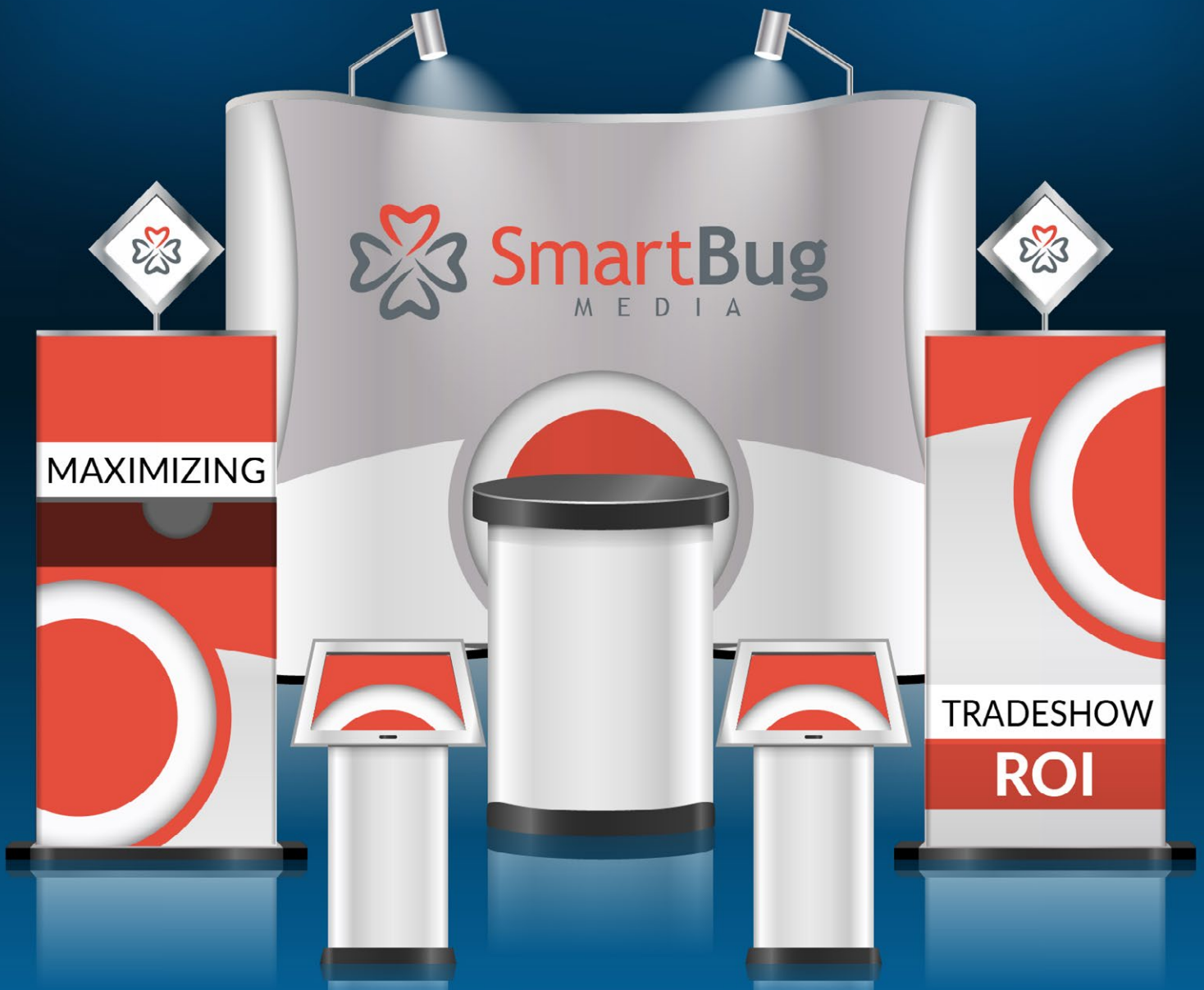


THE INBOUND MARKETER'S GUIDE TO **MAXIMIZING** TRADESHOW ROI



Each year, companies across various industries spend approximately **\$25 billion** on attending and exhibiting at tradeshows.

Even as we move toward more digital, Web-based marketing initiatives, traditional methods such as conferences and tradeshows are still extremely popular. For many businesses, tradeshow attendance is more than an opportunity to close business. Often, these events are seen as a way to gain education on industry trends and new products, and to scope out the competition. Furthermore, a tradeshow can be an opportunity to connect with existing customers as well as network with industry leaders. At the end of the day, however, it is a business development initiative. Attendance and exhibition at these shows cost significant money and the success is measured on revenue generated. Yes, it's great to come back to the office with a notebook filled

with new information and an update on the industry, but what's better is to return with a stack of business cards and a list of hot leads fresh off great conversation.

The traditional tradeshow process does not set companies up well for success. There are many key aspects of inbound marketing that can be adapted to significantly impact the results achieved from exhibiting at industry tradeshows. This ebook will provide you with a framework for a solid inbound-focused tradeshow campaign. It will cover marketing actions to take before attending the show, key tools to have on hand during the exhibition, and methods of follow-up that will set you apart from other attendees.

TRADESHOWS SHOULD BE A WAY TO GAIN MOMENTUM FOR YOUR SALES TEAM
AND SHOULD RESULT IN A SIGNIFICANT SPIKE
IN CLOSED BUSINESS FOLLOWING ATTENDANCE.



TRADITIONAL TRADESHOW MARKETING IS BROKEN



THE TYPICAL SONG-AND-DANCE WHEN IT COMES TO TRADESHOWS IS AS FOLLOWS:

1

You reserve a booth at the conference, where you and a small handful of colleagues attend with the high hopes of drumming up new business. Traditionally, there is little announcement beforehand that you will be exhibiting, except maybe a short email to existing prospects who may also be attending.

2

While at the show, there is often a demo of your product or service being shown at the booth, where business cards are being collected or barcodes on nametags are being scanned.

3

Afterwards, the team returns to the office to email and/or call the list of contacts generated.

DOES THIS SOUND FAMILIAR?

Although this does result in a list of new, slightly interested prospects, it is hardly optimized. Let's start from the beginning. Without an announcement to your audience, nobody knows you are attending. There are literally hundreds of exhibitors at these shows and often, attendees try to plan their days beforehand. This is to make sure they have a chance to speak to those that interest them. During the show, things are moving at top speed. Often, passersby do not have the time to stop and watch an entire demo and hear the canned spiel about what sets you apart. Although this is valuable, it's important

to give attendees options and provide them information that most interests them. Finally, after the show concludes, trying to get back in touch can be a nightmare. Not only are these prospects being emailed by every other attendee at the show, probably all within the same day or two, but their memory of what sets you and your product apart is probably a little foggy. What is needed is a way of optimizing each step of this process to ensure high-quality leads and overall great return from tradeshow attendance.

FIX IT WITH INBOUND



Inbound marketing attracts quality leads through a variety of different channels. When preparing for a tradeshow, it is important to utilize many communication methods to spread your messaging wide. Prospects consume information based on their preferences. For some, social media is where they turn to stay in the know, whereas others subscribe to blogs or email lists. Being vocal across these platforms will ensure you are reaching your target audience effectively.

Rather than seeing the tradeshow as one marketing event, it is best to view it as a full campaign. Just as one launches a new ebook, there are offers, key components, and significant planning involved. Tradeshow are no different.

An effective way of laying out this campaign is to break it down into three distinct parts:

BEFORE

DURING

AFTER

Taking time to prepare for the show, build out all necessary pieces and make sure everything is connected will undoubtedly start you off on the right foot for when the show begins.

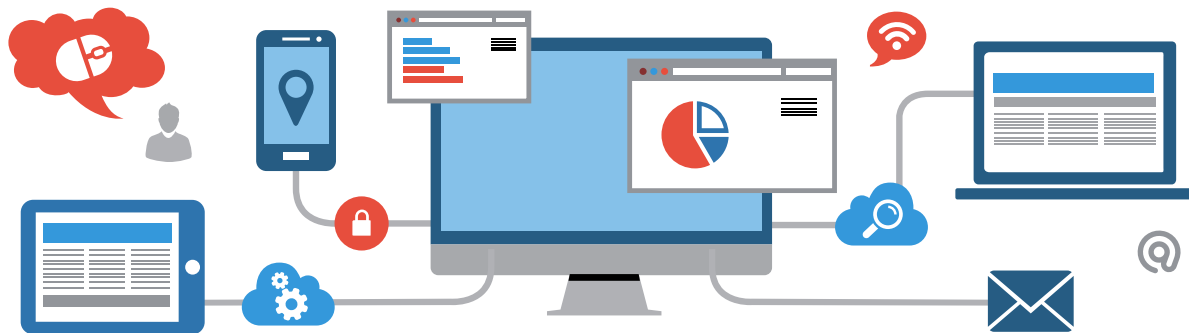
We will now discuss each step of the campaign. It's important to have all of these pieces built and connected early on.



KEY COMPONENTS FOR BEFORE THE TRADESHOW



BEFORE



As mentioned earlier, tradeshow are about momentum. There are many things we can do ahead of time to increase our success overall. One of the main components is a landing page for before the show. This page should include all pertinent exhibitor information such as which booth number you can be found at, when and where your company will be presenting on any topics at the conference, and what attendees should expect from speaking with you, whether they will receive a demo or further information on a particular solution. Furthermore, a form should be included with the encouragement to request time with you at the show. As we all know, these shows are busy and nailing down appointments are a great way to ensure that conversations are not missed.

Once this landing page is completed, an eye-catching CTA is needed to promote throughout the site. Using a co-branded CTA with both your logo and that of the conference can be a great way to catch a website visitor's eye. On the CTA, be sure to include the dates of the show, where it is being held, and text encouraging further click-through to connect with you there. This CTA

should be placed on your homepage along with your blog and any other interior pages that are appropriate.

Now that we have a conversion path complete, promote it on social media. On your company profile pages, announce your attendance and link to this landing page. Additionally, any sales reps or employees who will be attending should also promote this message so they can start conversation with prospects right away. Beyond personal and company pages, utilize LinkedIn Groups based on industry, location and persona. Is there a local group close to the tradeshow that contains professionals most likely to attend? If so, craft a clear message and explain the value of connecting with you at the show. In addition, research any industry or tradeshow hashtags that are to be used before or during the show. Leverage these on Twitter to join in the conversation and show your involvement. Finally, connect with and follow the conference on social media as you will see who is most active on their profile pages, and be sure to tag the conference in your messaging as well.

KEY COMPONENTS FOR BEFORE THE TRADESHOW

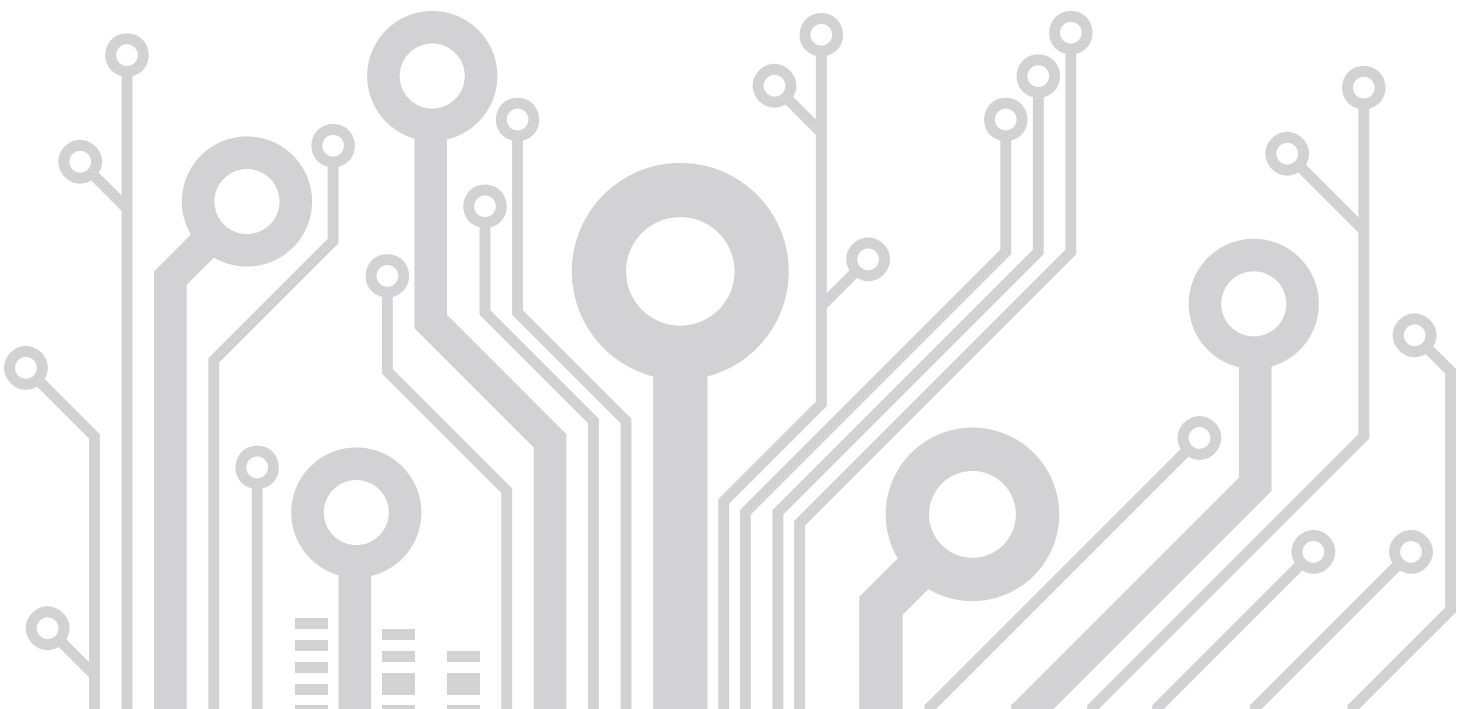


BEFORE

The final aspect of successful pre-tradeshow promotion is email. Have you attended this show in the past? If so, dig up the list of contacts from the previous year as well as any prospects or customers local to the show. You can send emails on behalf of the sales reps to their pipelines encouraging

them to connect while attending as well. In this email, communicate where and how to connect with you at the show, include topics to be discussed, and encourage recipients to request time to chat by submitting the landing page form.

STARTING THE CONVERSATION EARLY, EITHER VIA SOCIAL OR FORM SUBMISSIONS TO CONNECT AT THE SHOW, IS A GREAT WAY TO START OFF THE CONFERENCE ON THE RIGHT FOOT. WHERE MANY EXHIBITORS BEGIN WORKING THE DAY THE SHOW STARTS, YOU CAN BE AHEAD OF THE GAME WITH THE CAMPAIGN ALREADY UNDERWAY.



KEY COMPONENTS FOR DURING THE TRADESHOW



DURING

Tradeshows are busy, both for vendors and consumers. Conversations are generally fast-paced, demos are rushed, and the promise to follow-up when back in the office becomes saturated very quickly. It can be valuable to offer more than just the request to follow-up after the show. One of the founding principles of inbound marketing is sharing valuable content that is relevant to your audience. Just as you have offers on your website that speak to different stages of the buyer's journey, there should be a similar theme in this situation.

When preparing for the tradeshow, it is a good idea to create a few different landing pages that could be relevant to prospects. Most importantly, be sure to offer a demo request or free trial because those attract

prospects in the decision stage. Additionally, look at your content offerings and determine an ebook or guide that is relevant to the topics at the tradeshow or this particular persona, as well as a case study download that could reinforce your solution's value and ROI when compared with competition. As we discussed, conversations at tradeshows are quick, and sometimes offering only a demo request can hinder form submissions. Be sure to have landing pages created specifically for this show that give prospects options.

Note: when using landing pages at the show, make sure to disable cookie tracking on the form for manual lead entry. This will ensure that each lead is counted separately. If you are not using HubSpot and cannot edit the form in this way, open up the page in a private browser at the show.



KEY COMPONENTS FOR DURING THE TRADESHOW



DURING

When building these landing pages, make sure that the form submission sends an automated follow-up email with the offer and contact information of the sales rep. This will make sure that the prospect has an email in their inbox right away as well as a direct line and email to sales.

Again, these prospects are having many conversations throughout the next day or two, so it's important to keep your name and

company front of mind. Along with a simple follow-up email that delivers the offer, there should be a workflow that sends 2-3 emails over the next week. These can be delayed 2-3 days each, and should provide valuable blog articles, case studies and a demo or free trial request. This will keep you relevant and increase prospects' knowledge of you and your business.

As you attend sessions, it can be helpful to live tweet facts that you've learned using conference hashtags and mentioning the speaker as well. This will show your involvement in discussion as well as brand you as a resource for new information. Additionally, make sure to connect with prospects on LinkedIn after a good conversation at your booth or at a networking event. In your invitation request, mention a key part of the discussion you had or something unique that you discussed. This will help to keep the conversation flowing.

SOCIAL MEDIA IS ALSO KEY DURING THESE EVENTS.



KEY COMPONENTS FOR AFTER THE TRADESHOW



AFTER

Following up after returning home from a tradeshow or conference is arguably one of the most challenging yet important tasks of the whole campaign. In most cases, both vendors and attendees make it back to their offices and start to play catch-up from the previous days. One by one, the emails start to trickle in from all the exhibitors and attendees and before you know it, there are hundreds of messages being sent. In many cases, the conferences provide a list of attendees as well, which can be used for follow-up in the short term. This situation leads to serious bombardment from all angles. Not only are prospects receiving these messages and trying to remember who said what in which conversation, but the sheer volume of these emails diminishes the relevance and value of each one.

To best prepare for this situation, you should create a 3-email workflow that nurtures these prospects over the course of the next 3 weeks. Again, these are not the prospects who filled out forms at the show, which we discussed in the previous section. These emails will be sent to the contacts acquired via business cards and badge scanning. This communication should be spaced a week apart and provide reinforcement of your

company and solution as well as valuable marketing collateral such as a case study or relevant blog articles. The purpose of these emails is to reach prospects early but also after they have settled back into their normal routines. It can take a week or so to dig oneself out from the pile of work from a few days or week away. Knowing that your prospects are receiving valuable information from your company the first, second and third week back is great peace of mind.

Additionally, if the conference provides all vendors with a master list of attendees, you should send an email to those as well (omitting the previously emailed contacts) with introductory information regarding your solution and value proposition, as well as a link to a high-value landing page. Depending on the topic or industry of this tradeshow, it is a good idea to offer a relevant ebook or case study to these recipients.

Social media is the final component of post-tradeshow marketing. Compile a list of valuable anecdotes learned from the show or relevant statistics that are noteworthy. These are great for Twitter posts or a blog article. Furthermore, see if certain hashtags are still being used after the fact, and if so, include those in your messaging as well.



TYING IT BACK TO GOALS



What we've done here is laid out all the key components of a successful tradeshow campaign from start to finish. By using a variety of inbound tactics, leads can be generated even before the conference takes place, thus increasing the business opportunity as a whole. Having unique landing pages for each step of the process gives clear insight into which leads came specifically as part of this initiative and at what point they converted. As we've discussed, tradeshows are expensive. It's important to maximize the return by setting yourself up for success early. This campaign will lead to more quality conversations both at the show and after it has concluded. By providing prospects and

leads with additional content and relevant information to their needs, your team will be seen as a valuable resource, rather than just another solution provider. In your CRM, be sure to tag these leads as part of this particular campaign to help with reporting after the fact. It's possible that some of these leads will close far into the future, well after this campaign has subsided. Even still, we can tie that business back to this original campaign and continue to maximize ROI from these efforts. Closed-loop marketing is a must-have when performing campaigns like this. If you are using HubSpot, be sure to integrate your CRM to fully report on closed business and revenue generated.

In conclusion, tradeshows are all about generating leads and closing new business. Traditional methods of preparation and exhibiting at these shows provide very little opportunity to convert leads other than those already in the decision stage of the buyer's journey. What's important is to promote your involvement weeks prior to the event as a way to increase visibility ahead of time and provide prospects with a variety of conversion opportunities. This will certainly capture many more leads than you would otherwise and afterwards, will nurture them via workflows down the funnel toward sales. Ultimately, this will result in a higher amount of closed business as well as a great branding opportunity for your business as a thought leader in your industry.



SmartBug Media is a nationally recognized and full-service inbound marketing agency helping companies to take advantage of inbound and content marketing in order to increase leads, customers and revenue. We are a HubSpot Diamond Partner and top-ranked agency, boasting the highest ROI documented from any HubSpot partner—3,558% and 14,500 ROI on a six-month and three-year campaign. We invest heavily in marketing talent, agency processes, content and creative to consistently exceed customer expectations and marketing results.

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READY TO GET STARTED?

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- Insights into how inbound marketing can improve your prospects, leads, and customers
- Actionable tactics you can implement today and start seeing results (the low hanging fruit!)
- A complete assessment of your current marketing efforts and website
- Advice about whether or not HubSpot is the right solution for you

[Request a Free Consultation](#)