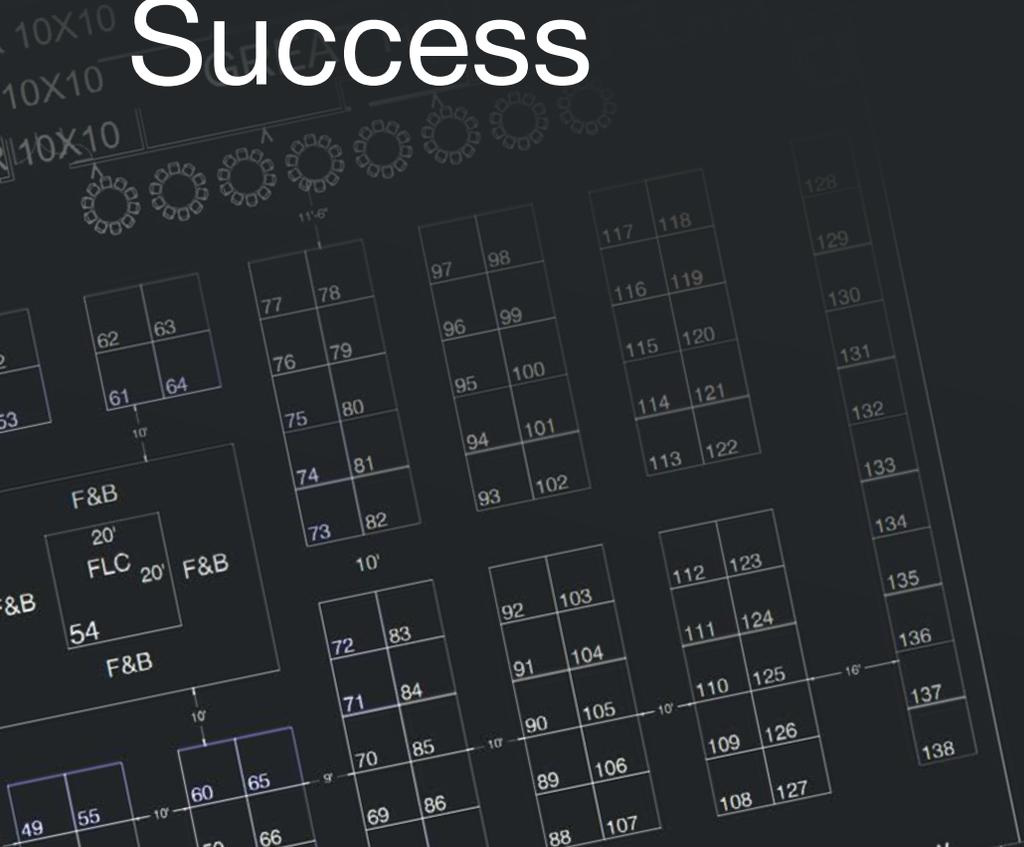


Guide to Record-Setting Sponsorship & Advertising Sales Success



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To learn how to take the next steps in your non-dues revenue, sponsored content, and virtual events sponsorship strategies, contact our team at info@ewald.com or (651) 290-6260.



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Are Sales Slipping through the Cracks of Your Association?

by Rithika Muralidharan

Associations depend on membership dues as the cornerstone of their financial sustainability. But are associations leveraging the right tools for diversified revenue growth? Prospective members, sponsors, and advertisers are spending dramatically more time online, forcing associations to adapt their business model. Using a sales Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system provides one of the most robust strategies for associations to reach prospective members, sponsors and advertisers in the digital marketplace. Here's how:

EXTENSIVE ANALYTICS REFLECT CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

A sales CRM system offers the ability to track email interactions through opens and clicks to paint a virtual picture of an individual's contact history and preferences. These analytics also are extremely useful during lead qualification to ensure this process is as efficient as possible. If a prospect has opened or clicked on an email multiple times, this would warrant a quick follow-up phone call.

SEQUENTIAL EMAILING ALLOWS FOR TIMELY OUTREACH EFFORTS

Reaching a prospect at the right stage of the buying journey and time of day is key and many sales CRM systems allow for this to be done with just a few mouse clicks. Digital sales pipelines allow contacts to be sorted into groups ranging from fresh new leads to long-time supporters. Templated emails can be crafted and scheduled to send months in advance rather than manually sending one by one. [For example](#), emails sent

Tuesday morning tend to see higher engagement than an email sent out late on a Friday afternoon. Timing is everything.

DATA VISUALIZATION SIMPLIFIES TEAM COLLABORATION AND GOAL SETTING

Immediate tracking of email responses and phone call notes within each individual contact profile makes teammate handoff effortless. Reporting dashboards built into sales CRM systems help measure productivity across the sales team while also providing timely comparisons. These functions keep everyone working toward a shared goal and keep your sales campaigns on track to hit and exceed budget.

Signs of a healthy association are found throughout a diverse mix of revenue streams — and a sales CRM system provides the foundation for a strong non-dues revenue solution. Mastering these tools leads to more efficient and effective outreach, timely communication when prospecting and qualifying leads, and a cohesive sales unit bringing in new revenue for your association.



Sponsor & Advertiser Prospecting in a Time of Growth

by Madeline Pope

While COVID-19 disrupted all in-person initiatives in 2020, some associations have turned crisis into opportunity for growth. Association sales teams have been acutely challenged to cultivate relationships as their most dependable sponsorship and advertising companies began to restructure, slashing marketing budgets or putting a freeze on sponsorship and advertising altogether. One way an association can keep building value is to focus energy on prospect development. Prospecting now will prepare the association for a resilient return to a post-COVID-19 world.

IT'S ALL ABOUT INCREASED SALES

Prospect development creates meaningful rapport and eventually secures more support for the association. Marketing expert and professor [Neil Kokemuller](#) warns that reliance solely on existing sponsors and advertisers leads to a natural decline in sales with a 15-20 percent turnover rate in a typical year. Increasing the sponsor/advertiser prospect pool makes an association's sales funnel larger, with more organizations and relationships working through each step of the sales process and continuously coming out as secured supporters.

But the solution is not to pack the top of the funnel with leads, regardless of quality. Effective prospecting requires a sharp focus right from the start.

BUILDING TOMORROW'S SALES TODAY

Qualifying prospects and identifying decision-makers takes a consistent and sustained effort over time. The prospect list needs to account for organizational fit and the association's

value proposition must be clear and customized with each contact type. According to [Cambria Davies](#) of HubSpot, doing this work ahead of time results in a prospect list that is 57 percent of the way through the sales process even before the initial outreach. Because prospecting can and should be highly involved, these tasks can fall to the bottom of the daily to-do list for many association professionals. This is exactly why the current sales slowdown in the time of COVID-19 can actually be leveraged to benefit long-term sales.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Davies suggests the following techniques improve prospecting efforts and result in increased sponsor and advertising sales performance:

- Question if the lead is the right organizational fit depending on demographics and mission.
- Prioritize the company's willingness and likeliness to close the deal.
- Strategically position and personalize the first outreach.
- Accurately and consistently track the information gathered during the prospecting process in a customer relationship management (CRM) system.

PROSPECTING TO THRIVE

Associations can reduce the impact of COVID-19 on sales efforts by preparing for the future. When market conditions improve, the associations that took advantage of the opportunity to improve will recover fastest and thrive. A sales effort that grows the association's qualified prospect list — and ultimately the association — creates a strong and tenacious return, transforming into future possibility.

Grow Revenue and Thought Leadership with Sponsored Content

by Alana Martinson

Advertising is one of the best ways for companies to reach your association's audience. However, members are bombarded with up to 5,000 ads every day, making it difficult to cut through the clutter. Getting your advertising opportunities to stand out in this densely saturated market is a challenge. Sponsored content provides valuable information to members, an opportunity for the advertiser to distinguish themselves as a thought leader, and a new revenue stream for the association.

Sponsored content is an advertisement that is formatted like other content the association produces. Sponsored content is most often positioned as a text article, but it can also take the form of a podcast, slideshow, video, listicle, social media post or other informational media.

There are four reasons why your association should offer sponsored content opportunities:

SPONSORED CONTENT IS MORE ENGAGING THAN TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING

Traditional advertisements can be easily tuned out and forgotten. Sponsored content is ultimately designed to persuade, but makes the reader/viewer pay attention with entertaining and informative techniques. When your audience actively engages with content, especially when positioned as "[native content](#)," they are more likely to pay attention and remember the brand.

BUYERS HATE TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING MORE THAN EVER

The all-encompassing nature of ads is overwhelming to members, with most ads seen as an impediment to finding the valuable information they are looking for. Too much, or too blatant advertising can come off as desperate and turn potential buyers/members away. [According to HubSpot](#), 72 percent of consumers say they would have a lower opinion of a brand that gave them a pop-up ad. This is why associations have to get creative with the type of advertising they offer. Sponsored content is a great way to position advertisers as trusted experts in the field rather than an annoying, desperate obstacle.

SPONSORED CONTENT KEEPS READERS INFORMED

Sponsored content is crafted in a way that allows for more information to be shared than in a traditional advertisement. This is especially useful for associations, because the information you offer is relevant to the niche audience of your member community. Additionally, the digital sales and marketing company [IMPACT](#) reports that 70 percent of consumers prefer to learn about a company through content rather than advertisement. Offering useful information to your audience increases the chance of them returning the favor by engaging with your content, and in the long run it ensures that they will remember your brand.

SPONSORED CONTENT CAN BE ENTERTAINING

The most powerful way to get an audience to remember an advertisement is to entertain them. SuperBowl commercials are a prime example. The reason they are so memorable is

because they focus more on entertainment value than persuasion. Sponsored content is inherently more entertaining than traditional advertising because it provides useful information that's not an overt sales pitch. Entertaining the audience creates a subconscious connection between the advertiser's brand and excitement in the reader/viewer. This positive connection between the advertiser, the consumer and your association ensures brand preference and loyalty down the line.

The world of association advertising is evolving and traditional ads are increasingly a thing of the past. Sponsored content offers a new way to provide value for the profession, a way for companies to stand out with their expertise, all while diversifying income for your association.



The Importance of Follow-Up

by Clayton Cloutier

One of the most crucial stages in securing advertising and sponsor revenue for your association is a consistent line of communication with prospective supporters. While the initial outreach is an essential step in any sales cycle, a diligent and coordinated follow-up effort can make all the difference in exceeding your budget.

On average, 10-12 follow-up attempts via email and phone are needed to close a sale, regardless if the company is a new prospect or longtime supporter.*

Prospecting and identifying new companies who might participate as supporters based on the industry, location, and audience fit for your event is crucial. However, it is just a small piece in a much longer, more complex sales process. With emails flooding inboxes daily, the initial outreach to a prospect can easily go unseen or missed in the chaos. Remember, not hearing back from a prospect right away does not always mean they are not interested.

BUDGET ENOUGH TIME FOR MULTIPLE ROUNDS OF FOLLOW-UP

A conservative lead time allows your sales team to follow up a healthy number of times and ensures they get their message across, while not too often to come off as pushy or annoying. Just as there is a sales process for event exhibition and sponsorship, there is a process for prospective supporters to decide if this is a good investment, secure funds, and find representatives to attend. The length of this process can vary greatly depending on the size of an organization and who your

main contact is. Approval may come sooner if you are directly communicating with a VP or CEO compared to a lower-level employee or shared inbox.

PICK UP THE PHONE!

In most cases, outreach begins over email as this medium presents an opportunity to quickly cast a wide net. However, communicating over email can be clumsy, and in some cases, hurt rapport with your prospects. When your audience doesn't hear a voice, the tone and even the contents of your communication can be misinterpreted. A quick phone call is often more productive than a string of emails as questions can be answered immediately, and misunderstandings can be avoided. Calling also adds a human element and makes prospects more likely to reply to future outreach, even if they are not interested. Utilizing multiple channels of communication can help you finally reach your prospects.

At the end of the day, a prospect is not going to sponsor or exhibit at your event unless they see the return. Not everyone you reach out to will be a good fit, but numerous follow-up attempts ensure that at the very least, you will connect with your prospect and create an open line of communication for the future.

**Based on research by Ewald Consulting from 2017 to 2020*

Four Ways to Build Your Brand at Virtual Events

by Libby Baxter

We've all seen a dramatic increase in virtual events in 2020 due to travel bans and government health regulations. But virtual events have been on the rise for more than a decade because they provide an economically and environmentally effective way to bring together an association's members, industry experts and sponsors.

Hosting your conference or trade show virtually reduces some of the logistical preparation required for in-person events, giving your association more time to focus on new and innovative opportunities to involve sponsors on the digital platform. Many successful forms of virtual sponsorship are already in use at in-person events but can be scaled to support your conferences and events that are 100 percent virtual. Here are four ways to build value for sponsors at your virtual event.

REIMAGINE PRESENTATION / SPEAKING OPPORTUNITIES

Speaking opportunities may already be integrated into most sponsorship packages, be it to introduce a speaker or say a few words about the sponsoring company and its newest services. This is easily transferable to a virtual video presentation format; however, the virtual nature of the conference allows for more creativity on the side of the sponsor. Because the entire conference is now virtual, your sponsors will be able to produce something more engaging or innovative to help them stand out from the crowd.

BOOST AND SCALE WITH LOGO RECOGNITION

An issue that your association may come across when creating sponsorship packages for virtual events is recreating the value structure of traditional sponsorship offerings. Logo recognition is a great tool to help with this issue because it's a benefit that will be familiar to your returning sponsors. Additionally, it's easy to scale to increase value and to differentiate between levels of sponsorship. Factors that can be used to increase the value of Logo recognition include placement on the website, hyper-linking to the sponsor's website, logo size, and how frequently sponsor logos are recognized on emails and social media posts relating to the events. With virtual events, there is an increase in electronic communication leading up to the event and increased screen time during the event. Utilizing these advantages with equivalently increased logo placement can far exceed the recognition your sponsors would have received on handouts or signage.

BETTER ROI THROUGH ATTENDEE DATA

A study by the [Event Marketing Institute](#) shows that 89 percent of associations polled use a mobile app for their conferences and trade shows. These apps are not just supplementary, but essential to the conference experience. Many attendees use them in lieu of a printed conference guide. This provides not just a tremendous opportunity for app-centric sponsorships and logo placements, but also valuable data for use in future years, including information on demographics, session attendance rates, booth visits, duration of visits, and check-in and check-out rates. Although some of these data can be gathered at physical events, data from the event app are more reliable and specific than what frequently needs to be tracked by conference staff or volunteers. Information gathered at virtual



events offers a valuable selling point to market to sponsors showing exactly how engaging different sponsorship opportunities truly are.

EXHIBIT BOOTH REBOOT

The options for expanding sponsorship on a virtual platform are nearly endless, but the greater challenge is finding value for exhibitors on a digital platform. Although sponsorships have the opportunity to create value for past exhibitors in different formats, companies like [Communique](#) and [GoExhibit](#) are invested in recreating an exhibitor-focused experience in a virtual reality setting. Exhibitors can have virtual booths that vary in size and prominence, attendees can visit these booths, and

each can have prerecorded videos, moderated panels or host individual webinars. For conventions and trade shows where the interaction between exhibitor and attendee is paramount, initial feedback shows these options are comparable to in-person conferences in lead gathering and relationship building.

As time goes on and technology improves, it's increasingly clear that virtual events are here to stay. Virtual events are a way to build value for key supporters by offering a more holistic approach to brand awareness. Association executives need to think creatively and design options for your sponsors that are valuable to them, the association, and most importantly, the professional community.



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