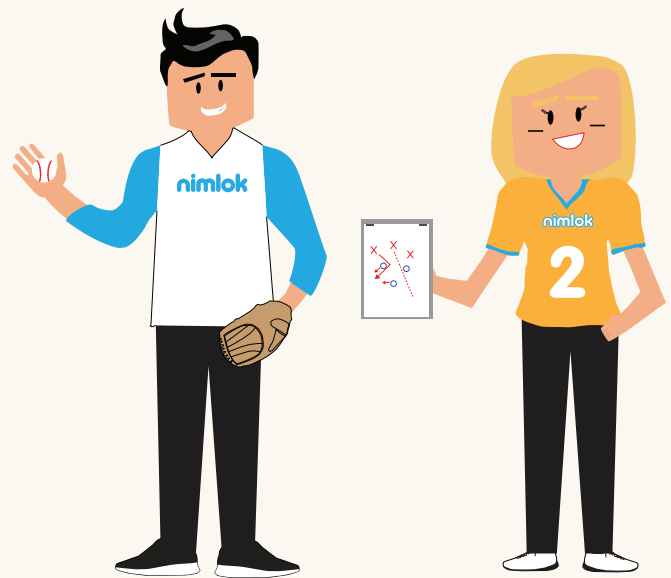


# Score Big: Your Trade Show ROI Playbook



Marketing—now more than ever—is driven by numbers and guided by metrics. With the rise of more robust, in-depth analytics, items once thought to be incalculable can now be traced and measured with striking accuracy. As a result, marketers are increasingly asked to step up to the plate to prove return on investment. CEOs and CFOs are asking their marketing teams to justify the impact on the balance sheet with measurable results and reasonable returns on investment.

Trade shows and face-to-face marketing events can be the secret play for achieving sales and marketing goals and creating strong ROI. They are the marketing vehicles that combine direct sales, lead generation, company exposure, media relations, press coverage and product demonstrations all in one. This guide will help you score big with your trade show ROI by providing you with concise and actionable tips and tactics for your next trade show or event.



## Starting Lineup

Batting Order	Player Names
1	Determine Your Goals and Objectives
2	Pick the Right Trade Show or Event(s)
3	Invest in Pre-Event Marketing
4	Engage the Media
5	Validate Your Investment

**nimlok.**

# Determine Your Goals & Objectives

Ball  Strike  Out

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
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Improving your event marketing performance doesn't begin at the event or trade show, it begins when you outline concrete goals of achievement and target ROI. To effectively plan your trade show goals and objectives, you will need to understand the big picture marketing and sales strategy of your organization. Begin by asking what your organization hopes to achieve through event marketing. Identifying the high-level objectives of your organization will help you create realistic and on-target event marketing goals, better preparing you for maximizing your trade show ROI.

## For Example:

- **Increase overall sales from existing clients**
- **Conduct X number of product demonstrations**
- **Grow the client list by X**
- **Meet with X number of clients**
- **Meet with X number of prospects**
- **Yield X number of high quality sales leads**
- **Attract investors**
- **Heighten brand-awareness**
- **Encourage repeat purchases and cross-selling**
- **Gain media exposure and attain X number of mentions on social media, TV, articles etc**



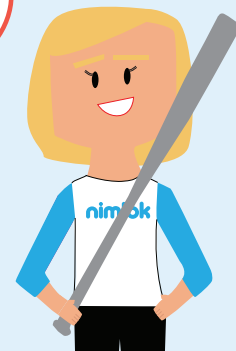
### Time Out

To learn more about planning your trade show goals, check out Nimlok's [Smart Marketers Guide](#).

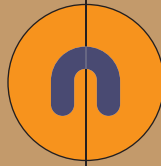


We have to hit a home run at our next trade show.

Agreed, that's why it's so important for us to be on target with goals so we can swing for the fences!



# Pick the Right Trade Show or Event



Picking the right trade show for your organization can mean the difference between a healthy trade show ROI or a lackluster exhibition experience. Before selecting an event, you need to identify the attributes of your target audience and ideal prospect/customer to give you an idea of which events are worth participating in.

After identifying the makeup of your target audience, it is highly recommended to attend the event and walk the show floor before contracting space. See for yourself the type of engagement and competitors participating already. Compile a list of trade shows you feel align well with your company's marketing goals and objectives and begin quantifying the value of each show in terms of ROI potential. Start the process of quantifying event ROI potential by securing the Exhibitor's Registration Kit provided by event organizers. The Exhibitor's Registration Kit contains valuable information on attendee profiles. This information—which includes job titles, industry segmentation/representation and geographic distribution of attendees—will help you align attendee profiles with the attributes of your target audience.

Add up the number of attendees that align with your ideal prospect's attributes to determine the number of ideal attendees you can expect to possibly visit your booth. Divide the number of ideal prospects by the total number of event attendees, and multiply this value by your average lead value to determine the potential benefit score for the event.

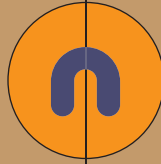
## For Example:

$$\frac{\text{Ideal Prospects}}{\text{Total Attendees}} \times \text{Average Lead Value} = \text{Potential Benefit Score}$$

Once you have scored each trade show's ROI potential, narrow down your event list to the top scoring shows and select the ones that fit best into your event marketing budget and timeline. Remember, even if an event scores well, if the cost of exhibiting exceeds your budget, or you do not have enough time to properly plan for exhibiting, then the value of the event is greatly diminished.



# Pick the Right Trade Show or Event



Scoring events is helpful in narrowing down which are most likely to yield strong returns. However, there are other important criteria to consider when selecting a trade show. Below is a list of other criteria on which to base your decision:

**1. Significance** — Is the trade show in your industry? Are the attendees good matches for your product or services? Do attendees have buying power?

**2. Social Media** — Twitter is an integral aspect of a solid event-based marketing plan. If the trade show itself is not very active on social media, it may be a bad sign. If the show does not market themselves effectively, they will not be able to help you market yourself effectively. Evaluate a show's social profiles and take that into account during your show selection process.

**3. Media** — Did high-profile media outlets flock to the event last year? Is there a media room at the show? Can you submit a media kit to share your news? How about the year before that? If so, there is a good chance the media will be in attendance this year. If you plan properly and engage with media before the event to schedule interviews you can garnish free exposure.



## Time Out

Learn more about Social Media's impact on event marketing by downloading [Nimlok's Exhibitor's Guide to Social Media.](#)

**4. Big Names** — Big-name speakers will draw big-name media and attention, which can translate to big-time ROI. The more impressive the lineup of speakers, the more likely that the event will attract a high volume of attendees.

**5. Attendees and Exhibitors** — Non-prospects can sometimes be just as valuable as an ideal prospect. The right trade show can help you scout your competition, learn from industry leaders and pitch investors with whom you may otherwise never have the opportunity to network. Other than appraising the number of valuable prospects at a show, also evaluate the number of competitors, thought-leaders or investors in attendance.

## 5 Ways to Save

There are many ways to improve your trade show ROI and keeping costs low is a great way to get more for less. Consider the following tips for your next trade show or event.

**Early Bird Rates:** The early bird gets the savings. Many show contractors offer special rates for exhibitors that return forms before the early bird deadlines.



**Exhibit Rental:** Rental trade show exhibits are affordable and flexible. Renting an exhibit will help cut down on your overall trade show spend.



**Bring your own supplies:** Bringing your own setup tools, cleaning supplies, pens, etc. will save you from over priced supplies and cleaning services on the show floor.



**Advanced Warehousing:** Advanced warehousing often comes with discounts on per poundage rates and helps you save on drayage and other related logistical costs.



**Travel:** Research group rates on airfare and accommodations along with special travel reward programs to save money on traveling.



# Invest in Pre-Event Marketing

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Preseason is a critical period for team building and training in the world of sports. Similarly, the pre-event planning phase of a trade show marketing campaign is a critically important step in maximizing trade show ROI. Without concrete pre-event planning, a trade show campaign can—and oftentimes will—collapse under the weight of an ill-prepared and poorly executed approach.

Because pre-event planning requires intense effort and huge investments in time, best practice dictates that event planners begin the planning phase at least 90 days before an event. Pre-show marketing should begin 6-8 weeks before the event and utilize phone calls, email, video, social media and more to create awareness and initiate pre-registrants to come visit at the show. Allow for more time if possible!



During your pre-event planning, make sure you cover these five topics, which can greatly impact trade show ROI:

## 1. Budgeting

Generating a strong ROI begins with knowing your expenses, having an outlined budget and a good understanding of a cost per lead analysis. Outline and project your event expenses as accurately as possible for common trade show expenses such as exhibiting space, drayage, shipping, electrical, flooring, rigging and travel. Overspending or underestimating cost will throw off your trade show ROI.



### Time Out

Learn more about creating your trade show budget by downloading Nimlok's [Trade Show Budgeting Worksheet](#).

# Invest in Pre-Event Marketing

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## 2. Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is an invaluable part of the marketing mix. Targeted email blasts, social media engagement and event marketing landing pages are all low-cost-high-return mediums from which you can generate pre-event buzz and attract the attention of attendees prior to the show.

## 3. Set Appointments

Your sales staff engages with prospects on a daily basis, whether face-to-face, over the phone or through email. Capitalize on their client relationships by having sales staff set appointments with prospects and clients to meet with booth staff at the event. Oftentimes, you can even secure a list of registered event attendees from event organizers, giving your sales team a starting point for prospecting. Send reminders before the event to confirm appointments.

## 4. Training

In the weeks leading up to your event, make sure that your booth staffers are trained extensively for in-booth etiquette, product knowledge, and the objectives and goals of your organization. A well-trained booth staff team can have a dramatic impact on your lead yield and performance on the trade show floor. Teams simply standing and waiting for people to visit the booth are not helping your ROI!

## 5. Plan an Event Within the Event

Prior to the trade show, invite high-value prospects and clients to afterhours dinner and cocktail events to establish better relationships and foster business opportunities. Sales representatives can have more intimate conversations with prospects and clients, without the distractions that can occur on the trade show floor.

With other aspects of pre-event preparation such as trade show booth sourcing or design, travel planning and logistics, pre-event marketing sometimes takes a backseat. In order to be successful at your next trade show, you need to drive qualified traffic to your booth. Getting on your prospects' agendas in advance will give you a distinct advantage against your competition.

## The X's and O's of Digital Marketing For Trade Shows

Using a combination of email marketing, social media engagement and blog posts, you will be better able to score big with event attendees. Below you'll find tips on what to market and who you should market to:

### What do you market?

- × **Your company's presence at a show**
  - **Special event-only offers**
- × **Free show passes**
- **Contests, raffles and other in-booth giveaways**
- × **Events you are sponsoring or holding at the show**
- **Educational resources such as whitepapers, catalogs, product demonstration videos and client testimonials**

### Who do you market to?

- × **Current clients attending the show**
- **Prospects likely to attend the show**
- × **Media outlets**
- **Partners**
- × **Contacts from the pre-registration attendee list provided by event organizers**

Purchasers and decision makers may not always be able to attend a trade show. They instead rely on third-party sources to decide which products and services to purchase—mainly turning to industry media outlets for credible and reliable information. If you are able to successfully court the media, you can reach these non-attendees, and in turn increase your trade show marketing ROI. A strong public relations plan can pay huge dividends. Below is a list of tactics and approaches to consider when planning for media engagement:

#### • Media Outreach

Identify the reporters, bloggers and media outlets that you believe will best help disseminate your message. You must establish your credibility and knowledge by clearly illustrating how you differ from your competitors. A good pitch will garner interest in your exhibition and establish key media relationships early on.

#### • Content/Trade Show Media Kit

Follow up with your media outreach by sending content relevant to your products, services and expertise. If you are planning to unveil a new product or service, send media contacts a press release or invite them to a press conference covering your new product(s). You should also send a trade show media kit consisting of a press release, related high-resolution images, company fact sheet and contact information to give reporters everything they need to write about your product(s), services or company.

#### • Interviews

During media outreach, be sure to offer or accept requests for interviews. Interviews communicate your message to a wide

audience and separate you from your competitors by giving an in-depth look into your company. It is important to prepare yourself or your spokesperson for interviews. Perform mock interviews prior to the event to make sure your message is as clear as possible and projects confidence and professionalism.

#### • Hold a Press Conference

If newsworthy enough, hold a press conference in-booth at your trade show and invite all relevant press contacts to attend. Make sure that you have something worthwhile to share such as a revolutionary new product, merger or acquisition news, personnel changes, awards or recognition, new partnerships or new industry research.

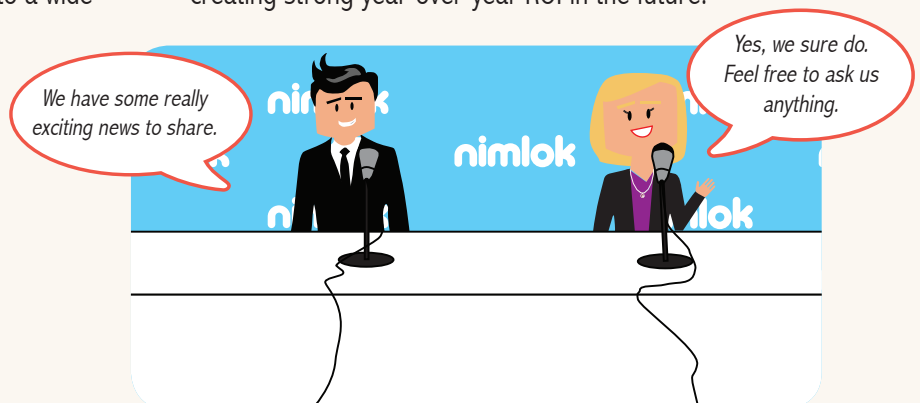
#### • Broadcast Your Press Coverage

Share news articles and videos about your company through email blasts, website content and social media. This will increase your exposure among clients and prospects, as well as those following show news and hashtags.

#### • Follow Up with Media Contacts and Bloggers

Reach out to reporters and bloggers who gave you coverage at the show. Personally thank them for their time and inform them that you plan to promote their content. To further capitalize on your media coverage, offer to promote to journalists that you are available for additional comments and post-event interviews.

Public relations programs take time to grow. Fine tuning your approach will come with experience. By setting the groundwork, you stand to reap the benefits of your efforts for years to come, creating strong year-over-year ROI in the future.





1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14

## Validate Your Investment

After the stadium lights have dimmed and the team is on the bus, smart coaches and marketers alike begin to analyze plays, stats and results. As a marketer, you have returned to the office from your event, there is still work to be done in validating your return on investment. You must analyze the results of your trade show plays and determine if the costs were worth the return. Aggregate all of your trade show achievements and assign a dollar value wherever possible. You may even have “short-term” and “long-term” return on your investment depending on your sales cycle. Types of achievements include:

- **Sales made**
- **Leads collected**
- **Media coverage**
- **Social media followers and engagement**
- **Website traffic**
- **Brand awareness**
- **Thought leadership**
- **Professional development from lectures and workshops at the show**
- **Client and prospect meetings**
- **Investor or partner meetings**
- **Networking**

Add together the value of all of your achievements and multiply by 50%. This will be your gross margin. Subtract your total investments from your estimated profit, and then divide the sum by your total investments. This will give you your percentage of return. If your return percentage is less than your goal, identify areas for improvement and make plans to improve before your next big show.

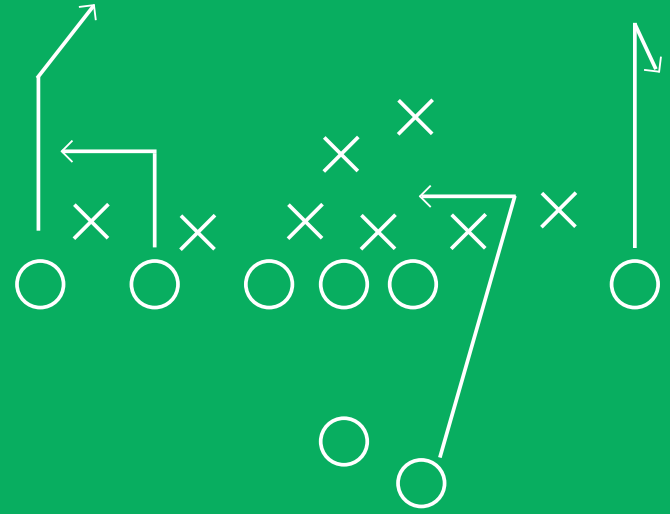
<u>Trade Show Investment:</u>	<u>Trade Show Achievements:</u>
Exhibit Expenses: \$15,000	Sales: \$89,000
Shipping/Logistics: \$2,000	Leads Collected: \$100,000
Travel/Accommodations: \$3,000	Website Traffic: \$8,000
Dinners: \$3,000	Professional Development: \$10,000
Marketing Materials: \$1,000	Media Coverage: \$15,000
	Client and Prospect Meetings: \$12,000
	Investor Meetings: \$30,000
 Total Investment: \$24,000	 Total Achievements: \$264,000
	*Est. Gross Margin (50%): \$132,000
 <b><u>Return On Investment:</u></b>	
$\frac{\$132,000 - \$24,000}{\$132,000} = 8 \times \text{ROI Return on Investment}$	
* Vary's per company, margins, etc.	





# Conclusion

Thanks to advanced technology and sophisticated measuring tools, marketers can better measure and evaluate the results of their efforts. Event and trade show marketing offer high rewards, but often come with high price tags. By implementing the strategies and tactics outlined in this guide, you will not only maximize your event marketing ROI, you will be better able to deliver consistent event campaign homeruns and trade show touchdowns.



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