



| Britepaper

# The Ultimate Guide to Promoting Your Event

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Let's face it - putting on a successful event is a lot of work. Even the most seasoned event organizer needs help transforming a date on the calendar into a vibrant venue with happy attendees. To help you out, we tapped event experts with experience connecting thousands of events to millions of event goers to put together this master event marketing guide.



Whether you're a veteran planner or a newbie just getting started, our tips, tactics, and strategies will help you amp up your marketing efforts and get the results you need to be successful. Our research shows that only about 9% of events thrown by professional organizers sell out, but you have the power to beat the odds. From small intimate fundraisers to professional conferences to outdoor music festivals for thousands of fans, this guide will be your go-to resource for promoting your event to the right people, crushing your ticketing goals, and maximizing your ROI.

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Our event marketing best practices start with event planning basics:

- Understanding the Ticketing Lifecycle
- Establishing ticketing goals and creating a plan and calendar

After laying the foundation for your event, its time to implement marketing strategies and outreach to promote your event and drive ticket sales. These include:

- Event Webpage Email Marketing
- Social Media
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Search Engine Marketing (SEM)
- Retargeting
- Display Ads
- Public Relations
- Partnerships
- Track Marketing Effectiveness

# The Ticketing Lifecycle



The term "Ticketing Lifecycle" refers to your ticket sales activity from the moment you go on sale to the second sales end. Our research shows an initial spike in ticket sales when the event is first announced. Then the doldrums hit and sales can slow down. Way. Down.



Nearly 40% of events sell less than half their tickets or registrations until the final days leading up to the event. This lull is tough not only because of the anxiety it causes, but also because it's hard to iron out event details when you don't know your final attendance numbers. For many ticket-buyers, waiting until the last minute to commit to an event is common, but organizers who understand the Ticketing Lifecycle can minimize the lulls with well-planned multi-channel marketing outreach.

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# Goals and Planning - Start with a strategy



Organizing a successful event starts with goal setting and planning. Below are steps to create a solid foundation for any event.

- **Set ticketing goals** - Make it a goal to sell 50% of your tickets two weeks prior to the event and the remaining tickets four to five days before. This allows enough planning time for vendors and others who need your final attendee numbers.
- **Build a plan and calendar** - Use your event goals as a framework for creating a marketing plan and calendar. Assign dates to all of your marketing outreach starting with the event announcement.
- **Plan ongoing outreach** - Schedule campaigns to drive ticket sales, announce updates, or offer promotions. Sustained communication will help keep the event top of mind and beat ticketing lulls.
- **Create consistent communication** - If you run a special ticketing offer, such as a "two for one" deal, make sure you advertise it in your email outreach, social media posts, and on your event page.
- **Track effectiveness of your channels** - Outline all the campaigns and set a goal for how many registrations each campaign will drive. If the sum of the goals isn't equal to your total registration goal, then you need to add more campaigns. Then track how effective each campaign was through page views, likes, shares, and most importantly, ticket sales.

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# Event Webpage - Create an event page with spirit



Every successful event starts with a strong event page. The page should be visually appealing to the audience and reflect the look and feel of your event and your brand. It should be easy for guests to navigate and convert website visits into ticket purchases.

## Brite Tip:

**What is conversion?** Your conversion rate is a critical metric to your event's success. It represents the percentage of visitors of your event page who actually purchase a ticket or register. When you optimize your event page for conversion, you make it easier for your guests to hit "buy".

The easiest way to track conversion is take the number of ticket sales divided by the number of unique visits to the website to get the percent that are converting. For instance, if 1000 unique visits resulted in 100 ticket sales, event conversion would be 10%.

$$100 \div 1000 = .01 \times 100 = 10\%$$

Here are some best practices for building high-performing event pages:

**Build for conversion:** Prime content areas on a page are the upper left hand corner, middle content area above the fold, and the main navigation. Use this area for important information like the what, when, where, and how of your event. A strong call to action such as "Order Tickets" or "Register" should also be eye-catching and placed above the fold, which means readers don't need to scroll down before they see it. Less important information should be further down the page.

Once your ticket-buyers click the call to action, direct them to an easy-to-read purchase or registration page. Make sure to include required fields for the attendee info you need to plan your event. This will also come in handy later when you market your next event! When selecting an event registration and ticketing platform, make sure conversion and fast page loading times are prioritized so you don't lose out on any sales or registrations due to technical shortcomings.

## Brite Tip:

Event page load times matter. A one-second delay in load time can decrease conversions by 7 to 10% . We've seen up to a 3% increase in conversions just by speeding up registration page load time by 500 milliseconds.

- **Emphasize images:** Images and video are a great way to showcase the event, capture interest, and drive demand. Use logos and photos of speakers, performers, sponsors, and partners or video from the previous year's event.
- **Optimize for search:** Optimize the event page for search engines so your event shows up high in event goers' search results. Think about the keywords or terms your target audience would use to search and incorporate those keywords into your page title, URL, header, and content. If your page is managed through an event registration and ticketing partner like Eventbrite, ask them to explain their page offering and search optimization features. Research how well other events on their platform rank on search engines. More detailed search strategies are covered in the search optimization and marketing section below.
- **Encourage social sharing:** Social media channels are a powerful way to amplify word of mouth and make it easy for people to like, share, and follow your event. Include links or social icons on the event page so people can easily connect with you while it's top of mind and share the event with their networks to help spread the word.

→ **Make it mobile:** According to comScore, the number of mobile only adult users exceeded the number of desktop-only internet users in March of 2015. Therefore, make sure your event page and purchase process is optimized for smaller mobile and tablet screens.

## Brite Tip:

Over half of adults globally have a smartphone and half of them use it as the primary device to access the Internet. Use a ticketing partner who offers mobile-optimized event pages, registration, and check-in applications so you don't lose this key audience.

→ **Make an unforgettable URL:** A concise URL helps people quickly and easily find your web page and remember it for later. Keep the URL short and memorable and use terms people would search for to help your page show up high in search results.

## Track page conversion and ticket sales

Getting page viewers to convert by purchasing tickets or registering is the primary goal of any event organizer. Eventbrite has seen the most successful events driven by organizers who closely monitor event page performance and conversion metrics.

Watch your conversion numbers and don't hesitate to make adjustments and look for improvement. Strategies to increase conversion rates include:

- Placing important event information such as the call to action above the fold
- Creating an eye catching call to action button
- Minimizing the number of fields required for registration
- Decreasing page load times

Building a strong event page is key to starting your event marketing.

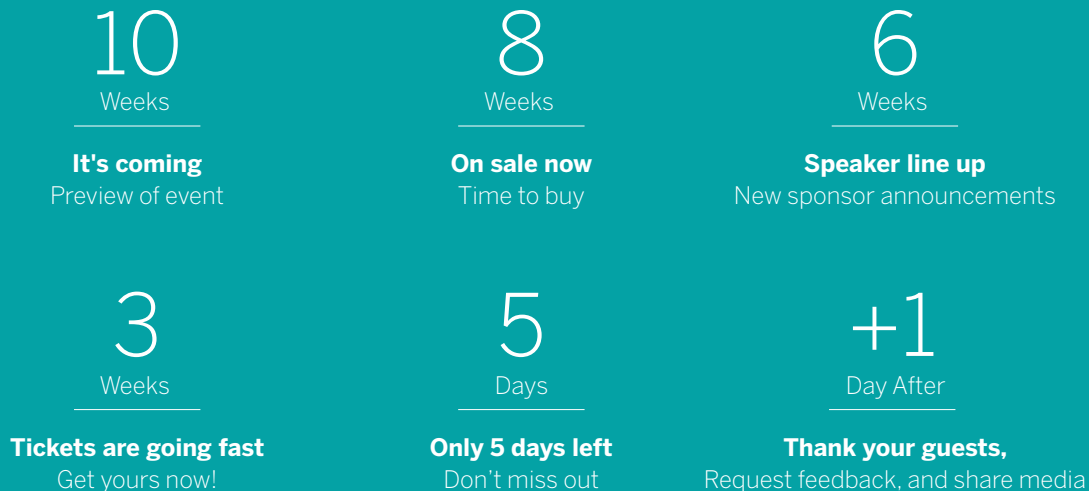


# Email Marketing - Reach the right audience with the right message



Email is a powerful tool for event promotion and marketing. Event organizers need to craft marketing emails that are personal, relevant, and targeted. Create a series of emails to announce your event, raise awareness, and drive ticket sales. Start before tickets are on sale with an initial announcement and then craft and then follow up frequently with fresh content, event news, and updates.

An example email schedule looks like this:



Use incentives to motivate people to buy tickets. Offer special early bird pricing with a clear deadline date. Premium seating or free parking to the first 100 people to register can motivate ticket buyers and ease ticketing lulls.

Successive emails should build on each other and include pictures and video from the previous year's event, quotes from attendees, and developing news such as new sponsors, speakers, entertainment, etc.

Follow up right after the event with a thank you email and ask attendees to post pictures and video to event social media sites. Start planning for next year by asking them to take a few minutes to fill out a survey. Promise to use their feedback to make next year's event even better and plant the seed for their return.

## Brite Tip:

### **Understand the unsubscribes**

Understand the email capabilities of an event registration and ticketing company before you sign on. Email unsubscribe service Unroll Me recently noted that two of the companies with the highest unsubscription rates were large ticketing companies with an almost 50% unsubscribe rate from their emails. That's half of their entire database - gone.

Use a ticketing partner with integrated email capabilities to send personalized, highly targeted emails to potential attendees. This will increase opens and click-through rates and ultimately, ticket sales.

### **Make it personal**

Personalized emails with relevant content result in much higher click-through and open rates. A good ticketing partner will help organizers “fish where the fish are,” with an integrated email tool that sends targeted emails based on past event attendance. If you’re holding an annual event, send an invitation to last year’s attendees and talk up what’s new for this year.

Eventbrite has leveraged social media to take relevancy to the next step. When someone has two or more friends registering for an event, a personalized email invitation is automatically generated, letting them know to buy tickets and join their friends at the event. This feature, exclusive to Eventbrite, has seen significantly higher click-through rates and conversions than standard industry email rates.

## Keep email engaging

As you develop event emails, be clear, concise and share information that is most valuable to your ticket-buyer. Start with the subject line and give the reader a good idea of what the email is about. According to HubSpot, the subject line should be less than 45 characters long. Other email tips include:

- **Start strong:** The first few sentences of your email should mirror the subject line and entice the recipient to keep reading.
- **Keep it short and sweet:** Long wordy emails get deleted. Be clear and concise, calling out the most important facts about your event: when it is, where it is, and how to register or buy tickets. Remember to also include a clear call to action like "Buy Tickets Now". A brightly-colored call to action image is hard for people to miss.
- **Add an image:** Pictures and images showcase the event and break up blocks of copy. Use pictures and video of past events, logos, and other graphics. Give people a sneak peek at your line-up of speakers, performers, and sponsors. If it's a conference, post presentations from previous conferences and link to them on SlideShare.
- **Personalize:** Emails with names in the subject line and email greeting have significantly higher open rates than emails without personalization.

## Brite Tip:

**Subject line spam alerts:** Don't use the following in your subject lines, or your emails might get sent to spam:

- "Free"
- "Act now"
- "Order"
- "Credit"
- ALL CAPS
- Excessive punctuation!!!
- Words you wouldn't say in front of your Mom



### Be mobile-friendly

The percentage of emails opened on mobile devices has surpassed emails opened on desktops. As of 2014, statistics put mobile-opened emails between 49% and 65% of all emails opened. More importantly, 69% of mobile users delete emails if they're not optimized for mobile. So if event emails aren't mobile-friendly, organizers risk losing more than half of their email pool.

Below are four basic tips for designing mobile-friendly emails. A good email marketing or ticketing partner has many of these features built into their service offering.

**1. Reduce and resize images:** Reduce the file size and proportions of images so they fit on smaller screens and download faster.

**2. Enlarge links and call to action buttons:** People are using their thumbs and not a mouse, so make sure links and call to action buttons are larger than the desktop email.

**3. Invest in responsive or scalable email templates:** Emails on desktop and mobile devices should be consistent. If coding isn't your strong suit, this is another area where a strong email marketing or ticketing partner can help.

**4. Test, test, test:** Thorough testing saves event organizers from embarrassing spelling mistakes and broken links. Your email marketing services should provide preview and features that allow you to send test emails. Both plain-text and web browser versions need to be proofread and tested.

## Brite Tip:

To optimize for smaller screens and download times on a mobile, using a service such as JPEGmini can reduce your image file size as much as 80% without compromising photo quality.

### Strategize when to send

The day and time an email is sent also affects open and click-through rates. Consider your audience and when they're more likely to be reading email.

We've found that for conferences, the best time to send an email is on a Tuesday, local time, between 10 and 11 in the morning. For music festivals, later in the evening is better since festival-goers tend to stay up later (listening to music, maybe?).

### A note about privacy

The CAN-SPAM Act sets rules for business emails and outlines penalties when companies and individuals are in violation. Following the rules shows recipients that you're professional and you respect their privacy. To abide by CAN-SPAM, all emails must include your company name, address and an unsubscribe link. All unsubscribe requests must be processed within 10 days. More information about CAN-SPAM can be found [here](#).

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# Social Media - Create a relationship with your online community



Word of mouth has always been one of the most powerful ways to promote an event. With 73% of US adults on at least one social network, using social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter intensify and accelerate word of mouth. From the moment someone considers buying a ticket, this word of mouth becomes a social chain reaction, helping to increase ticket sales and drive revenue.

Your event's activity on social sites can also help boost search results. Social media properties send social signals that result in higher search results on Google and drive traffic to your event page and social media pages.

## Getting Started: Which social media platform is best for your event?

Before creating pages and accounts on social media channels, evaluate your options and be selective. "Fish where the fish are" and choose social platforms with the right target audience for your event. Only sign up on platforms you can commit to keeping updated. A presence with very little content and no following is worse than no presence at all. Below are overviews of the most common social media sites to help you decide what's best for your event.

### Facebook

Facebook continues to be the social media behemoth with 71% of online adults using it and 63% of them checking it at least once a day. Creating a page and using it to promote your event with information, pictures, and video of past events is easy even if you're not super tech-savvy.

### Twitter

With more than 645 million Twitter users, "tweeting" is a strong way to nurture word of mouth using just 140 characters. It's a platform for quickly publicizing news such as the addition of exciting music acts, speakers, or sponsors. It is also an excellent tool for sharing updates during the event.

## Brite Tip:

### **Save space with short links**

Short link generators such as Bitly, Tiny, and Google's goo.gl are free services that take big, impossibly long urls and shorten them for limited spaces such as Twitter's 140 characters.

### **Google+**

Google's social networking site is deeply integrated with other Google features including video calls (Hangouts) and email. It's a smart tool for connecting and communicating with other people via Circles. Event pages can also be created with invitation and RSVP capability.

### **LinkedIn**

LinkedIn is a professional network that connects people and companies. Users of LinkedIn generally have higher incomes and it is the only social channel where users between the ages of 50 - 64 outnumber those between 18 and 29. On LinkedIn, you can also establish an organization page and use it to promote professional events and conferences.

### **YouTube**

Video is one of the richest ways to showcase any event. From a TEDX speaker to an expert panel discussion, sharing video provides interested attendees a better feel for the event. Establishing a branded channel on YouTube serves as a hub for hosting video that can be exported to your other social media sites and event pages. Having a dynamic YouTube channel can also help your search results.

### **Instagram**

Instagram is a photo and short video sharing site. Share images from past events or photos of speakers with the event hashtag and links to the event page. Instagram is attracting a younger following with people under 30 joining at a much higher rate than other ages, so it's a good platform for event organizers looking for the younger set.

## **Pinterest**

Pinterest is for sharing groups of photos and images on “boards”. Heavy on lifestyle, home, fashion, and art, 33% of online females use Pinterest, making it an optimal place to build a following for events that cater to women.

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Other social sites like SlideShare, Tumblr, Flickr, and Vine are worth looking into for event organizers who have the resources and want to flex their social media muscles.

Most social media sites are free to register and use, but a few, such as LinkedIn, have additional features and upgrades that are available for a fee. Sites like Facebook offer paid advertising opportunities that can promote your event to a highly targeted audience. Below is an overview of the free or “earned” opportunities with social media sites.

## **Shares at every stage**

Most social media sharing occurs the week before an event, consistent with the Ticketing Lifecycle. However, event organizers can encourage sharing earlier and more often. Forty-one percent of people share an event at the “discovery phase” — well before committing to a ticket purchase or registration. As you plan your social media outreach, start with the initial event announcement and work from there to create consistent buzz and keep your event in the spotlight.

The best part is, once one person shares your event, the rate of sharing is exponential. Not only will each share produce more ticket sales within an attendee’s social network, those additional attendees are likely to share with others—creating a word of mouth chain reaction.

## **Plan your posts**

Start the social chain reaction with integrated sharing tools on your event page, event emails, and the rest of your marketing outreach. “Sharing” prompts should be clearly visual, usually in the form of social media icons or buttons. Make sure onsite signage and hand-outs also include call outs to your social media pages and hashtags to promote sharing at the event.



Social media should work with all of your outbound marketing to ensure it is consistent and complementary. Use your event marketing calendar to schedule and plan each post, share, and tweet so they sync with your email campaigns and more importantly, so they support your overall event ticketing goals.

Establish clear ownership of managing and monitoring social media interactions. Social media facilitates conversation, so be prepared to respond to questions, encourage your fans, and handle complaints. People want to know you're listening and will respond when something breaks or isn't as it was supposed to be.

### Create quality content

Get to know your core audience both offline and online. Listen as much as you share, and use those insights to build a social presence that people are drawn to. People value content that is informative and entertaining so prioritize quality over quantity to increase the likelihood people will like and share your content with others.

Share photos, video, thought leadership content, interesting findings, sneak peeks behind the scenes, and event previews. Balance content with a mix of educational info, countdowns, incentives, and topical trivia to stimulate engagement. Don't be shy about asking readers to follow, share, or retweet your event news and updates. Identify and nurture your biggest fans. Showing appreciation for your followers could result in them advocating on your behalf.

### From a share to a sale

The value of social media marketing is more than driving awareness through word of mouth. When done right, it's a prime driver of ticket sales and registration. The actual ROI of social media can be calculated through two key metrics:

Dollars per share

Visits per share

The average value of the additional ticket sales and registrations caused by a share

The amount of additional traffic generated by each act of sharing

On average, across all event categories:



Facebook drives ticket sales  
15 page views  
\$4.15 in future ticket sales and registrations per share



Twitter reaches more fans  
28 page views  
\$2.18 in future ticket sales and registrations per share



LinkedIn generates awareness  
10 page views  
\$0.92 in future ticket sales and registrations per share

Every time information about an upcoming event is shared on Facebook, it drives more revenue than any other social channel. Meanwhile, Twitter drives more page visits to an event's ticketing page than any other platform. Done right, social media is an incredibly effective channel for promoting events and selling tickets.

## #Hashtags

A hashtag is a label for content on social media sites and blogs. It's a word or phrase with no spaces preceded by a #. Hashtags are searchable, making it easy for people to see all of the content related to the hashtag topic. Hashtags can be used by anyone and the more people using the hashtag, the more the associated event or topic is amplified in social networks.

You should create a hashtag that is unique, intuitive, and easy to remember. Use it consistently at the end of social media posts and updates. In addition to a unique event hashtag, organizers can also tap into more general topics so the event comes up on related searches. For instance, a yoga conference in Seattle might create #NWYoga2014 as its event hashtag and also use #yoga and #namaste in the social updates. That way, people searching #yoga and #namaste will also see the updates on the conference in Seattle.

## Brite Tip:

Hashtag.org is a free resource that shows which hashtags are trending and how others are using them. Use it to get ideas and see what conversations are hot in the social sphere.

### **Track and tweak your strategy**

Like most marketing outreach, social media efforts should be tracked to gauge impact and make adjustments when needed. A strong ticketing partner will have integrated social media tracking tools, making it easier to see and understand the impact social media has on your events ticket and registration sales. Below are a few social media tools that make it easy to schedule and post across multiple social media channels and provide analytics for likes, shares, retweets, and other insightful data points.

### **Social Media Management and Tracking Tools**

- Hootsuite
- SproutSocial
- CrowdBooster
- Buffer
- TweetDeck

### **Inspire sharing at the event**

Social media isn't just about promoting the event and driving registrations. It's also a great tool to use at the actual event, and again after it's over. Hopefully, attendees have already liked your page and are following you on Twitter, but it's always good to remind them. Onsite, include social reminders and your event hashtag on marketing materials, presentations, and signage. This encourages attendees to upload photos and videos and share their event experiences. This sharing creates fan-driven content that can be more valuable than your marketing materials, as it comes from trusted friends within a social network.

After the event is over, post pictures and videos and encourage attendees to do the same. Say “thank you” to attendees, sponsors, and volunteers, and ask for feedback. And it's never too soon to give them insight into what's in store for next year.

### **Social media and search optimization**

Social media is increasingly becoming a popularity signal for search engines. Having a strong social media presence helps to increase search results and drive traffic back to your event page or to your social media properties.

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## SEO - Free marketing for events



Over 91% of internet users use search engines to look for information or help make a purchase decision. To increase the chances your event is discovered online, make sure you consider strategies and guidelines for search engine optimization (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM), retargeting, and display advertising.

### **Search Engine Optimization - Optimize organic search success**

Search Engine Optimization, also referred to as SEO or organic search, involves creating and optimizing quality website content to appear higher in the natural rankings of a search engine results page. Eighty-two percent of clicks go to the free search results, so optimizing search results for the event page and other online event properties is critically important. Think about SEO as a free way to drive more traffic to your event page. And the more traffic, the more tickets sold.

In order for an event page to be searched and ranked, it has to be seen and indexed by search engine crawlers (or "spiders") to assess it for relevant content and return it as part of a search result. Organic search rankings come from two primary factors:

→ **Relevance:** The content on your page should include the keywords or terms used for search queries.

→ **Popularity:** The popularity of your page is determined by the number and quality of inbound links, or links on other sites driving to your page. In addition, social activity is becoming a stronger popularity signal to search engines and can drive more traffic to social properties or your page.

## **Tailor your event page for search**

The structure of an event page needs to be optimized for search engines. Content should be organized hierarchically with headers, sub headers, and content areas. Headers are hierarchical, with the most important at the top. Content needs to be in HTML text format and not Javascript or Flash because only HTML is able to be crawled and indexed by search engine spiders.

Visuals including pictures, images, and video aren't searchable either, so they need to be tagged in descriptive terms, using ALT tags for search engines to "read" and assess for relevance. A strong ticketing partner should understand and prioritize search optimization as part of their event page and event listings features to help you reach your attendance and ticket sales goals.

## **Keywords are king**

Keywords are the foundation of successful search results. In addition to using your event name, think about words or phrases that summarize your event. The Google AdWords tool will assess how often these words or phrases are used in real search queries. Use this information to choose the keywords and terms you'll include in your event page copy. The more specific your keywords, the higher your page will rank.

## **Brite Tip:**

Event type and location are commonly searched for words and can send a lot of potential ticket buyers your way. So, you're holding a craft beer festival in Austin, make sure keywords on the event page include "Austin" and "beer". Use these words when posting your event to online event listing sites such as your ticketing partner's site and local newspapers and magazines.

The most searched-for keyword terms – most likely terms that include the name of your event – should be used across the different text used for search rankings. Secondary keywords can be used farther down in the text on a page. Here are tips on how to optimize different parts of your event page:

→ **Title tags:** When you visit a website, the title tag is what your browser (ie Safari, Chrome, etc) shows at the top of the window. This is one of the most important SEO indicators, so be sure to use your primary keywords towards the beginning of your title tag.

→ **ALT tags:** ALT tags or image tags are the HTML text assigned to an image, picture, or video, so use your keyword so spiders understand what your image is about

→ **Meta description tags:** This description is how your page is described in search results, enticing the searcher to click on your link. This tag is not used for search rankings, but even well-ranked pages need to take advantage of this to get clicks.

→ **URL:** Your URL should use your primary keywords to help your ranking. Eventbrite pages have default descriptive URLs making it easy for organizers to select and use a search-friendly URL to attract more ticket buyers.

→ **Headers and top of page:** Use primary keywords prominently in the main header (H1) and again near the top of the page. Secondary keywords can be used lower down the page.

→ **Body copy:** Use your keywords a few times in the text on your event page so search engines know that you're staying on topic – but don't overdo it. Keep in mind that your primary audience is made up of people, not search engines, so use primary and secondary keyword only when it reads well. For example, you can use the event name in addition to "tickets" or "registration." A rock festival in San Francisco could use "San Francisco Rock Festival tickets" or "SF Festival registration" a few times in the event information. Use some variation so that the copy doesn't sound redundant — and you don't get flagged for keyword stuffing.

## Increase inbound links

In addition to strong keywords in content, search engines view inbound links to event pages as votes or popularity signals that your event is relevant. The more highly regarded the website is that links to your page, the stronger the signal. Therefore, developing inbound links from topically relevant websites is an important strategy for improving search rankings.

The following strategies can help grow your inbound linking:

→ **Online event listings:** In addition to your ticketing partner's event listing page, make sure your event is listed in online newspaper and magazine event listings. Be sure to include an SEO-friendly event description and link back to your event page as part of your listing request.

For listings that already include your event, make sure all relevant information and a link to your event page is included. If it isn't, don't hesitate to call or email the host and ask them to add it.

→ **PR:** Integrate SEO practices into your PR outreach by making sure articles link to your event page. If press mentions appear without a link, reach out to the reporter and/or publication, thank them for the mention, and then politely request a link to your page. Most are happy to do so.

If you send out press releases, include your full URL in the press release including the "http://" and "www." When press releases are syndicated, embedded links often get dropped. Including the entire URL maximizes the chance of it not being dropped which makes Google more likely to pick up the link as it crawls the syndicated sites.

→ **Guest blogs and social media:** Blogs are an excellent way to improve search results - whether it's your own blog or someone else's. Research blogs that are relevant and topical to your event. Reach out to the owner and offer to write a guest blog that they can review and edit as needed. Make sure your blog post complements the content usually published on the blog. Most blogs are informative and editorial in nature so share insights, best practices, thought leadership, and other ideas. Mention your event at the end of your post with a link to the event page. Sometimes blog posts have a byline at the top for the author and associated website so use this to list your event page.

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# SEM - The value of paid search to increase visibility



In contrast to free SEO, SEM (Search Engine Marketing) is paid advertising based on keywords that are used in searches. Sometimes called "paid search" or "sponsored search", SEM ads appear as links above organic search results, in the "upper-right" side of a search result page, or on other websites (other than search engines) that host text-based ads. While clicks on paid search are much lower than clicks on organic search results, sponsored search is still a valuable way to increase awareness of your event.

Depending on your budget, SEM can be a cost-effective option because keywords or phrases are purchased by cost per click (CPC) or cost per impression (CPM) which means you only pay if your ad is clicked or seen.

## Try new terms

If you're new to keyword ad buying, start small and experiment to learn what works, then grow your efforts as you see what strategies are successful. A good place to start is to bid on ad words with your event name, organization name, or brand term. We've found that buying your brand terms can drive more traffic and ticket purchases. For example, for a conference hosted by the Homeopathic Physicians Association, bid on "Homeopathic Physicians Association" as a paid search term and link the ad to your event page.

In addition to brand names, category targeted ads have also proven effective in attracting users searching for your type of event in or near its location. If you're organizing a microbrew festival in Chicago, test buying terms like "Chicago microbrew festival" or "Chicago beer tasting."

## Capture interest in your area

One of the powerful features of paid search is that ads can be run in highly targeted areas based on location or geo-target. This means the ads will only be shown to people in certain cities, and metro areas, within a given radius from your event location, or if someone explicitly mentions your location in the search terms. For example, if you think people will travel up to 30 miles to your event, you could target the search term "beer festival" and set the radius to 30 miles. The ad will show only to those searching for your target search term, within 30 miles of the event location, or if they use the location of your event as part of their search words.



## Track paid search words

Always set up Google AdWords conversion tracking to track how many clicks from Google paid search result in traffic to your page. You can then test and modify keyword bids, closely monitor your budget, and determine if SEM is an effective marketing spend for your event.

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## Retargeting - Follow interest off your page



Have you ever visited a website for a company or product, only to see ads for it pop up while you're on completely unrelated websites? If so, you've been "retargeted." Another form of paid advertising, retargeting keeps track of visitors to your event page and then serves up advertisements as they visit other sites. This is done by inserting a javascript code on the footer of your event page that keeps a list of visitors and puts cookies in their browsers.

It's a highly-efficient channel to get someone to come back to your site and ultimately convert. Retargeting also offers an opportunity to tailor the message to an audience that already knows about your event. Like paid search, retargeting ads can be geo-targeted and served up to people within a certain city, metropolitan, or geographic area of the event.

There is a learning curve to retargeting campaigns, so here are a few tips:

- 1. Use clever creative:** Unlike SEO and SEM, retargeting uses visual ads, usually in the form of banners on a page. The creative or visual elements and copy you use should have a strong call to action, be compelling, refer to the event name, and make your target audience want to click on it. Test one ad against another (called A/B testing) to see which gets the most clicks and highest conversions.
- 2. Focus on effectiveness:** Work with your ticketing partner to put conversion and exclusion pixels on your ticket confirmation pages. These allow for tracking the effectiveness of ads and will also stop showing the ads to people who have already purchased their tickets.
- 3. Don't be a stalker:** No one likes to feel like they're being followed online. Establish an advertisement frequency cap so people don't get annoyed by seeing your ads everywhere they go.

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## Display Ads - Put your best foot forward



Also known as banner ads, display ads are another form of paid advertising and are graphical advertisements that can include text, logos, pictures, and sometimes even interactive media such as audio or video. Display ads are placed on sites that sell advertising space and can be highly targeted by demographic, behavioral (based on online activities such as other sites they visit, interest they exhibit, etc), and location.

Like retargeting, display ads need to have strong creative and call to action. Test different ads to see which are resonating with online users by analyzing click and conversions. Targeting options for display ads include the following:

- **Placement targeting:** Specifically pick websites that are complementary to your event and run banner ads that align well with your audiences' interests.
- **Keyword contextual targeting:** Use popular search words or terms to reach new customers when they are searching for topics that are related to your event.
- **Interest-based targeting:** Target potential event attendees based on sites they visit and their interests as gauged by their online activities.

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## Public Relations - Get popular with the press



Getting coverage in newspapers, local magazines, radio, and blogs can be an effective way to raise awareness of your event and drive ticket sales. Determine what your objectives are first, and then plan accordingly. Is your primary goal to drive registration and ticket sales? Do you want to broadcast how successful the event was to raise awareness for other events or your organization in general? Knowing this beforehand will help you to plan media outreach before, during, and after your event.

Use your event marketing calendar to schedule press announcements, media pitches, and outreach in conjunction with your email marketing, social media updates, and other marketing activities.

## Craft press releases to announce event news

Sending out press releases is a good practice to support your initial event announcement and successive news. Your initial press release should introduce the event and be timed to support other announcement activities such as your event page being published and email announcement. Successive press releases can announce updates such as added acts, new sponsors, and other announcements fans will be interested in.

For all releases, make sure your event details: the who, what, when, and where of your event, are clearly spelled out. Spend time crafting the “hook” that explains why people should care about attending the event. End with a brief paragraph or boilerplate about your organization with a name and contact number. Low cost wire services like PRWeb can help you select cost effective distribution that’s right for your outreach and budget.

To optimize your event’s chance of getting picked up by search engines, use the keywords discussed in the search section above in your press release, and make sure your page URL includes the “http://” and “www”, so the link doesn’t get dropped when it’s syndicated.

## Get included in online event listings

In addition to helping with search engine optimization, event listings can also help attract media coverage. Make sure your event is posted in local publication event listings and guides. If you are organizing a professional conference or another event that might attract people from outside of a specific geographic region, find your event on sites with content that relates to these people’s interests. For example, for a conference for model train collectors, you could list your event in publications about model train collecting. Remember to always include the URL to your event page.

→ **Timing:** The timing for pitching your event to reporters and journalists is determined by editorial and production schedules. In general, monthly publications plan their coverage six months ahead of the publication date whereas for weeklies, it’s six weeks. Bloggers tend to have the shortest cycles at around 10 days. A lot of events don’t have a confirmed venue 6 months in advance so work with what you know. Do not try and pitch an event before you know the basics such as date, venue location, and schedule of performances or agenda for conferences.

Follow up if you don’t hear back after the first or second contact. But know when to stop. Don’t pester them if they don’t respond after your third attempt.

→ **Target:** Determine the target audience for your event and what they read, watch, and listen to. Next, find the reporters that write for these media outlets and determine those who would be most likely to be interested in your event. Only pitch to reporters that are going to be interested in your event. For instance, if you're hosting a symposium on education to benefit an international non-profit that is opening girls schools in India, find a reporter who covers philanthropy and international development work. Once you've determined your target list of reporters and bloggers, get to know their "beat" or specialty to be able to personalize the pitch.

→ **Structure:** Personalize each pitch by addressing the reporter by name, let them know that you follow their work, and why you think they'd be interested in covering your event. Journalists are often inundated with emails, so make the best use of their time and attention by keeping your pitch as brief as possible. Lead with the hook about why your event is special or unique and include details that will help them to quickly understand what it is about and then place it into context for their readership.

Provide additional information such as links to helpful resources and your event page. Make it visual by including a photo or link to a video and point out how your event relates to other current events to make it timely and topical.

### **Build relationships through social media**

Once you get coverage, social media is the perfect channel to share that coverage and spark conversation and interest. Most reporters use Twitter, and you can show gratitude by calling out the coverage on Twitter with a link to the article and thank them by including their twitter handle.

Good PR is about establishing and building relationships with journalists and editors. Once they know you're a reliable professional source, they're more likely to pick up the phone when you call with another event or story idea.



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# Partnerships - Work together to spread the word



Your event partners have a vested interest in the success of your event. Whether it's your ticketing partner, sponsors, vendors, or even performers or presenters, collaborating to spread the word, raise awareness, and drive ticket sales and registrations should be everyone's objective.

From providing a search-optimized and visually appealing event page to promoting your event on listings, your ticketing partner needs to be working for you and your success. In addition to offering powerful features, they should also be providing resources to help you learn, and maintain an approachable and knowledgeable customer service team to answer your questions and help tackle any unforeseen challenges.

- 1.** Gather all of the people or groups that are participating in making sure the event is successful. Socialize your event marketing calendar and like and follow each other on social media channels. Share your event hashtag with all of your partners, and ask them to use it on all of their posts and tweets before, during, and after the event. Partners can help by sharing and retweeting your event updates and news to their own networks. This cross-network sharing amplifies your outreach, attracting more people who might be interested in attending.
- 2.** Think beyond your event and build long-term partnerships. Selectively share and retweet partners' other news and info targeted to their audience. This shows partners you're interested in their success beyond your event and will make them more vested and likely to reciprocate.
- 3.** Explore other ways partners can help via their online properties such as websites, event listings, and blogs. Show them your willingness to collaborate by offering to write a guest blog post or suggesting copy for their website. They may make edits to what you send them so it conforms to their specific "voice", but it's easier to edit content than it is to start from scratch.

Finally, if they have an email database and/or a newsletter, explore ways to leverage their customer base to promote the event. From a designated email to a mention in their newsletter, these are additional ways to get the word out to a new set of people.

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# Track Marketing Effectiveness - Get more bang for your buck!



Our research shows that 98.6% of professional event organizers use tracking links to find out which of their marketing channels are most successful. In a study of events for 1,000-6,000 attendees, we found that an event organizer's chance of selling out went up by 3% if they use tracking links. And the more tracking you do, the more it helps: events that didn't sell out tracked an average of 11.5 channels, while events that sold out used an average of 15.7.

Clearly, it's important to track which marketing channels are driving traffic to your event page and most importantly, converting those visitors into ticket buyers. So how do you get started on the road to selling out? Once tracking mechanisms are in place, monitor frequently and adjust if they aren't driving traffic or if the ROI (return on investment) is too low to justify their use. Here's how to track and analyze your marketing channel performance:

**1. Align your marketing plan and goals:** Outline all the marketing campaigns for email, social media, search, and other outreach and set a goal for how many registrations each channel or campaign will drive. If the sum of the goals for each channel isn't equal to your total registration goal, then you need to add new campaigns or additional channels.

**2. Use tracking links:** Use unique tracking links for every marketing channel - email, social media, display ads, blog posts, etc. Assigning a unique tracking code to an email will enable you to track how much traffic was driven, how many tickets were sold and how much revenue was generated through that specific email. Eventbrite lets organizers easily create unique tracking links for every marketing channel. If ticket sales for a specific channel are lower than your cost, then you may want to reconsider using that channel going forward.

**3. Track channel results:** Now that you have tracking links set up for all your promotional channels, take a detailed look at specific performance within each channel. For email, watch open rates, click-through-rates, event page visits, and the number of ticket sales sold as a result of specific email. You may find that even though the open rate was high, the click-through-rate was below average. That's when it's time to test the call to action, email copy, and images.

4. Measure all the costs: When calculating ROI for a specific channel, consider all the resources that are going into the execution. Retargeting and display ads, for example, require design work and effort to develop the copy and messaging. Don't forget to count the additional placement costs to run the ads. All of this should be included as part of the cost per channel when calculating the ROI.

5. Notice the numbers: Eventbrite has studied the correlation between event organizer behavior and ticket sales. Organizers that log into their event reports daily are 75% more likely to reach their ticketing goals. Always monitor your campaigns and ticket sales closely so you can adjust and optimize quickly.

6. Be flexible and adjust: Your event marketing plan needs to be fluid because as you monitor your campaigns, you're inevitably going to need to adjust by doubling down on channels that are performing well and canceling channels that aren't. Make sure you can act quickly to make the necessary changes before it's too late. Monitor your event marketing calendar to ensure that it's reflective of your updated plans. Create a post-event document of marketing channels that worked and what you might have done differently that will serve as a solid blueprint for your next event.

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## Congrats!

You're up to speed with the ultimate guide to marketing and promoting a successful event. With all of the marketing channels and outreach opportunities available today, putting on an event of any kind can be a lot of work—but a strong event registration and ticketing partner can help make it easier. To help you vet potential ticketing partners, we've created an easy checklist for you to help make your decision easier.

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# Top 10 Marketing Must Have's for Your Event Registration or Ticketing Partner



1. Search-friendly event pages and URLs
  2. Exclusive integrated social media features
  3. Personalized attendee emails to drive increased engagement
  4. Dynamic and searchable event listings
  5. Proven track record with events of all kinds
  6. Mobile-friendly pages, registration flow and email marketing
  7. Tracking and analytics to optimize your marketing efforts
  8. Bright and eager customer service team
  9. Online resources for tips and insights
  10. Dependable platform with a 99.99% uptime
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## About Eventbrite



Eventbrite is the world's largest self-service ticketing platform, hosting a vibrant collection of live experiences to fuel people's passions and enrich their lives. Organizers use Eventbrite to plan, promote and sell tickets to events of all sizes, while event-goers can easily find and buy tickets to events that match their interests.

**To find out more, go to <http://www.eventbrite.com>**