived! You'll be pulled in a thousand different directions throughout the event, so here are our tips to make things smoother (and your life easier).

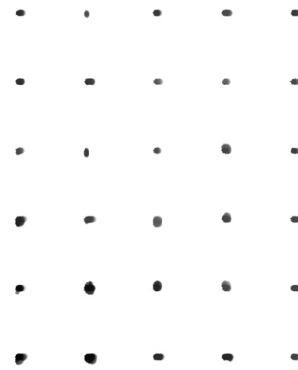
Turn to your Run Sheet

An event run sheet is the most basic but the most indispensable tool that you and your team can have on event day. It lists the sequence of activities from start to finish, set out by time, location and responsibility. A great run sheet is also a central database of contacts so every member of your team knows what they need to do and who to contact to get it done.

A run sheet can also be a godsend when you have multiple stakeholders to manage. At any given point, your boss, colleagues or sales team may come to you asking for specific information. Retrieve this quickly from your run sheet to minimise delays to your own workflow.



**CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD A SAMPLE
EVENT RUN SHEET THAT YOU CAN
ADAPT AND USE FOR YOUR NEXT EVENT!**



Have a Game Plan

Having put so many people in one room, the last thing you want is for your team to miss out on engagement opportunities. This is where planned social interaction comes in.

The idea is for everyone to have a personal plan of action - to agree beforehand who should be spending time with whom

Strategically planned introductions can go a long way. Connecting a customer advocate with a prospect, for example, can help accelerate the sales cycle, while introducing a member of the senior management to an existing customer could deepen the relationship and boost confidence in your brand.

A plan of action also gives your team the chance to do their pre-event homework, to school themselves on who they'll be talking to so it's easier to build a connection right off the bat.

Save the Conversation

It's also good practice for each team member to keep detailed notes about each interaction that goes beyond scribbling on the back of a business card. Instead, everyone should be jotting down the context of the conversation and key observations to make follow-up more meaningful and productive.



Pre-planning interactions on event day is something we always do. At every event, we make sure our sales team is present, briefed and prepped to engage with guests pre and post event formalities. From a reputation point of view, this has helped us deliver some great results, including strong relationships with both clients and prospects.

Bronwyn Smith, Head of Digital Marketing, ELMO Talent Management Software

Chapter 06

Post-Event



Post-Event: Maximising Mileage

When it's all done and dusted, give yourself a moment to catch your breath, have a glass of bubbly and let's jump right back into things. The event is over but your opportunity to maximise event ROI isn't.

Solicit Feedback

Your conversation with attendees should continue after they leave. In fact, now's the best time to connect with them and get their honest feedback — did they get what they wanted out of the event? This will not only give you a better understanding of the success of the event, it could also help you identify follow-up areas for each attendee. In your post-event survey, you'll want to determine the business impact of the event...

...SO FOCUS ON QUESTIONS SUCH AS:

- What were your objectives for attending the event?
- Do you feel that your objectives were met?
- Did you meet the people you expected to meet?
- Did the event agenda give you ample time to interact with other attendees?
- Did you learn what you set out to learn?



**CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD A SAMPLE
FEEDBACK FORM TO GET STARTED ON
SOLICITING FEEDBACK THAT MATTERS!**

Determine what success looks like

If you restrict yourself to conversion rate as a measure of success, you're likely to disappoint yourself. The reality of marketing events is that your attendees show up to network and learn. They're not going to sign a deal on the spot but they are hinting that they're open to the idea. So what you can measure is revenue opportunity.

MARKETING-QUALIFIED LEADS (MQLs)

These prospective customers aren't ready to buy yet but are likely to respond to nurturing, making them a high quality lead for your sales team.

NET PROMOTER SCORE (NPS)

This is a way of measuring customer loyalty and happiness that helps you differentiate the promoters (or advocates) of your brand, from those who feel neutral (the passives) or negatively (the detractors) about your brand.

With NPS as a guide, your sales team can focus their efforts on nurturing those who are more likely to respond positively.

Stay Close After the Closing

Following up with attendees after the event can take many forms — an email, phone call, meeting or an invitation to another event. When follow-up is placed in context of the conversations that they had during the event (remember those detailed notes?), it's likely to produce better results.

Continue the Content Journey

Don't overlook the fact that you'll also be content rich after the event. Keep sharing your content assets through platforms like LinkedIn. High quality, shareable content adds value to anyone who sees it, not just your attendees, and has the potential to ignite new conversations and connections.

Help your sales team understand that they have a role in distributing and amplifying content with their customer base. Not only does this increase the 'eyeballs' on the event content, it also strengthens their own personal brand as a credible and trusted advisor.

Chapter 07

Conclusion



In a Nutshell: Your Event Checklist

Events can be one of the more complicated programmes in your marketing mix but, when done right, they're worth every late night. We hope you'll keep this guide and the following checklist handy, and that your next event will be a roaring success.

Your Event Checklist

REMEMBER:

- ☐ Be clear about your marketing objectives
- ☐ Understand what events will do for you that other marketing channels won't
- ☐ Build your budget with your event ROI in mind
- ☐ Develop an event plan and stick to it
- ☐ Put together a team and keep them well briefed at all times
- ☐ Craft an event content strategy that is relevant, consistent and coordinated
- ☐ Give yourself sufficient lead time to promote your event through various channels
- ☐ Have a run sheet to help you cope on event day
- ☐ Plan your team's social interactions beforehand
- ☐ Measure success in terms of Marketing-Qualified Leads and Net Promoter Score, rather than conversion rates
- ☐ Follow up with attendees immediately after the event



LinkedInTM Marketing Solutions

Today, LinkedIn members number more than **500 million** of the 3 billion professionals on the planet, representing the largest group anywhere of influential, affluent, and educated people.

For more information,
visit marketing.linkedin.com