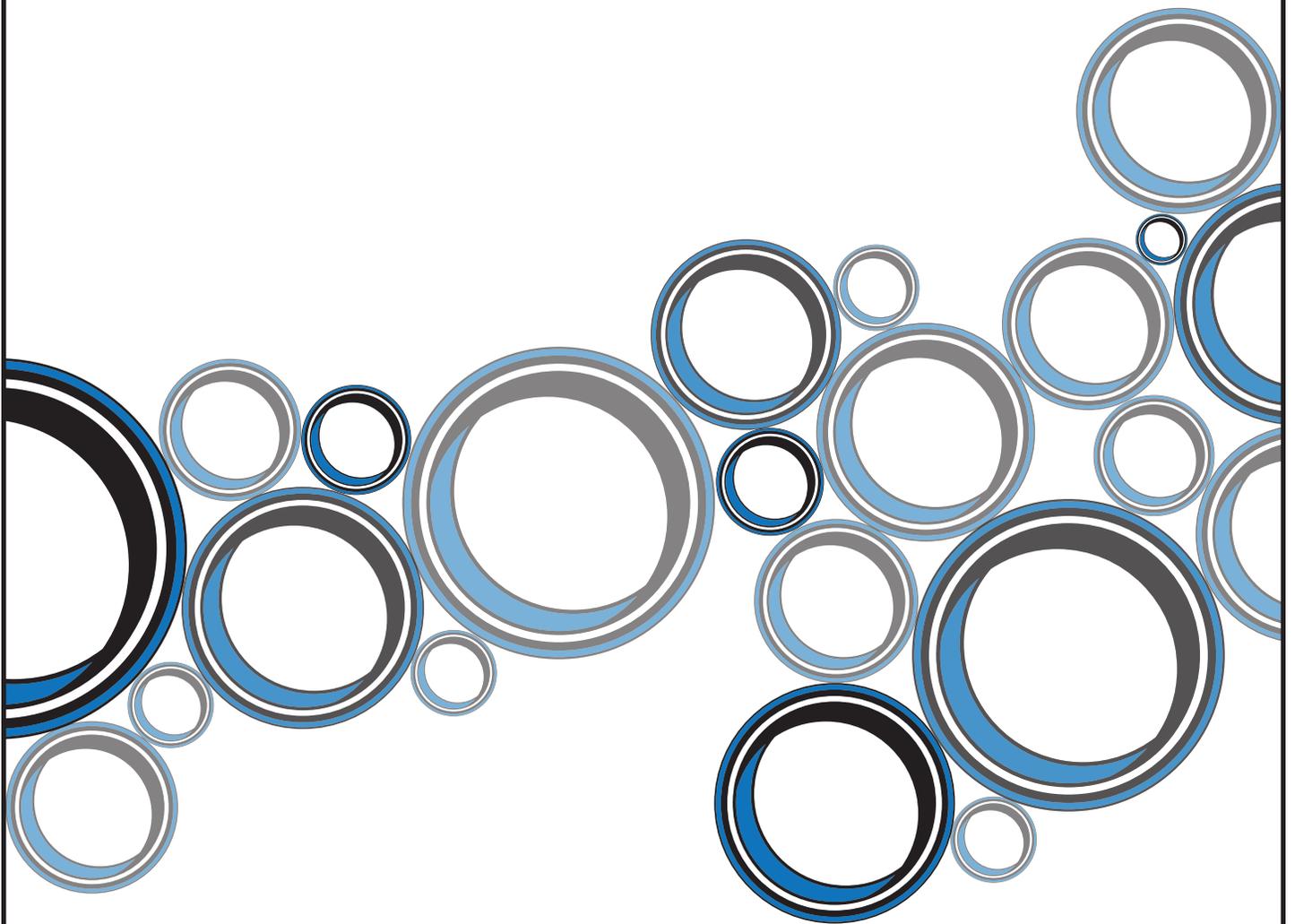


THE MARKETING SCOPE

**BEST PRACTICE GUIDE:
VIRTUAL EVENTS**



2013

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VIRTUAL EVENTS & VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS

Business events have been around for hundreds of years, it's only been recently that we have been able to leverage technology in order to reach across boundaries, and save time and travel with virtual events. The beginning started with phone conferences in order to meet, businesspeople could share voice communication in a small or large group. Soon, web conferencing added the capability to share pictures and slides and collaborate on a given topic. Increasingly available bandwidth then allowed sharing of live video streams, from simple webcams to sophisticated video devices. Now, all of these technologies and more have been combined, allowing people to meet in virtual business environments. These virtual business environments are now saving more than just time and travel, but actually saving money and even making money in some cases.



24/7 BRAND ENGAGEMENT – NO MORE “ONE AND DONE”

Beyond the cost savings, there are some marketing advantages to virtual events/environments over live ones. One advantage is the interactions and behavior of every attendee can be recorded and evaluated. Another is all that hard work to plan and set up a in-person event does not just go away in two days once that event is over. With a virtual event the content and the ability to connect with experts and peers lives on in a 24/7 365 days a year.

TRULY CHANGING THE WAY COMPANIES DO BUSINESS

Recently, virtual events have enjoyed dramatic growth and acceptance in corporate

marketing departments, as well as other groups inside the enterprise. By combining aspects of web meetings, webcasting, community capabilities and social networking, virtual events offer a truly engaging and stimulating attendee experience. Initially dedicated to episodic one-off virtual events, they soon emerged as a powerful platform for companies to connect with customers and prospects anytime and anywhere on an ongoing basis. Innovative companies of all sizes now leverage virtual environments to reach more people, reduce customer acquisition cost and stay connected with their audiences around the globe. Today, everything from product launches, user conferences, customer briefings, and corporate trainings take place in virtual environments.

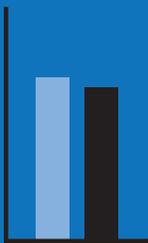
According to a November 2010 research report conducted by BtoB Magazine, Nearly two-thirds

of respondents (63%) view virtual events as innovative marketing and communications vehicles, while 57% tout their ability to reduce sales and marketing costs.

HYBRID EVENTS – COMBINING THE PHYSICAL WITH VIRTUAL

By combining physical with virtual—and creating hybrid events—business professionals have found a new way to revive their stagnant physical shows and conferences. Many companies that have traditionally produced physical events – such as tradeshow, conferences, and corporate meetings – are taking a new approach, merging the physical and virtual to create a hybrid event.

A virtual event is an online, highly interactive experience that takes place in a virtual environment with different venues, locations, sessions and programs. By combining physical with virtual,



The Marketing Scope recently conducted a survey to over 490 senior marketing professionals, they found that 62% of the respondents plan to increase spending for virtual events, and 67% is contemplating hosting 10 or more virtual events, in the next 12 months.

companies are able to augment, rather than replace, physical events.

More importantly, hybrid events offer participants the option to attend physically and or virtually. This important distinction allows meeting planners and marketers to capture larger audiences. Even in a volatile economy, a successful hybrid event can dramatically increase return on investment (ROI).

EXTENDING THE CONVERSATION BEFORE AND AFTER THE EVENT

Trade shows and sales meetings tend to have a short shelf life.

There is a lot of work and effort that goes into the build-up, making sure deadlines are met and everything is just right. But once the event is over, it becomes a memory – even if attendees are willing and ready to continue the conversation.

Adding a virtual component to an event provides a place for organizations to keep the conversation going, and keep its products and services top-

of-mind. For an internal event, it provides ample space for collaboration and interaction. For an external event, especially one you don't own, it allows you to continue reaping the benefits of your huge investment of time and money, directing attendees to your materials and subject matter experts as the natural extension of what they just experienced at the event. Providing this virtual event gives you the ability to take on or enhance a leadership position in your industry.

Just as motion rides let theme park visitors experience whole new worlds at a heightened level of excitement, virtual

events greatly enhance the user experience for customers, prospects, employees and any other audience you need to reach. And with today's growing list of

self-service capabilities, virtual environments can be developed quicker and easier than ever, even with a limited budget.

Whether you're looking to improve internal communications, educate partners, reach new audiences quickly or solve some

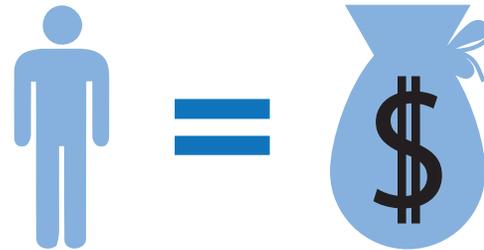


other communications issue, virtual events and environments bring a whole new level of engagement to the process.

DETAILED INTELLIGENCE TO ENSURE SMART MARKETING

As short-lived web meetings and webcasts are moving into always-on virtual business environments, they facilitate a continuous conversation between an audience and a brand – a key benefit for hosts and sponsors of virtual events. This model allows marketing teams to collect unprecedented marketing intelligence, while reaching much wider audiences. And it helps mature leads without the constant barrage of email and phone calls that are part of other lead maturation models. Customers appreciate that they have a platform to freely engage with a brand on their own terms, without being bothered by pesky sales reps. The reality is that customers would much rather have a conversation about a company's products with another customer, peer, or product expert. Virtual environments are the perfect answer. An integrated and configurable Engagement Index indicates when a lead has matured to a point that it will automatically be transferred to

the CRM system as sales-ready. What's more, the cost per lead for US trade shows averages somewhere around \$200 - \$500 depending on industry and location. Companies like IBM,



Oracle, Novartis, ACS, and many others are using virtual events to bring the cost per lead down by an order of magnitude. Sales organizations appreciate the value of the virtual environments as a “customer acquisition machine,” which automatically qualifies and matures leads and provides them with highly granular information. And because of that, virtual business environments are now becoming an indispensable component of most company's marketing mix.

TOP MARKETING APPLICATIONS FOR VIRTUAL EVENTS

NEW PRODUCT ROLLOUTS/ UPDATES

Over the last 20 years, the pace of business has continued to accelerate at a rate that makes the visuals in motion rides look like they're in slow motion. Information has to be delivered quickly, both internally and externally, in order to gain or maintain a competitive advantage.

A virtual event creates this mechanism. Organizations can have knowledge centers for each product, tailored to each audience – customers/prospects, internal sales, partners, customer service and more – that allow them to get in, get the specific knowledge they need, and get out without having to wade through information that is irrelevant to them. By incorporating collaboration technologies in the virtual event, organizations can also give visitors the option to ask for more information or help from subject matter experts and peers, as well as schedule a meeting

or take some other action that advances the sales process.

LEAD GENERATION - REACHING NEW AUDIENCES, ENTERING NEW MARKETS

Virtual environments not only make it easy for organizations to communicate and collaborate with their current audiences better, they also allow those organizations to reach audiences they've never been able to touch before.

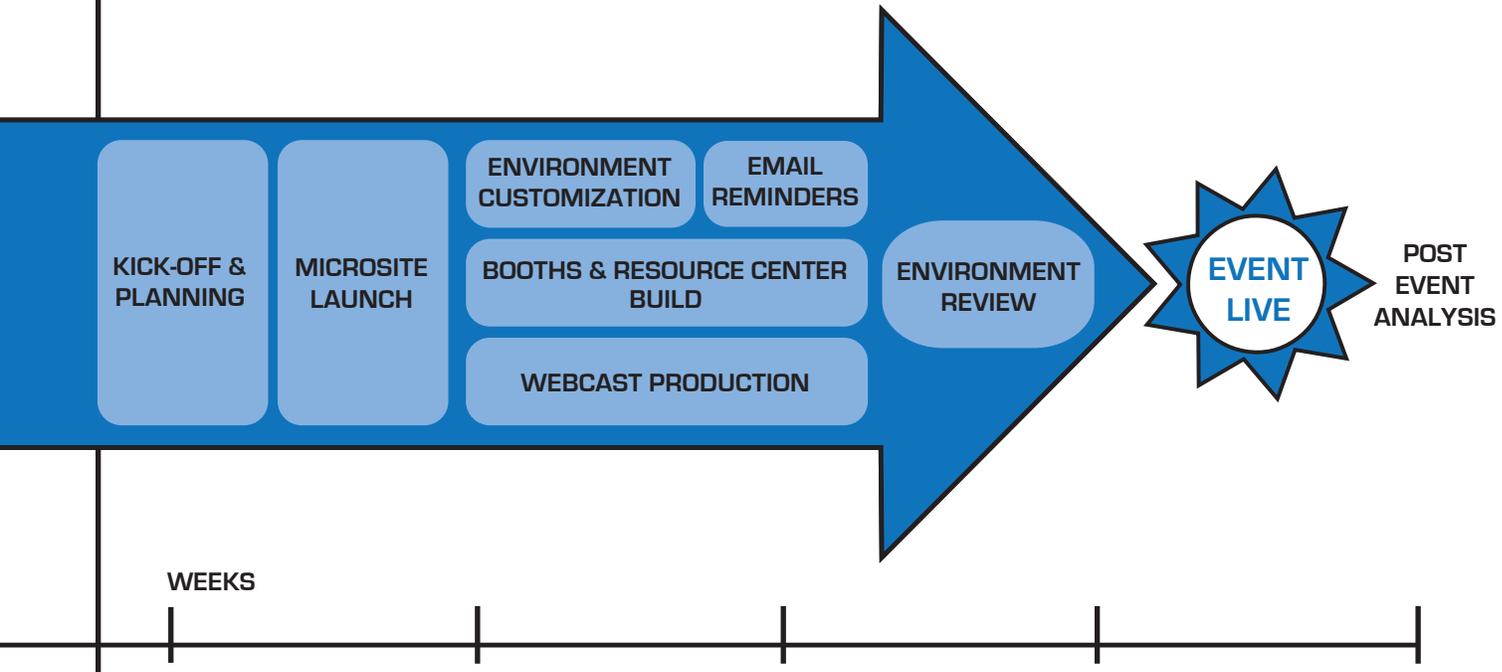
A good example is a large technology company that was able to educate 2,000 partners spread across 81 different countries using a virtual environment. Had they tried to do this in the physical world, the barriers would've



been astronomical. The cost of travel (and personnel being out of the office) alone would have been exorbitant. The time factor to reach all of those partners country-by-country (or region-by-region) would have greatly slowed the process down as well. Instead, they used a virtual environment that included information in seven languages and chat translations for 50 languages, all available to everyone at the same time. The program was completed quickly, and the company was able to gather data on usage that will make their next virtual environment even better.



THE VIRTUAL EVENT PROCESS



THE 6 STEP PROCESS TO LAUNCHING A VIRTUAL EVENT



STRATEGY & GOALS

- **Define Goals** (organization, initiative & event)
 - **Choose executive sponsor**
 - **Choose team to manage this initiative**
 - **Project Schedule and timelines**
- Review Features
 - Provide Environment Customization Content & Copy
 - Create a Virtual Host
 - Upload/add Content & Copy
 - Environment 1st Review



PLAN & BUILD THE EXPERIENCE

- **Micro-site Launch**
 - Micro-site Creation Form
 - Build Micro-site (this is where people register & login)
 - **Environment Customization**
 - Environment Customized Checklist
 - Environment Creation Form
 - Create Environment
 - Environment Working Session
- **Booths & Resource Center Build**
 - Booth Admin Tutorial (get from your platform provider):
 - Booth Overview
 - Booth Settings and Design
 - Booth Content
 - Booth Rep Management
 - Resources
 - Booth Rep Tutorial:
 - Booth Representative Interface Guide
 - Booth Staffing Tips - Quick Guide
 - Overview and Access
 - Visitor Interface
 - Rep Interface
 - Communication
 - **Webcast Production**
 - Review Webcast Content Checklist

- Complete Webcast Content Checklist
- Best Practice On Videos
- Create Webcast Locations
- Schedule & Complete Recordings
- Produce Videos
- Publish Webcasts for Review
- Speaker Training



PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

- **Email Reminders**

- Provide Default Email Copy for Review
- Submit Custom Email Copy
- Review & Approve Email Copy & Schedule
- Schedule Emails

- **Promotion Checklist**

Every organization and virtual event is different, each promotion plan will be different. Here's a short checklist to get you started:

- Execute an integrated campaign using email, online advertising, e-newsletters and PR. Work with partners for promotional opportunities. Depending on your promotion period, send

out at least 2 - 3 invitation emails for your campaign. Create a robust and engaging event microsite to attract registration.

- Implement a social media strategy with tools such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc. to promote your event as well.
- Most platforms allow you to track the various promotion tools you use so you know which ones are working for you and which ones are not.

- **Virtual Event Cook Book**

- **Examples of Different Levels of Sponsorships**



PRE LAUNCH ACTIVITIES

- **Environment Verification Checklist** (needs to be customized)
- **Environment Review**
- **Provide "Back-door" Access to Environment**
- **Review/Verify all Environment Content & Customizations**
- **Final Environment Walk Through**



LAUNCH

- **Delivery Checklist** (review one week before event)
- **Live Day Program Guide** (word doc)
- **Monitor Live Day Activities**
- **Staff Booths**
- **Provide Organizer & Attendee Technical Support**



POST EVENT ACTIVITIES & ANALYSIS

- **Training For Reporting Portal**
- **Submit Environment & Microsite Changes for On-Demand Period**
- **Complete Environment & Microsite Changes for On-Demand Period**
- **Post Event Review** (online meeting)
- **Post Event Promotion**

NOTES:

THE MARKETING SCOPE

ABOUT US

The Marketing Scope provides research, best practices and articles on the latest trends, products and techniques in the market place.

Whether it's lead generation, content marketing, SEO, brand building, advertising or sponsored market research – The Marketing Scope acts as your private lab and R&D team in bringing you the latest research, insights and best of breed technology to give you a competitive edge and business intelligence not commonly found elsewhere in the marketplace. We're extremely nimble, act in Internet time, and operate in stealth mode. While we don't claim to be a big company, we do really big things that make a difference for our readers and clients and produce impactful results when it comes to engaging with and connecting to your audience, launching new technology, or reaching into a new market.

CONTACT US

If you have any questions about this guide or would like to discuss how we can assist you with your next marketing initiative – please feel free to contact us at: info@themarketingscope.com

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