

ITA GROUP EBOOK

7 Ways to Make Your Event More Strategic

*Take Your Results Off the Charts
with Solid Event Strategy*

Table of Contents

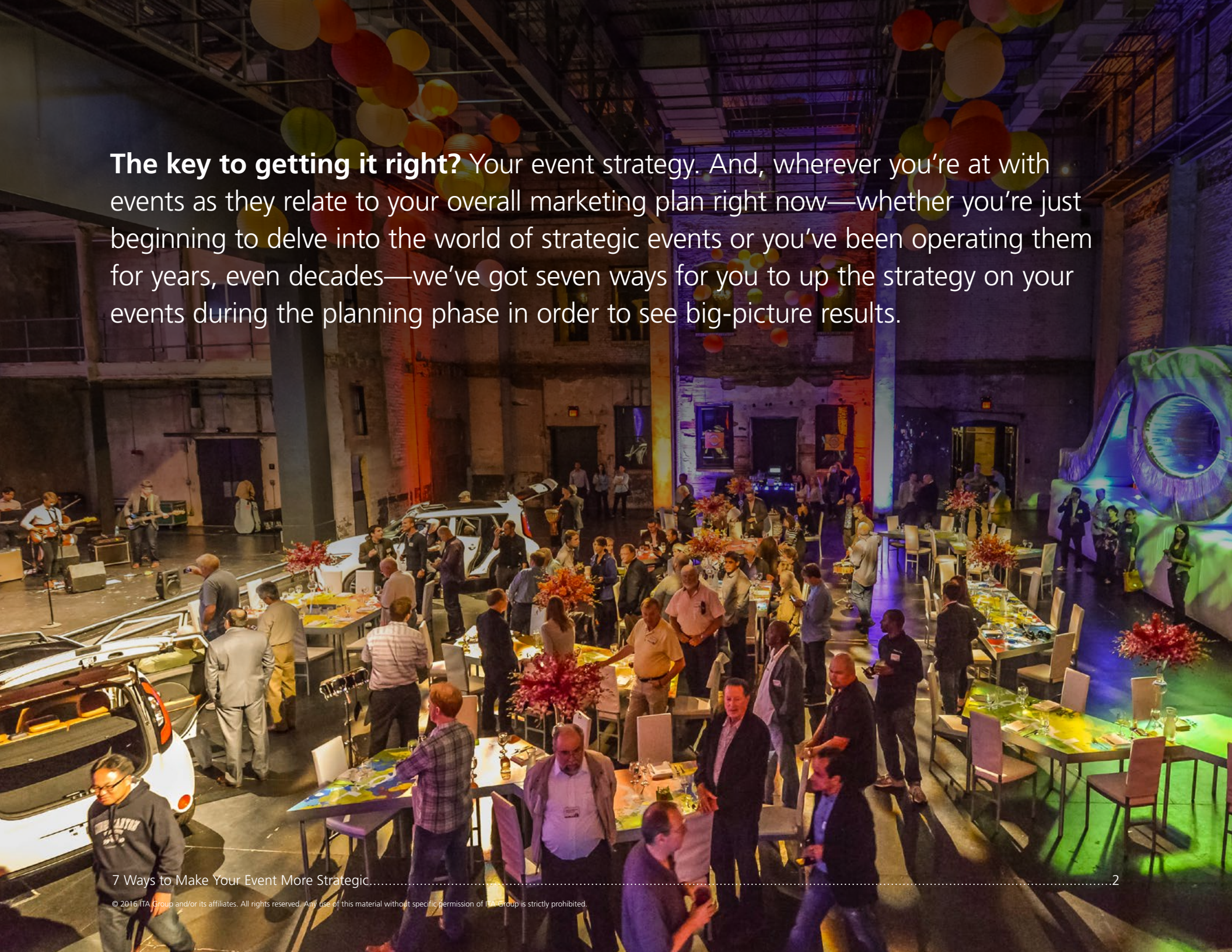
Strategic Events as Part of Your Overall B2B Marketing Strategy?	1
1. Define Your Goals.....	3
2. Evaluate and Segment Your Audience	6
3. Leverage the Science of Motivation.....	9
4. Communicate Continuously	12
5. Move Away From Standard Presentations	15
6. Leverage B2C Marketing Methods for Your B2B Event.....	18
7. Data-Capture and Measure	20
Position Your Event for Unprecedented Success	22

Strategic Events as Part of Your Overall B2B Marketing Strategy?

You Got It

Strategic events—those business-building productions including sales kickoff meetings, global and user conferences, expos, product launches and press events—are central to any successful organization’s overall marketing strategy. According to [HubSpot](#), event marketing usually consumes nearly a quarter of a company’s marketing budget.

But, as any event marketer knows, it’s critical to get them right. After all, strategic events have the potential to bring big results, as nearly half of all brands realize an ROI of 300%–500% from their events and experiences ([EMI & Mosaic](#)).



The key to getting it right? Your event strategy. And, wherever you're at with events as they relate to your overall marketing plan right now—whether you're just beginning to delve into the world of strategic events or you've been operating them for years, even decades—we've got seven ways for you to up the strategy on your events during the planning phase in order to see big-picture results.

1. Define Your Goals

Big-Picture Goals Will Help Determine Specific Event Objectives

Before you can go anywhere, you've got to know where you're headed, and why.

And while you likely have your sights set on achieving a larger corporate or marketing objective by leveraging a strategic event, keep in mind the route you take to get there needs to have a detailed roadmap. Meaning, your event will require its own objectives—the tactical objectives it must achieve to ensure you meet your overarching goals.

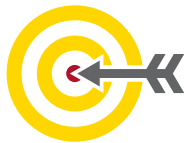
10 Questions to Guide Your Event's Goals and Objectives

1. What are your company's top business objectives for the short term and long term?
2. How are you defining success for those objectives?
3. What are your company's top marketing objectives and strategies for the year?
4. Does your company have three to five key marketing messages you're trying to consistently deliver?
5. What are your marketing segments, customer profiles and targeted audiences?
6. In your current event portfolio, are events reaching the right audiences?
7. Is the timing right for each event?
8. How have your events performed in the past?
9. Are events creating leads and opportunities you can leverage across your organization?
10. Do your events match industry standards—can they hold their own against competitors' events?

Your goals will also help drive creation of the supporting event tactics you need to achieve your objectives—like leveraging a strategic communication campaign to hype the event and hit your attendance goals. Ultimately, goal definition is the first step to creating a road map for your event.

Consider these goal-setting tips as you start to plan your path.

Goal-Setting Tips



Define both financial and operational metrics. ROI and attendance, for example. Then decide tactically how you'll achieve them. (Sponsorship revenue is one significant way to subsidize event costs and help your partners promote their products, solutions and services.)



Make your metrics measurable—or as measurable as possible. If you have no way of comparing, you can't gauge your success.



Identify the data you need to gather and analyze each step of the way. Do you need to capture a prior year's or quarter's data for comparison? What will you compare your event's numbers against?

Example Goals & Objectives

Corporate Objective Achieve Annual Sales Goal		
Sales & Marketing Objective	Solution/Event Type	Event Objectives
Engage, educate and inspire your sales force	Sales Kickoff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Achieve x% success rate on post-event product, solution or service knowledge quiz > Meet desired satisfaction and corporate loyalty scores via post-event surveys
Generate or nurture a network of end-user brand advocates Engage and educate channel partners	Conference or Expo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Achieve x% attendance > Build your sales lead database by x > Create \$x in on-site product sales > Realize an x% post-event increase in sales > Achieve x hits, shares, impressions, and/or mentions via social media promotion (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn)
Promote a new product, solution or service to an identified audience	Product Launch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Generate x% in resulting product sales > Build your sales lead database by x > Achieve x hits, shares, impressions, and/or mentions via social media promotion
Communicate the launch of a new product, solution or service to the public	Press Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Achieve attendance of x-number of media outlets > Achieve x hits, shares, impressions, and/or mentions via social media promotion

2. Evaluate and Segment Your Audience

Knowing Your People Will Ignite Your Potential for Results

Just like your event has its own objectives compared with your overarching objectives, your attendees each have their own reasons for attending—things they want to achieve on site and take away when they leave. And though there are a host of top-trending reasons for attending these professional functions, one size does not fit all when it comes to helping event attendees achieve their own success. That means you've got to know your people and design your event to fit its specific demographic(s).

First, Strategize Your Ideal Attendee List

Think about who you want to attend and use what you know about them to entice them to commit. The following questions will help you identify and target your ideal attendees.

Who are your ideal attendees and influencers? Your sales team, current clients, prospective clients, past event attendees or industry leaders? Or a combination of all of the above?

Why are they interested in you? Better yet, why are you interested in them?

What do they value? Meaning, what strategies can you implement that will not only get their attention, but will ultimately get them on site?



Then, Evaluate and Segment

Once your prospective attendee list is solidified, think about the different demographics you're bringing on site and consider all the ways segmentation can impact and benefit everyone, including you.

- > If you're hosting an event that includes a combination of attendee types (sales team members, current clients, prospective clients, past event attendees and/or industry leaders), **segment breakout sessions appropriately by role.**
- > **Offer networking opportunities** that bring together different roles with like interests.
- > Communicate to all segments in a way that will most **personalize the experience.**

Remember, your attendees are a primary medium for spreading your overall message and growing event awareness. The clearer and more relevant your message, the better.

Tip: As part of the event registration process, survey your attendees to find out what topics and content they're seeking.



3. Leverage the Science of Motivation

Attract Attendees Using What Moves Them

The science of motivation tells us some people are moved more from within—intrinsically—and others are moved more by the potential for an external outcome—extrinsically. And our business tells us professional event attendees have a strong intrinsic pull—they're inspired by conceptual motivators like purpose, mastery, autonomy, knowledge and social contact. They're the individuals who want to be the first to test out your latest innovation or learn about the hottest industrial trend.

The takeaway here? Strategize your event accordingly. You've already evaluated and [segmented your audience](#) to tailor your event to the very specific tactical inclusions they're looking for. Now, go a step further and target their intrinsic motivators. What tactics will captivate and inspire them? Training? Probably—it's one of the top reasons professionals attend events. Networking? Also likely. The ability to create their own experience? Absolutely—freedom of choice is central to any intrinsically inspired individual, and the ability to create their own agenda according to the topics and sessions that appeal to them will go far.

According to the [International Association of Exhibitions and Events:](#)



91%

of event attendees attend events to keep up with their profession and industry through education.



75%

of event attendees (and 84% for millennials in particular) attend events for networking opportunities.

Don't Discount Extrinsic Motivation

It's also probable that your attendees are driven by extrinsic motivators such as competition and advancement, among others. And, those motivators may be just the reason they've chosen to attend—they're seeking the knowledge and tools that will help them get the salary and title boosts they're looking for.

4. Communicate Continuously

Attract, Engage and Retain Your Attendees, 24/7

Once you've identified the right audience(s), it's critical to communicate to them. Continuously. While a solid up-front strategy will help get your attendees on site, a more robust, phased approach will allow you to bring your efforts full circle and get your message not just heard, but remembered.



Attract

Pre-Event Communications

Pre-event communications is where potential attendees get their first exposure to your initiative. It's your introduction, your first impression. And, besides starting to build momentum for your event, it's where you start unveiling critical details, including:

- > Logistical necessities: Where and when the event is happening
- > The foundation for the overall message, including the event theme
- > A clear "why" (as in, why an attendee would take valuable time away from the office to attend your event)

Engage

On-Site Communications

Bring your brand and your event theme to life on site and immerse your attendees in it. And, do it in a way that will make them remember you long after they've gone home. Elements like a solid social media strategy, branded environmental graphics, targeted presentation messaging, amenities, themed evening events, and, of course, swag, present prime messaging opportunities—especially when it comes to hyping the intrinsic tactics you've incorporated on site.

Retain

Post-Event Communications

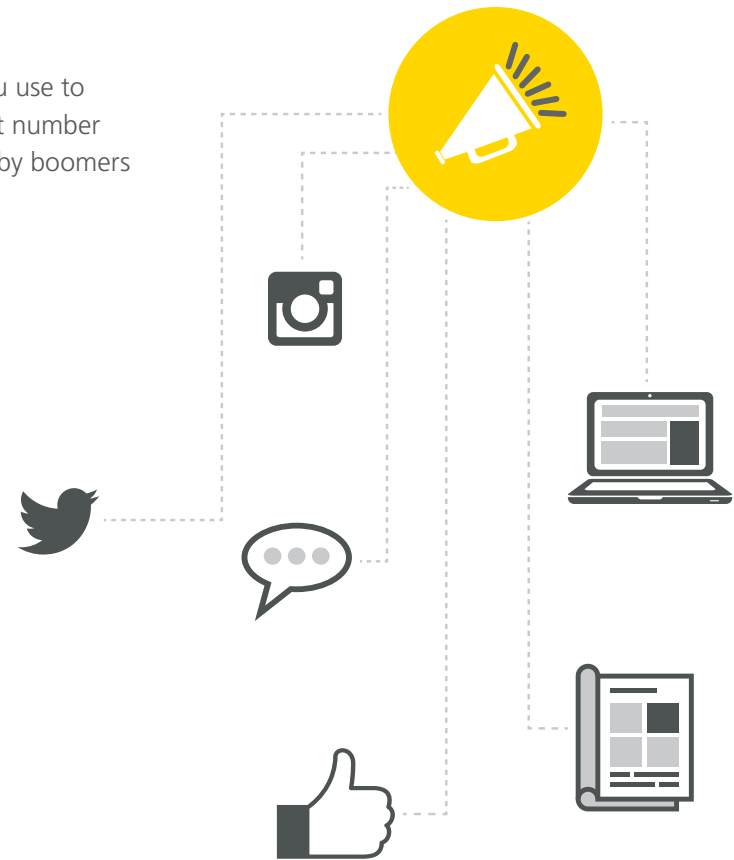
Every attendee's event experience is a journey—not a destination—and it continues well after they return home. The communications you continue to push out post-event should not just hype the experiences you delivered, but may also feature insights, ideas and resources that establish you as a thought-leader and further build your brand, especially when recipients share them with colleagues and friends.

Tip: Personalizing content and/or messaging will allow you to really zero in and further appeal to your more intrinsically motivated attendees.

Discover the Value of a Cross-Media Approach

Successfully communicating an event means maximizing your reach—and the media you use to do it. A cross-media approach to spread the word is the best way to impact the greatest number of attendees, including everyone from content-consuming guests to influencers, and baby boomers through millennials. Here are a few types to focus on:

- > Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Snapchat (depending on your targeted attendees, you may already have a built-in audience from your existing social media accounts and will likely get more lift by working event promotion into your current social editorial calendar)
- > Growing social media platforms, like Periscope, that offer live video showing behind-the-scenes planning of your event, pre-event site visits and Q&As
- > Print media, such as direct mail or trade magazine ads
- > Digital media, such as blog posts, email or press releases
- > Word-of-mouth through your sales team—incent them to provide a direct contact and provide a personal touch, especially to key attendees you want to see there



Tip: Utilizing a consistent tone and creative visual scheme throughout your campaign is critical to delivering a cohesive pre-event, on-site and post-event experience.

5. Move Away From Standard Presentations

Interactive Content Is One Way to Supercharge Attendee Engagement

With attendees more hyper-connected than ever before, interactive, hands-on content is not just a nice-to-have, but a necessity.

Attention spans are shorter, making it harder to keep participants engaged, ultimately requiring overall meeting formats to evolve. What has resulted is a focus on heightened interaction and collaboration, and the following tactics will help give presenters and attendees alike a two-way platform for facilitating the conversation.



Did you know? Human beings now have a shorter attention span than goldfish—they beat us by a whole second.

Presentation Tactics



Less PowerPoint.

Slide decks are making way for engagement trends like dynamic video presentations and interactive panel discussions and interviews. But that doesn't mean you can't distribute supporting content—just make it available for attendees to download at their leisure.



Facilitate real-time presenter/audience interaction.

Give presenters a gauge and attendees a voice by leveraging tactics like live polling and Q&A. There's an app for that (actually, there are a few) and leveraging the technology is a real-time way to transform the entire experience and increase engagement on and off the stage.



Rethink your general session.

Right now, event marketers are changing up the general session experience by featuring several smaller assemblies with more personalized content. And, while hosting a live assembly for in-house attendees is still an option, offering keynote streams and virtual access to the session is one way to a) engage on-site attendees who are located in different areas of the event complex, and b) give off-site attendees the ability to test drive your event before they commit money and time, ultimately driving attendance in future years.

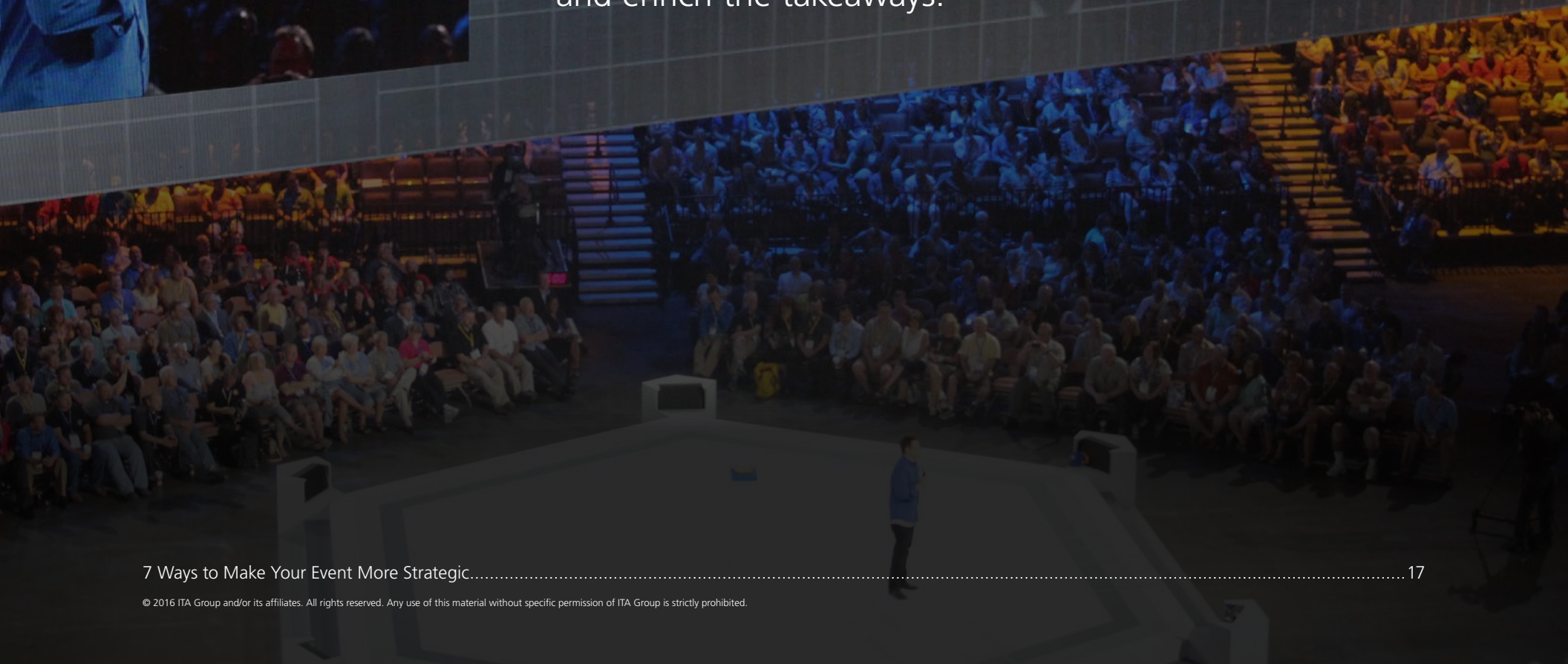


Strategize shorter keynotes.

Rather than requiring a speaker to stretch a 20-minute presentation into an hour-long speech just to fill a time slot, encourage succinct message delivery and use the remainder of the time for interactive Q&A. Again, let attendees help drive the conversation.



Thanks to modern technology, presentations as one-way broadcasts with limited interactivity are a thing of the past. Maximize that innovation to enhance the conversation and enrich the takeaways.



6. Leverage B2C Marketing Methods for Your B2B Event

Consumer Marketing Can Show You the Way to Experiential Excellence

Experiential events—those productions that have attendees eating, sleeping and breathing the event host’s brand—are designed to directly engage consumers while inviting and encouraging them to participate in the evolution of the brand. And, B2C marketers have mastered the art.

You, Too, Can Master the Art by Playing by B2C Rules

- > **Up the experiential factor.** Optimizing your event environment in a way that allows attendees to touch, feel, and experience the product not only supports brand immersion, it also influences the desire to buy.
- > **Simplify the transaction.** Once you've immersed your attendees in your product or brand and have customized the experience, provide them the ability to purchase it on site with ease. Event apps with product purchase/transaction technology are one way to make the process practically effortless.
- > **Don't attempt to recreate past success.** Your audience expects you to raise the bar and increase their unique experience each year.
- > **Put your people in control.** Or, give them the *sense* that they're in control—it makes them more inclined to participate. User-triggered experiences create the opportunity for attendees to impact the outcome of their experience, and crowdsourcing puts decisions like meeting content, food and meeting space layout in the audience's hands.
- > **Engage your audience's emotions.** Whether through communications or on-site interaction, emotions created as a result of the experience drive behavior change and brand loyalty.
- > **Leverage user-generated content.** This is where social media comes into play. Again. Generating future marketing content from the experiences your event delivered can pay dividends.
- > **Take on a bold, no-fear attitude.** Think about it this way—if you're not willing to take a chance and push the envelope, someone else (i.e. the competition) will.

Tip: Look to effective experiential brands like Coca-Cola and Nike for successful methods that are bold and focused on a well-defined market—if for no other reason than for results. Today, according to [EMI & Mosaic](#), **65% of brands say that their event and experiential programs are directly related to sales.**

7. Data-Capture and Measure

Developing a Measurement Plan Before Your Event Will Optimize Your Measurement Efforts

When it comes to event measurement, it's imperative to plan ahead. Not only will effective measurement demonstrate achievement of event goals and objectives, it will also give you invaluable insight as you begin to strategize the design of your next event.

The following questions will help guide your efforts and identify the metrics to prove your success.

What objectives are you planning to measure?

You may want to identify these metrics before, during and/or after your event.

- > Unique registrations
- > Qualified marketing and sales leads
- > Registrant conversion rate
- > Attendee conversion rate
- > Participant satisfaction
- > Training scores
- > Incremental sales
- > Social media: Hits, shares, impressions and/or mentions

What event data (before, during and after) do you need to track? And, what historical data do you need to collect in order to compare?

What tools and systems can you leverage to support your measurement plan?

Resources like your CRM and marketing automation software will prove most valuable in securing the data you need to measure and in going back to collect historical data.

When and how often are you going to measure? At what intervals will you track a metric such as event registration? Three months out, two months out, a month out, and weekly leading up to your event?

Don't underestimate the power of polling. Survey and simply ask your attendees what they thought. What worked? What didn't?

Tip: Whatever you do, make your event measurement a cyclical process. Meaning, after you've identified your goals and measured throughout the event, use your results to a) when possible, alter elements of your event while on site, and b) guide the strategy of your next event.



Shift the Mindset of Your People and the Results of Your Investment—In a Big Way

Contact us today to learn how.

