



## Unifying Planning and Execution Across the B2B Events Portfolio

In-person and virtual events, including webinars, are a staple of B2B organizations' tactic mix

Although events are often planned and executed separately, they offer an immense opportunity for the unification and amplification of content and data

Organizations that sync their virtual and in-person events improve their ROI and attendees' experience

A trend in modern woodworking is to take a piece of antique wooden furniture and break it down into multiple pieces, then use those components to make something else. For example, a woodworker may disassemble a vintage wooden box and turn the pieces into a sign, a coat rack and a jewelry holder. This practice allows artisans to increase the return on their initial investment and create more inventory to sell.

B2B leaders can imitate this ROI magic by ensuring that event-related activities (e.g. content creation) are executed in a unified way that contributes to the entire event portfolio. Unifying event activities creates synergy and scale that leads to an improved attendee experience and time savings for marketers. In this brief, we identify opportunities for unifying various parts of the event planning and execution process across an organization's event portfolio.

### Defining Event Types

Events come in various forms and formats (see the Core Strategy Report "Event Strategy and Execution"). To help unify the experience and drive internal alignment, it is critical that organizations use a consistent event taxonomy:

- **Web-based events.** Online events include webinars (interactive — see the brief "Rethinking Webinars for Demand Generation"), webcasts (lecture format) and hangouts (on-camera discussion). More expansive web-based events (e.g. virtual trade shows) offer attendees and sponsors some of the amenities of a trade show without the associated cost, travel time and logistical planning (see the brief "Rethinking Virtual Events for Demand Marketing").
- **Live events.** These events focus on pre-sale activity or the post-sale customer audience. Whether creating initial demand, building on previous interactions or adding value to an existing customer relationship, the agenda is controlled by the sponsoring organization.
- **Trade shows.** Typically, these are theme-based, organized events where exhibitors and sponsors compete for the attention of attendees and members of the press.
- **Customer conferences.** These are commonly multi-day events, although a single day may be feasible. They drive loyalty among current customers and educate them about new offerings. The sponsoring organization controls the



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content and attendee list and often has a separate team and budget allocation to fund and organize the events.

- **Sponsorship/reward events.** This type of event relies on a third-party activity (e.g. sporting or cultural event) or a reward-oriented location and activity to drive success.
- **Channel events.** This type of event focuses on supporting the channel business. An externally focused event can be hosted or sponsored by the supplier on behalf of its channel partners, or a supplier may invite channel partners to an internally focused event.

## Synergy Opportunities: Before the Event

The content and planning at in-person and virtual events can be coordinated in various ways. Synergy opportunities leading up to an event include:

- **Registration assets.** Many companies use disparate technologies for event landing pages and registration. By creating a template, they can benefit from a consistent, repeatable approach. A template also ensures that the data being captured can be appropriately integrated in marketing and sales systems. Internal stakeholders should agree to the minimum profile data that needs to be captured before and during an event (including compliance requirements for future marketing) and the capture of contextual information to aid post-event follow-up and user experience.
- **Name and branding.** Often companies are unified on the messaging that runs across program families but lack consistent naming across event types. Consider using a consistent name and theme across event types. Leverage the event taxonomy to draw distinctions about how events are being delivered and to report more effectively on how themes are performing. Attendees can benefit by understanding which events they should attend in a series (e.g. an attendee interested in agile marketing can see upcoming webinars and roundtables on that topic).

## Synergy Opportunities: At the Event

Synergy opportunities at events include:

- **Social media.** Leveraging social media for virtual and in-person events is a trend in B2B. During events, it is essential that organizations leverage the same hashtag for the same event types. This allows attendees and non-attendees to

tap into a continuing stream of content from events. Social media also can be a powerful recruiting tool leading up to an event.

- **Cross-promotion.** According to SiriusDecisions' 2019 B2B Buying Study, there are an average of 17 interactions in a B2B buyer's journey. Events offer the opportunity for a call to action to add an additional interaction — e.g. after seeing a short demo at a trade show, a buyer registers for a webinar that includes an in-depth product demo.

## Synergy Opportunities: After the Event

Synergy opportunities after an event include:

- **Event presentations.** B2B marketers should explore opportunities to leverage the same content and presentations for various event types. For example, a presentation from a trade show can be used as the backbone for content in a webinar. This approach can be particularly useful if there is minimal overlap in the target attendees.
- **Data.** In B2B, the importance of understanding the buying group can't be understated (see the brief "Identifying and Overcoming Buying Group Blindness"). An organization's portfolio of events is sure to touch various members of buying groups. Data on attendance and interaction at these events must be leveraged in marketing and sales systems to better inform follow-up actions (see the brief "The Data Model for the Demand Unit Waterfall™").
- **Content capture.** Content that is captured at one type of event can be activated across other event types. For example, video from a webinar can be used on a TV display in a company's booth at an industry trade show (see the Select Practice "Softchoice: Using Events to Drive Value and Growth for Customers").

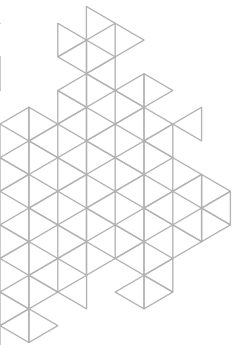
## The Sirius Decision

Events will remain an important interaction type that B2B buyers crave throughout the buyer's journey. Initially, the disparate planning and budgeting processes for various event types may present an obstacle to unifying event activities (see the brief "Introducing the SiriusDecisions Event Management Framework"). However, to keep up with the demand for event logistics and event content, organizations must leverage opportunities to scale. In addition to the internal benefits like



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increased alignment and improved ROI, there are benefits for event attendees, such as more clarity in company messaging. Companies that unify activities across their events portfolio also are poised to improve their measurement of value generated by their events (see the brief “Measuring In-Person Event Performance: Telling the Whole Story”).



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