EXPOPLATFORM

THE FUTURE OF EVENTS SERIES

# The Monetisation Blueprint

How to accelerate digital revenue growth: a practical guide for event organisers

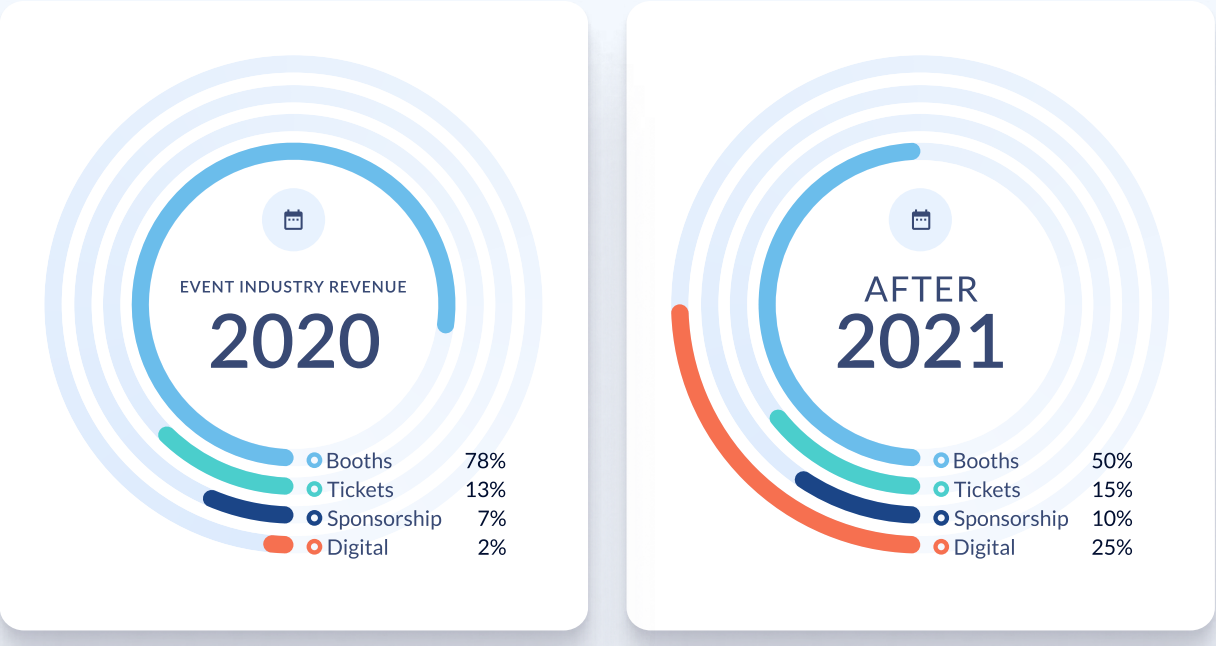


# Introduction

The event industry is currently undergoing one of the biggest shakeups to its business model it has ever seen.

The inexorable rise and rise of digital marketing, accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, has fundamentally changed how organisers will engage and monetise communities for years to come.

Latest estimates highlight that digital revenue is anticipated to grow from just two percent of exhibition model to 25 percent, with stand sales dropping from 78 percent to 50 percent of the revenue mix.




Source: AMR / Globex

This kind of evolution will take more than just technology. To make this shift successfully will need new skill sets and new processes. It requires a complete re-evaluation of the customer value proposition and how it is delivered with a blend of digital and in-person engagement.

More than anything it needs leadership to fully commit themselves to the new exhibition model - to set a clear, ambitious path towards building an omnichannel business that connects buyers and sellers throughout the year, combined with a firm belief that in-person events will remain the high point of engagement.

Our previous ebooks - the Marketplace Blueprint and the Hybrid Blueprint - have explored how to change to product mix. In the Monetisation Blueprint we focus on providing practical advice for organisers to make this shift in revenue mix.

We hope you find this a helpful resource - and good luck!

**Luke Bilton**
Chief Growth Officer, ExpoPlatform



**Thank you to all our contributors:**

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01



# Keeping up with a changing landscape

Consumer and business habits have changed forever.

Events organisers had been fairly slow to keep up with change, as the traditional business model had always proven good return on high margins.  But if the pandemic has proven anything, it is that events need to adapt as aggressively as other disrupted industries - such as publishing and television - have over the last decade.

> *When you've got a business model that's just printing money - terrific margins and a sense that people just keep coming and coming year after year - it creates a certain amount of hubris and lack of willingness to change and lack of willingness to invest. Because why bother?*
>
> *Suddenly we had this shock wave across the world of Covid-19 which displaced everything live from sporting events to retail, purchasing, into certainly B2B trade shows and conferences. The mad-dash is then on to try to supplement that revenue wherever possible with whatever solution one could muster up.*

**Brian Field**
COO of Emerald



Read the full Transformation Story

Key trends include:

01

## Ongoing uncertainty

It is clear that pandemics and local lockdowns are not going to disappear. A study from McKinsey suggests around 20 percent of corporate travel could be lost in future, compared with figures from before the pandemic.

While digital technologies have been available for a long time, they have often been seen as an optional extra to a live show as opposed to something organisers should be actively pursuing. The pandemic forced drastic changes to how businesses can make money in the industry without in-person shows. Now we have learnt some of those skills, it is important to build them into an overall strategy to pandemic-proof your budget, offering an alternative in case of cancellation or travel restrictions.

Despite this, the 27th UFI Global Barometer estimates only 47 percent of organisers have built a digital event strategy for individual existing shows or products, even with the ongoing threat of coronavirus restrictions to physical events.

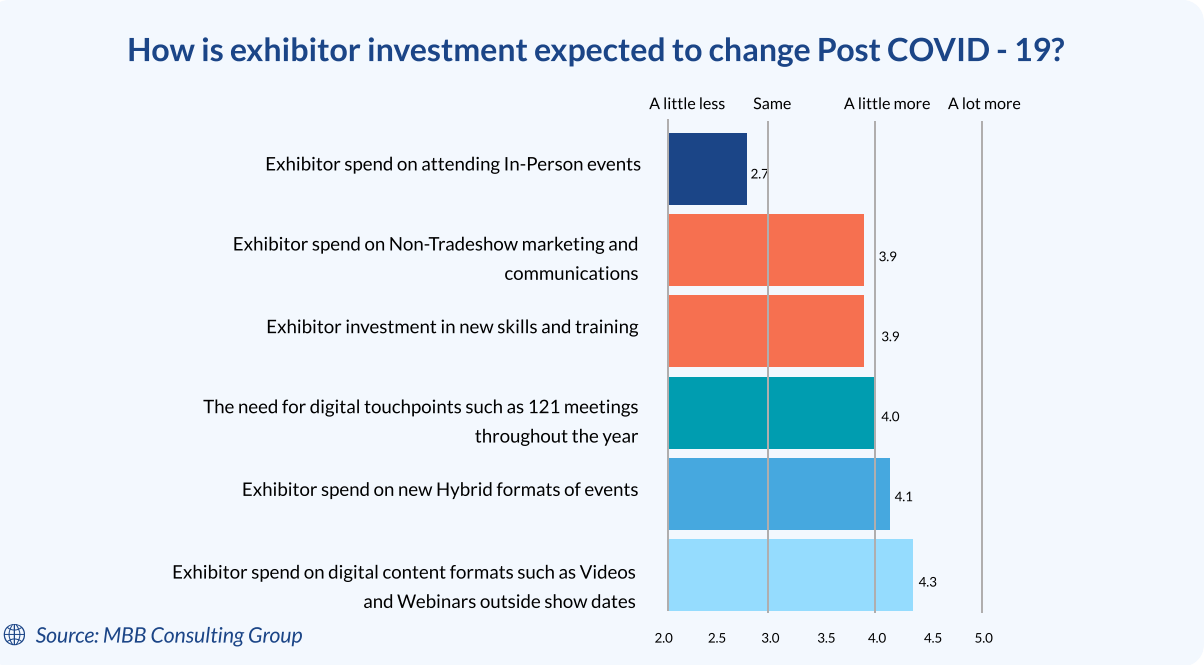



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# Spend has shifted from in-person to digital

The global trend towards digital channels is nothing new. For the last two decades, digital advertising has steadily grown each year and in 2021 is currently estimated to be worth £333 billion ($455 billion USD). This represents 61 percent of all advertising (more than TV, print, cinema and outdoor combined) and is forecast to rise to 68 percent by 2024. *Source: Emarketer, March 2021*

Out of necessity, the move of exhibitor marketing spend to digital has been accelerated by the pandemic. A recent Exhibition Think Tank (ETT) survey of members showed how organisers are expecting exhibitors' investment to shift following the Covid-19 pandemic. Spending on pure tradeshow activities is predicted to decline, with exhibitors anticipated to increase investment in digital content, hybrid events and training of their own teams.




Furthermore, findings from the Exhibitor Media Group show 48 percent of exhibitors are expected to invest less for events which had to be rescheduled than they would have done before Covid-19.

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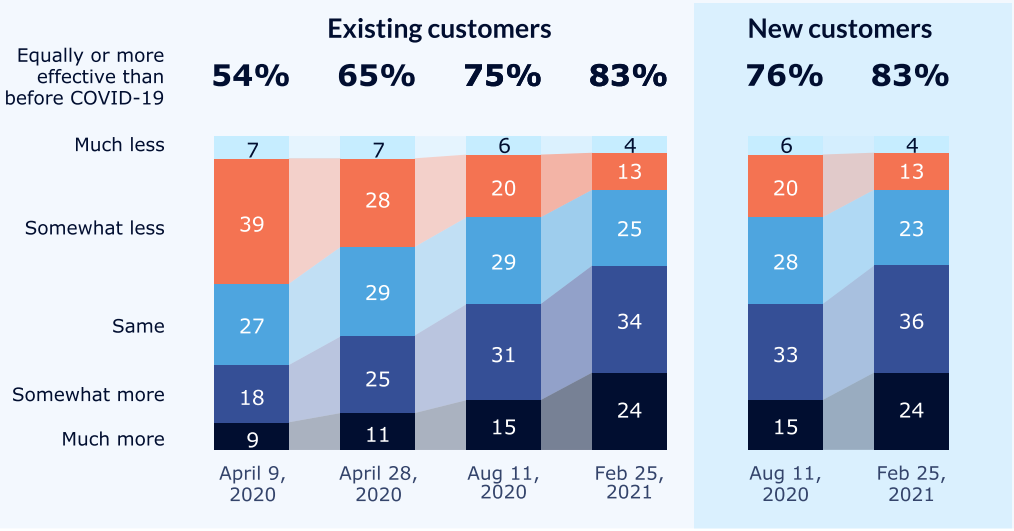
# Rise of marketplaces

Buying and selling rapidly shifted online during the pandemic.

A total of 83 percent of B2B buyers surveyed in a McKinsey study have found digital (either ecommerce or remote sales) to be equally or more effective than the traditional approach. This research ran throughout the pandemic, showing how the comfort with losing face-to-face increased quickly as buyers became more comfortable with digital channels.

**Effectiveness of new sales model in reaching and serving customers**

% of respondents




70 percent of B2B decision-makers told a McKinsey and Company survey they are open to making self-serve or remote purchases worth more than £35,800 ($50,000), while 27 percent were willing to spend more than £358,000 ($500,000). This shows that changes forced by coronavirus are not disappearing. Instead, there is more confidence in digital as an approach for B2B buying and selling.

The choice for event organisers is to either be part of the online buying and selling, or to miss out entirely.

Marketplace platforms such those offered by ExpoPlatform can provide year-round leads-as-a-service for customers through features such as AI-based product recommendations, RFI tendering, content, online messaging and video calls.

Including a marketplace listing in an exhibitor's contract is a natural upsell and can significantly increase the amount they get from exhibiting.

## Your deep dive into the hot topics with the Ebook Blueprint series

For more on this download the Marketplace Blueprint



04

# The subscription economy

The subscription economy has grown by 435 percent over nine years with the move in that direction looking like it will keep accelerating, according to Zuora research. Customers now place more value on outcomes over ownership. Netflix, Spotify and Amazon Prime have all succeeded with this model. Digital nomadism, working from home and the gig economy have taken the world by storm. The message is clear: people want more control over how they work, connect and purchase.

- ***Why** buy a ticket for one blockbuster when a streaming service gives you access to hundreds?*
- ***Why** buy one album when you can listen to almost limitless music through an online subscription?*
- ***Why** prioritise making connections at one conference when you can engage with your industry throughout the year?*

The subscription model creates predictable, recurring revenue streams for businesses, and can be used by exhibition organisers to have suppliers subscribe for a year of activity rather than a one-off event.

05

# Micropayments

Micropayments are an untapped opportunity for event marketers. This method can be utilised to improve the effectiveness of targeted email campaigns, with a pay-per-message package. Rather than paying a blanket amount to cover a database, exhibitors could choose to pay for 500 messages which will go directly to potential leads who are more likely to become customers.

Targeted communications help trade shows become more effective, using advertisements through online platforms or email campaigns to build awareness among potential customers.

An association's perspective.

James Hampton, director of operations at MCI UK, said:

> *You need that extended engagement outside of the period of the event, because it really allows you to bring in more members - and not necessarily just members, but customers.*
>
> *You might create an online community that's free to join, therefore you could potentially have 10,000 customers or people that are interested in what you're talking about.*
>
> *You may only have 1,000 people that pay a subscription to be an actual member, but all the rest of the 9,000 are just happy to be part of that community. They can dip in when they want, they can read some of the articles, they can join some of the discussions and find themselves becoming more and more engaged.*
>
> *That's the point where they become a member and you can grow your membership base. From the member perspective, it's a new way for them to engage. It certainly attracts the younger audience - that's a real challenge for associations.*

**James Hampton**
director of operations at MCI UK



An example of how year-round community platform, webinars and events can be part of a seamless experience for members, supported by a common data platform.



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# Digital solutions and packages

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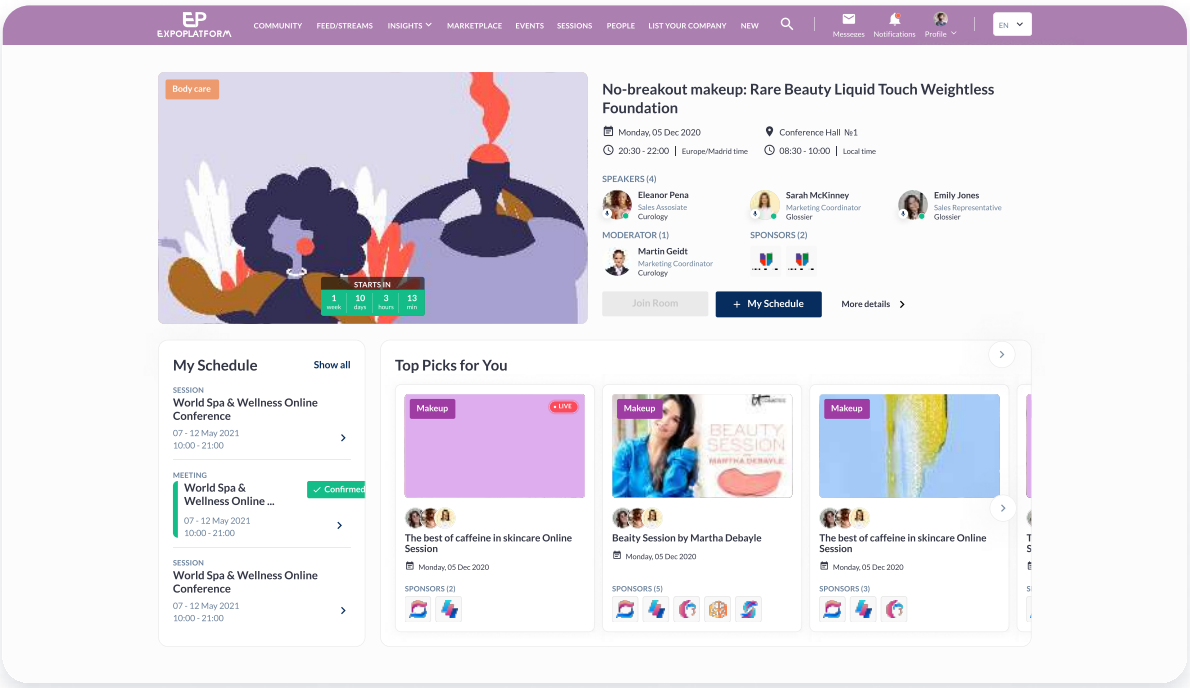
# What kind of digital solutions are there?

**There are three main types of sponsored digital solutions**: thought leadership, branding and lead generation services. Digital platforms can give you a large amount of inventory pre, during and post an event.

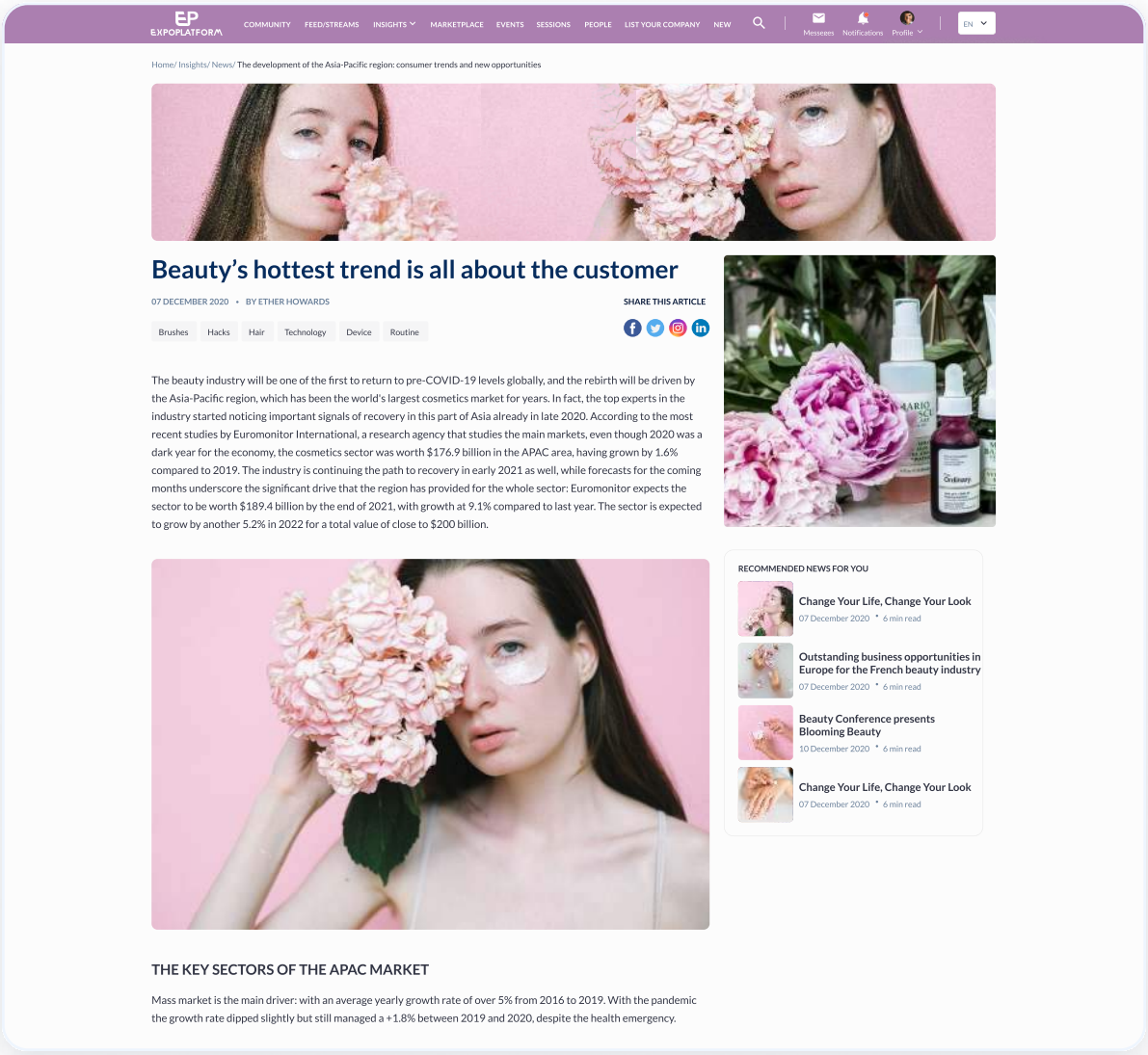
Here is an overview of the inventory available to you:

**Thought leadership** allows customers to showcase content which can educate your audience, provide new insights and share case studies

| | |
|---|---|
| Sponsored conference sessions | Sponsored conference sessions are both a thought leadership and lead generation opportunity. The client's logo is associated with sessions and they will receive the leads of all viewers.<br><br>These sessions can be hosted live and kept on-demand to continue the promotion post-event. |

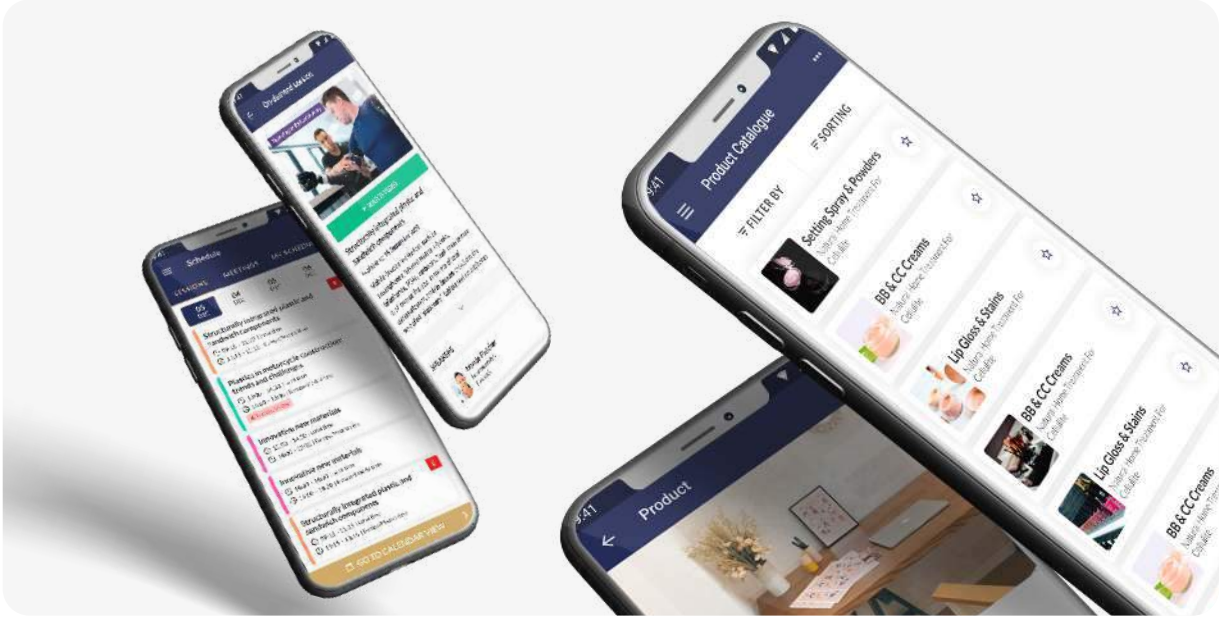


| | |
|---|---|
| Sponsored editorial | Online communities provide many content marketing opportunities for sponsors. Clients' product announcements can be promoted through advertorials, videos and infographics in a trusted editorial environment.<br><br>This should be clearly labelled on the site as 'sponsored content' (or similar). The content should be promoted through your brand's email and social media to drive traffic. |
| Breakouts and workshops | Invitation-only breakout rooms, workshops and roundtables are an excellent engagement and sponsorship opportunity.<br><br>Conducted virtually, they can be used to bring different audiences together around key topics, and provide leads for the sponsor. |




**Sponsored editorial can start with written article and upgraded with video or infographics**

| **Branding solutions** can raise the profile of key clients with sponsorship and advertising before, during and after an event | |
|---|---|
| Online advertising | Exhibitors can drive brand awareness by a range of advertising positions across the online platform and emails. Inventory can include display banner ads, video pre-rolls to run ahead of content sessions, promotion in email newsletters, typically sold by cost-per-thousand impressions (CPM) or tenancy.<br><br>In addition to monetising their inventory, many organisers also sell the re-targeting of audience across other third-party platforms, and the geo-targeting of visitors to a physical venue. |
| Event sponsorships | Hybrid and virtual event platforms can have high-profile sponsorship branding available across a platform.<br><br>Opportunities include sponsor branding on the homepage, virtual lobby pages and sponsoring online meetings. |
| Mobile app sponsorship | For in-person and hybrid events, the mobile app is a key sponsorship opportunity. Mobile apps can be “owned” by a headline sponsor, who also receives branding around all promotions of the app and through in-app advertising positions. |

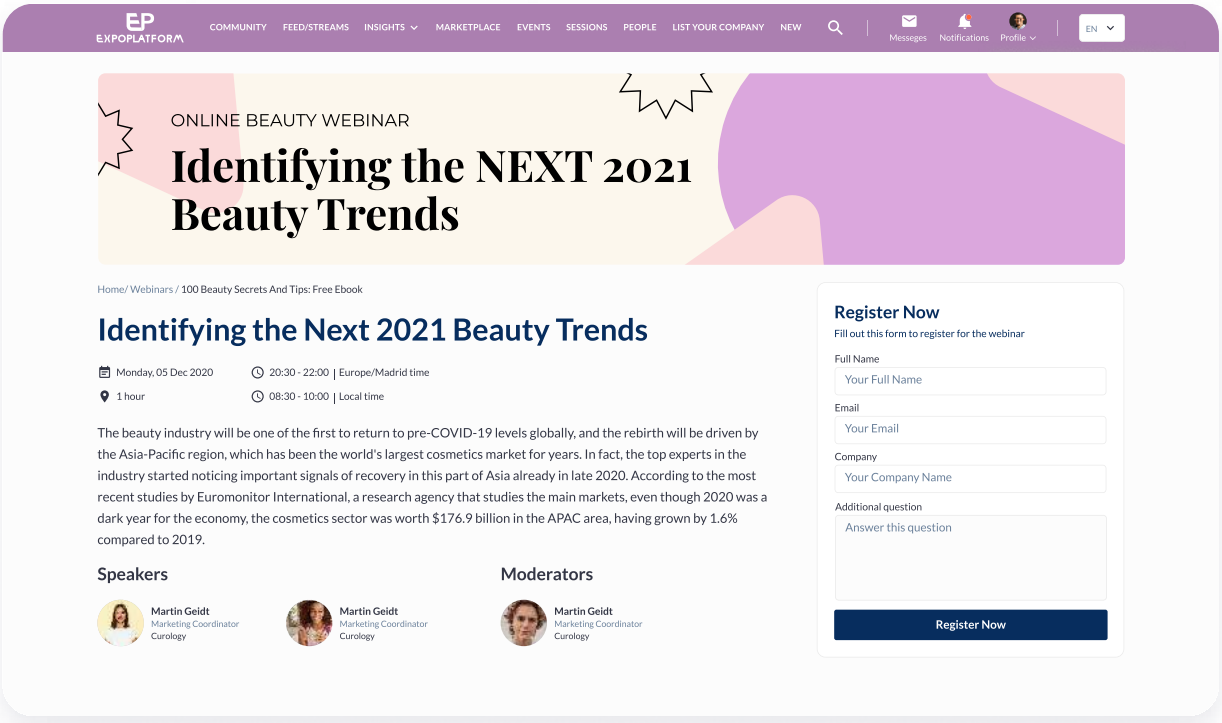


| | |
|---|---|
| Community groups sponsorship | Community discussion groups can create multiple sponsorship opportunities. These can be created around different topics, for groups to come together, share updates and content, all surrounded by a sponsor's branding. |
| Podcast sponsorship | The global rise of podcast adoption presents a good opportunity for event organisers to repurpose conference sessions and interview speakers in a regular audio podcast. Sponsorship typically covers in-audio messages in the episode itself, as well as including their branding in any online or email promotion. |

**Lead generation** services use gated content and user-tracking to provide the client with opted-in, qualified sales leads

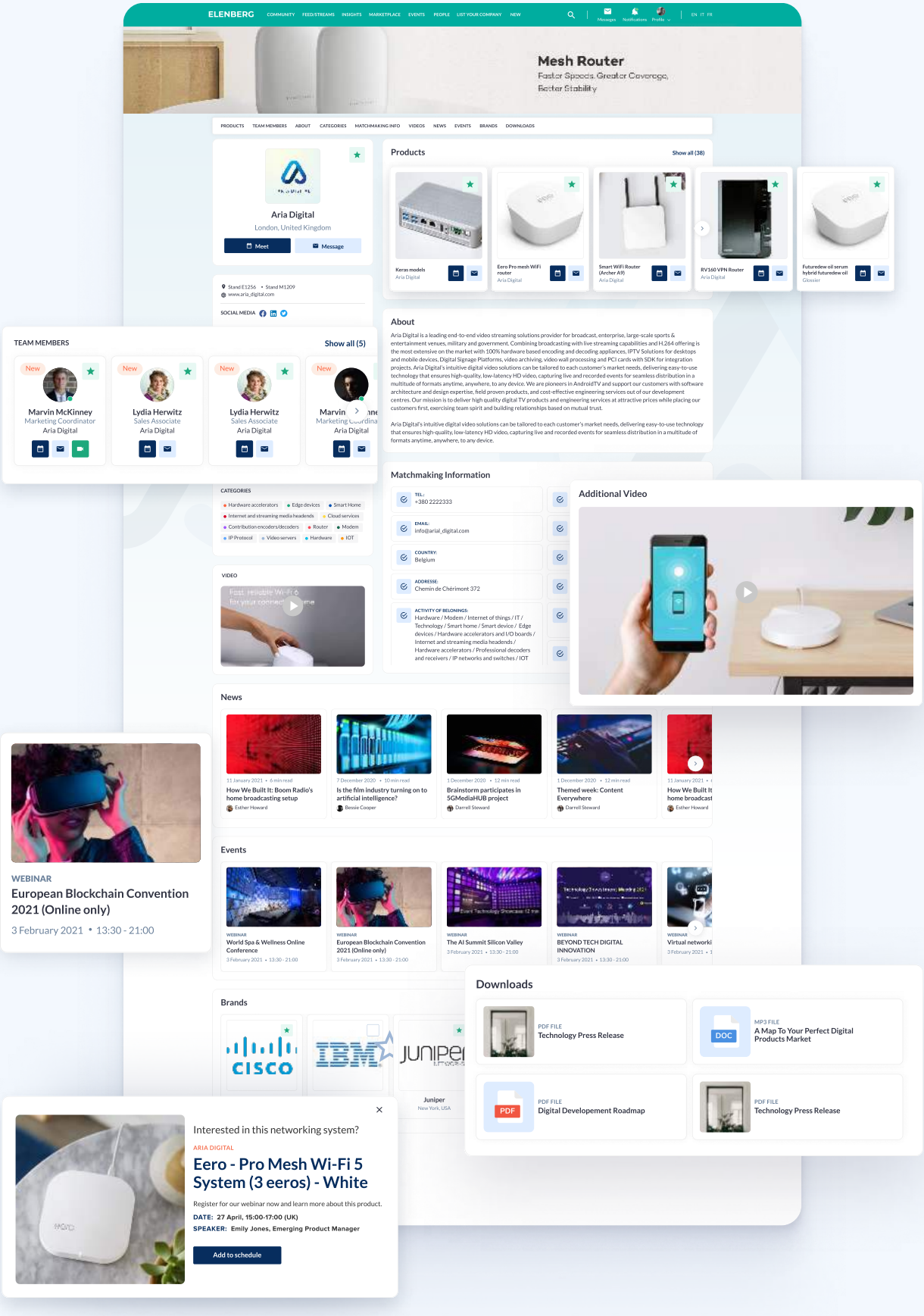
| | |
|---|---|
| Marketplace profiles | Company profiles in a marketplace can be the starting point for most event organisers.<br><br>The company profile gives the exhibitor a presence in an online marketplace, provides tools to publish their products and news as well as a full dashboard to monitor the leads of all those who view their profile.<br><br>Organisers can create different tiers of profile (e.g. Gold, Silver, Bronze), with packages structured in order to incentivise clients to upgrade their listing. |
| Push notifications | Target attendees using the web or mobile app to receive a popup message on their screen or smartphone.<br><br>Exhibitors can request the content, date and time of the alert. This could be announcing a demo of your product or directing an attendee to a virtual booth.<br><br>Notifications can be targeted to focus on specific demographic groups and - if an event is using beacon technology - could also be location-based (for example, when an attendee is in a particular zone). |

| | |
|---|---|
| Ebooks and whitepapers | Hosting downloadable whitepapers, reports and ebooks on reports on a community platform in order to generate leads from visitors interested in reading about the topic.<br>This can be highly effective form of lead generation as downloads can continue to generate leads for customers year-round. |
| Webinars | Educate the industry with thought leadership around a specific topic and generate leads from everyone who registers to attend live or on-demand.<br><br>Visitors can be asked questions on the registration form, which are passed on to the sponsor along with their contact details. |
| Product demos and TechTalks | The webinar format can be used in a number of different ways, including focused product demonstrations, factory tours as well as deep-dives into the technology a supplier provides.<br>In product-led industries, this approach can prove more effective than a general educational webinar. The leads will typically be more responsive to discussing further with the sponsor's sales team. |




**Educate your industry with Webinars and Product Demos**

## An example of a Premium supplier profile on ExpoPlatform



# Dos and Don'ts of digital inventory management



❌ **DON'T** under-value your inventory. Many organisers have a history of offering digital as added-value. Make a break with the legacy agreements by relaunching with a new rate card and value proposition.

☑ **DO** your research first. Survey your customers about the types of digital solutions they find most effective. Compare rate cards with your competitors in your market to make sure your pricing is competitive.

❌ **DON'T** throw too many options at a client. Instead, come up with a reduced list of options which you know are attractive to customers and that you can deliver.

❌ **DON'T** be generic. Make your digital solutions stand out by customising it for your brand and content themes. For example, instead of selling a generic webinar, launch a "BRAND Academy Series" with limited number of sponsorship opportunities around key content topics.

☑ **DO** create urgency. Maintain a tracker of sold inventory and inform clients about how many slots are still available from a limited number of options. Regularly update clients what's proving popular and when you have sold out.

❌ **DON'T** make it hard to buy. Any confusion can be enough to stop a client buying from you, so find ways to make it as easy as possible. Create media packs which include clear visuals, descriptions and pricing of every solution. Be able to offer a full menu of options to clients who want to build their own and a few user-friendly packages for those who want simplicity.

# Hybrid packages

Package your inventory into a series of easy-to-buy bundles with pricing to reflect the value your customers will receive at each tier. This is better than just presenting customers with a long list of options.

Here is an example of what digital exhibitor packages might look like:

| | BRONZE | SILVER | GOLD | PLATINUM |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Company profile** with logo & description, social media links, website and searchable categories | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Exhibitor lead dashboard** to rank and monitor leads for online and scans from mobile app | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Schedule 1-2-1 meetings** and conduct video calls with customers | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| **AI recommendations** promoting your brand to relevant visitors | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Publish products** on your company profile | ✗ | 4 | 8 | 12 |
| **Host downloadable assets** such as press releases and brochures | ✗ | 4 | 8 | 12 |
| **Premium profile Customise** profile with an additional video header image, custom background and sessions/scheduled events | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ Side bar video and custom background | ✓ Plus featured video and header banner |
| **Pop Up banner** on your company profile to drive leads from visitors | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ |
| **Promoted listing** appears at the top of searchable exhibitors list | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ Also highlighted on floorplan |
| **Feature logo** highlighted on floorplan and welcome lobby | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ |
| **Banner** across platform | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ |
| **Access** for the life of platform | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Exhibitor representative** to manage profile and accessible in chat/meetings/ video calls | 1 rep | 2 reps | 5 reps | 12 reps |

**Timothy Skennion**, managing director of Derabo Advisory Group, has designed an approach which is easy to customise and gives numerous sponsor-to-attendee touch points throughout the course of the year.



Creating an incredible virtual event experience and keeping them engaged post-event creates additional opportunities to monetise your audience post-event.

This can be through content programmes, subscription opportunities and eventually paid event opportunities.

Sponsors still have the same needs that virtual events are built to meet: that's providing qualified leads through the attendees and creating a platform for delivering their thought leadership and sharing their expertise with their target audience.

Virtual events still provide a great opportunity to meet both of those objectives of sponsorship.

# An integrated sponsorship package

Tim Skennion has provided an example digital and in-person package of activity covering pre, during and post show:

## ✔ Pre-Event

1. **Interview with sponsor speaker**
   - Include a brief summary of sponsor solutions
   - Drive additional branding and sharing of thought leadership for sponsors
   - Creating value to organiser by highlighting a speaker
2. **Publish an 'About Sponsor' message**
   - Snippets under one minute are shared as part of pre-event promotion
   - Distribute as dedicated, stand-alone message - email, social to nurture registrants
3. **Original content**
   - Make original blogs and other sponsor content created by the sponsor available to all registrants

## ✔ Day of Event

1. **Offer a sponsored speaking opportunity**
   - Provide sponsor with attendee list from speaking session
2. **Live poll before or after session**
   - Provide sponsor with contact information and results from the survey
3. **On-site sponsor interviews can be coordinated in advance to drive traffic to sessions**
4. **Live and virtual hybrid booth**
   - Provide opportunities for live and virtual attendees to engage with sponsors and download their content

## ✔ Post-Event

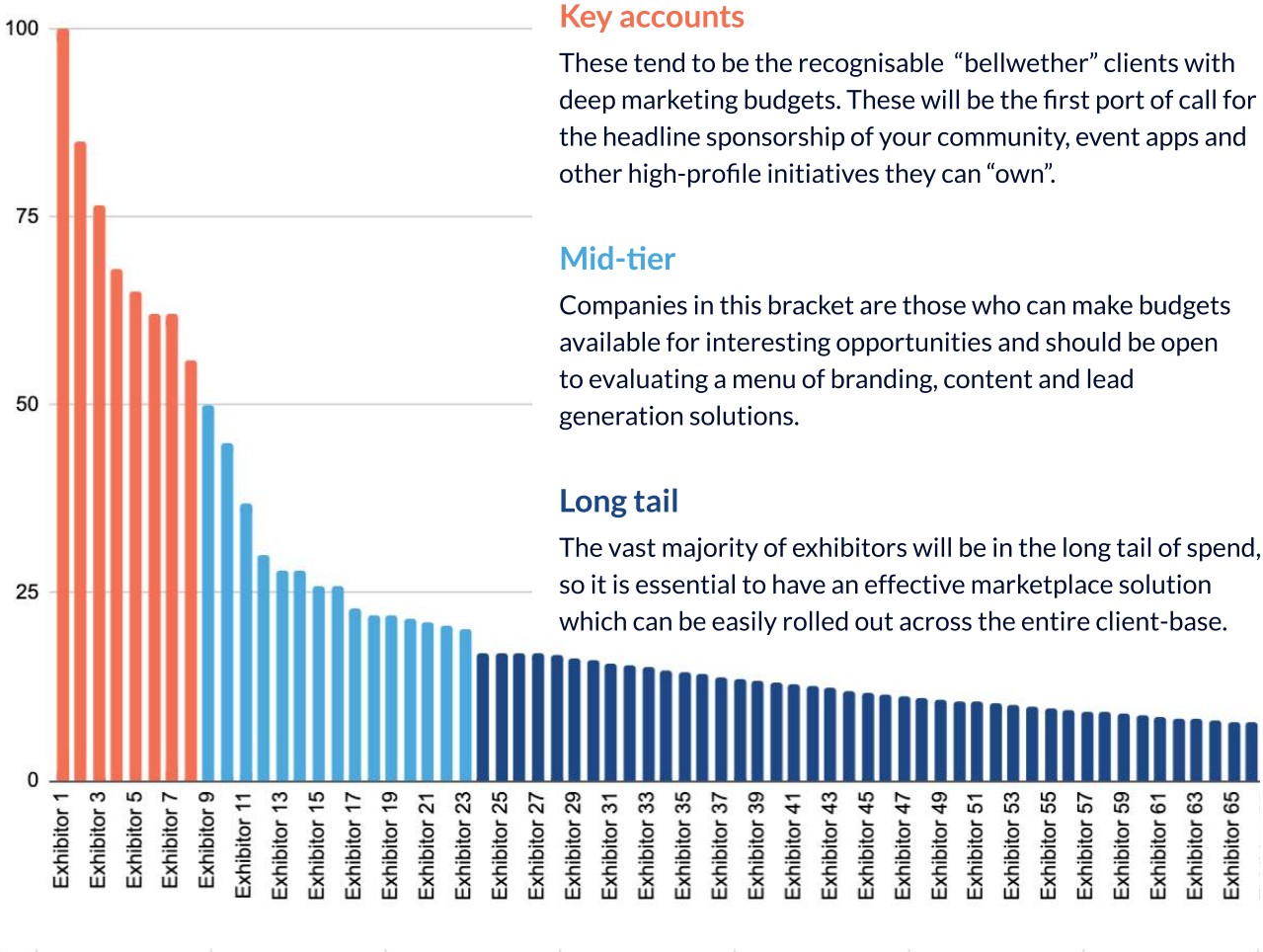
1. **Share video of a sponsor speaking session to all registrants - email and social**
   - Provide sponsor with contact information of all viewers
   - Host as on-demand indefinitely on event website to be downloaded
2. **Distribute multiple versions of original sponsor content between three and six months after the event**
   - Make it available to all attendees and maintain engagement
   - Provide contact information of all viewers to sponsor

02

# Segment your client-base

Not all exhibitors are equal, with a wide range of budgets and expectations.
An important consideration when drawing up your digital packages is to have solutions which will suit companies of all sizes.

Segmenting an exhibition based on historical spend will usually look something like the graph below:




### Key accounts

These tend to be the recognisable "bellwether" clients with deep marketing budgets. These will be the first port of call for the headline sponsorship of your community, event apps and other high-profile initiatives they can "own".

### Mid-tier

Companies in this bracket are those who can make budgets available for interesting opportunities and should be open to evaluating a menu of branding, content and lead generation solutions.

### Long tail

The vast majority of exhibitors will be in the long tail of spend, so it is essential to have an effective marketplace solution which can be easily rolled out across the entire client-base.

Don't forget: digital solutions have potential to appeal to a wider range of suppliers than those who currently exhibit at a physical event. Make sure to have competitively priced entry-level digital packages which are suitable for new prospects such as startups and international exhibitors.

03

# Package live and digital together

## A monetisation journey

A hybrid blend of live and digital channels should seek to use the best of both worlds, to create what has been called a "monetisation journey" through the extended lifecycle of an event.

The monetisation journey, a concept developed by MBB-Consulting Group, allows an exhibitor to pay for a series of touch points. One element is the physical stand, but there are also other opportunities to offer within the industry such as online panel discussions or digital product presentations. A subscription model may be suitable here, where an exhibitor can choose to pay an annual fee for a touchpoint package which includes a certain number of digital and live elements.

> *For the innovative event producer, hybrid events provide a blank canvas for reinventing the event experience - for attendees and sponsors alike - through unlimited formats, content and engagement opportunities.*

**Timothy Skennion**
managing director of Derabo Advisory Group



Offer a menu of options to allow differently sized businesses to buy a package of live and virtual event touch points at different rates. A smaller firm could purchase a tabletop of about 20sqm, with an online product tour for one month and a virtual panel discussion at another time of year. Meanwhile, a large business could pay for a stand of more than 50sqm in a physical show as well as two panel discussions, two industry talks, an online award, online stand and virtual product tours across four months. These would be priced relatively and could be paid for annually. It is important this journey should be designed with three elements in mind: exclusivity, urgency and purpose.

**Exclusivity:** a limited inventory of in-person and online options is a tried and tested way to encourage bookings.

**Urgency:** these options can have limited availability - such as spaces sitting in on a panel discussion - which makes it important to reserve tickets sooner.

**Purpose:** make sure your offerings deliver results for sponsors and audiences.
The relationship built between customers and brands becomes a community through content which is mutually beneficial.

> *We have created the concept of a monetisation journey to bring live and digital B2B products together that make sense for exhibiting companies and enables them to get visibility and leads throughout the year.*

**Tesi Baur**
founder of MBB-Consulting Group



# Monetising visitors

**Consider how you would like to monetise visitors**

The first begins with free online content which is open to all. Complementary components like this act as adverts for your products and brand awareness. They attract people who have an interest in what you are selling and search online for it.

The second tier involves potential customers signing up. These people already know you have good content but now want access to exclusive articles, showcases or products. This is because they have had their interest piqued by the free offerings. Content such as expert insights or webinars then become available to them once they have signed up and logged in.

A third tier could include paid-for access to VIP content, such as being able to connect with mastermind groups or think tanks as well as an annual pass to an event series.

> Other ways of gaining revenue may include accessing different areas of a digital event: you pay a premium to achieve more content, gain more dedicated speaker access - even paying to attend a networking party.
>
> You offer limited free content but then after registration, you are sent to another pathway.

**Donna Shaw**
COO Of Rego



Limit spaces available to online content to make it exclusive to those who have subscribed. Target this audience by giving them FOMO - such as “only a few spaces remain” to industry leader presentations or panel discussions. The purpose is it keeps customers engaged with your content, informing decisions and improving products for a better ROI.

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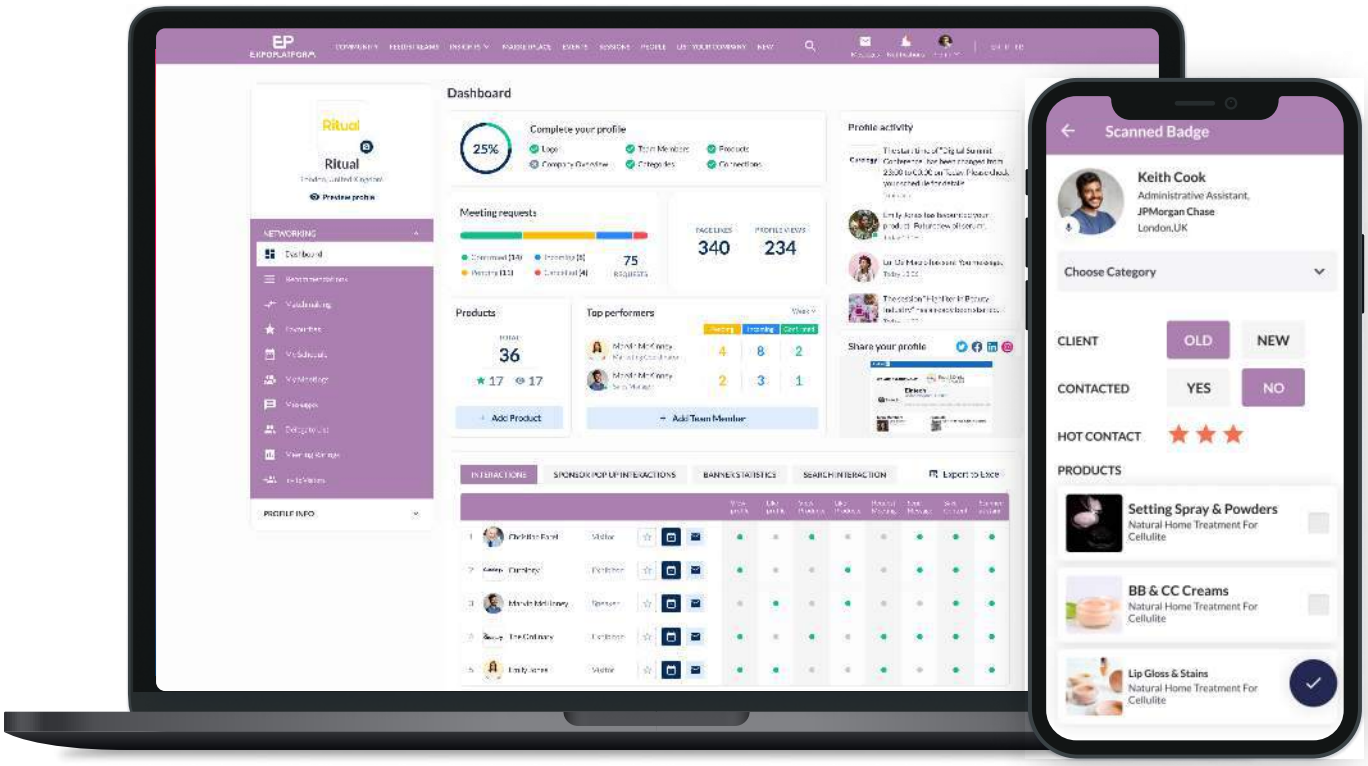
# Offer transparent return on investment

Today's marketers are used to using Linkedin, Google and Facebook - platforms which all show real-time statistics. To remain competitive, the event industry needs to be equally transparent about how marketer budgets are being spent, providing customers with useful statistics about who is engaging with their profile and content. Gone are the days where organisers can expect rebookings year after year without proof of ROI.

Platforms such as ExpoPlatform provide exhibitors with a real-time dashboard of information about all customers who have engaged with their online company profile, as well as the products and content they publish at their physical stand.

The integrated mobile app allows for lead scanning of badges - barcodes or QR codes - which is available for visitors and exhibitors, who can rate and categorise leads and add notes.

All leads captured are stored in an exhibitor's dashboard, bringing together online and offline results together into a single view.



*Covid-19 has forced everyone into realising that technology - whether it's rented or owned - is an absolute necessity.*

*Organisers can't just go back to a pre-Covid-19 way of doing things because the way things used to be done - coupled with the absence of performance data - has been increasingly challenging for chief marketing officers seeking hard calculations of ROI.*

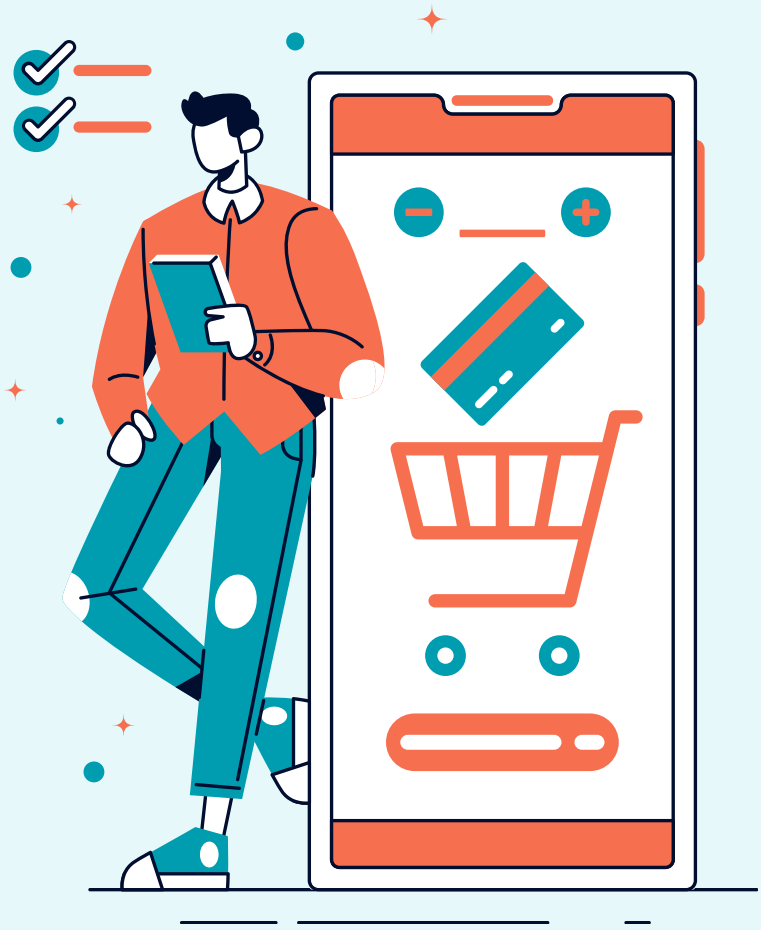
*Being able to use data and supporting tools to generate clear measures and metrics around ROI is required. We have to do it.*

*Covid-19 has accelerated the need for broader technological adoption, which is something the industry was going to have to do anyway.*

**Brian Field**
COO of Emerald



03



# How to adapt your sales team to the new world

01

# Do organisers have *credibility* to sell digital?

Our contributors were asked whether traditional events organisers have the credibility to sell a digital product. The responses reveal a promising future for conference producers in this virtual world, but they must be willing to make changes to their business models.

> The number one asset event organisers have is a large volume of high-quality data. Audiences an exhibitor wants to reach at the live event will be just as relevant online. This should give instant credibility - or at least a seat at the table - if the organiser can create a compelling offering.

**Luke Bilton**
Chief Growth Officer, ExpoPlatform



> The advantage of the exhibition industry to sell digital products is our access to the most relevant people of the industries we are serving, as we know them and can access them through the trade shows we organise. That should put us in a pole position when it comes to offering digital products.

**Tesi Baur**
founder of MBB-Consulting Group



However, Tesi Baur believes the event industry still needs to build up a skilled workforce that truly understands digital products and is able to unlock the potential they have when combined with live. He added:

> I don't think that our exhibitors are turning their heads to us when they are seeking the right digital products. We need to gain the trust of our customer when it comes to digital and hybrid products.

**Donna Shaw,** COO of Rego, believes there will be a gap emerge between organisers who embrace technology and those who don't.



The whole culture of exhibitions remains quite old school. It's getting better, but it has been a very traditional ethos.

But it's that gap between them, getting that mentality to buy in and to understand that we can work together here and we can evolve.

I think the people that have embraced that are the ones that are going to come out the other side and make this work.

**Heather Holst-Knudsen**, CEO and managing partner at H2k Partners, said that organisers' sales teams have to go out with "a different narrative". She believes an event is an event "whether it's face-to-face or virtual" - it's just different channels.



We don't call it digital content or pre-content - it's content. Now it's going to take some time to really get that to sink in, but it's in the wheelhouse of the event organiser to take the lead on that.

I think it's also in their wheelhouse to educate customers about what constitutes a great virtual experience and how that is different than face-to-face. It could be anything from micro-events to a peer-to-peer 25-person roundtable that happens every Thursday at 10 am. It could be a whole two-day event, but whatever it is, it's the organiser's responsibility to educate and train their customers on how to leverage virtual events to extract maximum value.

**Tanya Thomas**, chief sales officer at GDS Group, gives her advice for how exhibition sales teams should handle themselves during the pandemic:



- Be a solution provider rather than a salesperson. Find out your customer's needs with a genuine interest by asking smart questions and making sure we listen to the answers.

- Make sure you understand and articulate that you still have the audience your customer needs to access. The vehicle has changed - from physical to digital - and the added efficiency and value delivered by digital delivers greater ROI when executed well.

- Create super-smart digital solutions that bridge a customers pipeline gap and deliver ROI in the short-medium term.

02

# Pivoting from live to digital solutions



## Raoul Monks

**CEO and founder of Flume Training** offers practical advice for sales teams to successfully pivot from live event sales to digital.

### 1. Remind clients why they bought into live events in the first place

There was a reason why your client needed live events in the first place. Now is the time to revisit those reasons. What did they want to achieve? What were the outcomes and impacts that they wanted? What were they looking for?
It's likely that their answers will come down to thought leadership, branding and lead generation.

### 2. Establish what success looks like for your client

Focus your client on their new goals. How do they want to come through this? What do they want to achieve with their clients and potential clients? What do they want to be known for after this crisis? There is a chance that your clients don't have answers to all of these questions so you have the opportunity to share examples of what you are seeing in the market and make recommendations.

### 3. Teach the client about your audience

Once you understand what success looks like for your client, teach them how your audience is changing behaviour. Explain that in the absence of face-to-face interaction, the audience is leaning in more to digital alternatives. Explore what products you have or could create that will work for your audience and help your client achieve their goals.

### 4. Build solutions around impact

Once you have identified which digital products are going to help your client achieve their goals, you need to co-create a solution that is built around delivering the right impact. This will provide your client with a simple story that they can use to justify the spend internally to other stakeholders outside of sales and marketing.

# Here are some common mistakes to avoid:

- **Pretending digital alternatives are the same as live events.** We have to acknowledge that digital solutions are different from live events - to do otherwise would be odd and could damage the level of trust between you and your client.

- **Focusing on the tech.** Clients don't really care about the tech - they care about why they're buying it and what it's going to do for them. Spending too long talking about the intricacies of your new tech will have a detrimental effect on the sales experience.

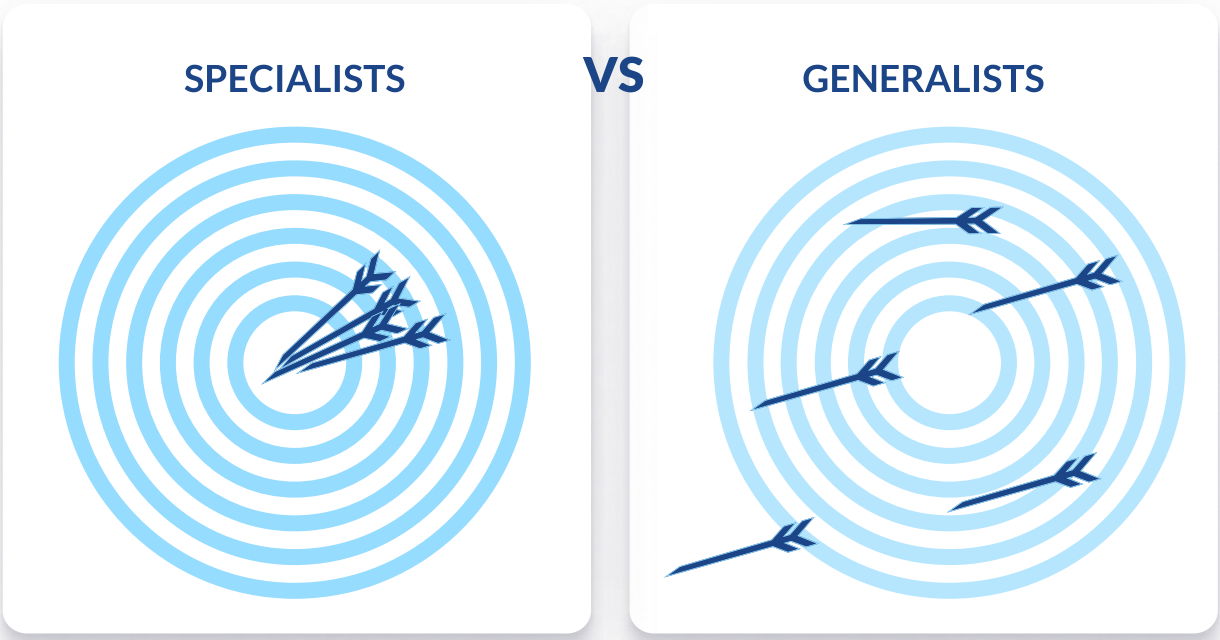
- **Being too passive.** It is very easy to accept "no" from your clients right now. However, if your true motivation is to help your client get through this crisis and you believe that your digital products will help them engage with your audience, then you should be prepared to be assertive and teach them why this is the right way forward. Being too passive now is not the right thing for your client.



03

# How to structure for success

The digital transformation of events has given an opportunity for organisers to rethink how they structure sales teams. There are now so many different channels for promoting content, engagement and marketplaces which can be handled in different ways. But which direction should an organiser take when trying to restructure their sales team? There are two schools of thought about how to do this: specialists or generalists.



# DIGITAL SPECIALISTS

There is a new generation of people who have grown up with social media and know how to use it to reach a targeted audience. Bringing in specialists who know how to utilise emerging technologies could give your business a competitive edge.

> *Digital and live events sit side-by-side, but they're two very different business models, returning different kinds of revenues and profit margins. It takes different skill sets and conversations. Unless we realise that, collectively, we're not going to progress. That has been proven in the last 10 to 15 years of having non-technical sales people sell digital products - it just doesn't work.*
>
> *Bringing in more tech-savvy staff into your sales team can help you navigate this new world - they have expertise which can help your team understand the language and potential this new business model can offer.*
>
> *Along with full-time digital specialists, it can be useful to bring in freelancers ahead of an event to upsell customers.*

**Charlie Cracknell**
managing director of Inspired Minds



> *People that have evolved and embraced the technology will be the ones that come out the other end accepting that you can bring in external skill sets to support your own - making your event even better.*

**Donna Shaw**
COO Of Rego



# GENERALISTS

Bringing together your digital and event sales team can help to make the experience seamless for your customers. This is because having one person to go to under a single sales account manager makes it easier for them to communicate any concerns or requests. Furthermore, placing digital and sales teams under one umbrella allows for a unified vision when supporting customers.

> *Our exhibitors were pushing us to offer showcase pages and matchmaking services outside of the show cycle. They told us they are prepared to increase investment if we can prove the value and combine products into a single bundle - 'don't make me sign four different contracts'.*
>
> *We used to have specialist sales teams split by events and media. Now that approach doesn't make sense anymore and we have one team selling all solutions to an account.*

**Anna Knight**
vice-president of licensing at Informa Market's Global Licensing Group



So, specialists or generalists? The answer is probably "a bit of both": a key account team trained and incentivised on selling everything, plus digital specialists ready to jump in and support as required.

# CASE STUDY

## Combining digital and event sales

Anna Knight explains how she restructured her salesteam for digital growth.




*A clear separation existed between the media and events operations at Informa Market's Global Licensing Group in 2019. The sales team took 95 percent of its business from the in-person trade show, despite physical attendees constituting just a small fraction of the potential market. Print and digital media activity was limited to a news website, print magazine and email newsletters.*

*When in-person attendance gave way to online alternatives in 2020, Anna's team began trying out different types of online events and products. Digital content replaced print. Podcasts, white papers and webinars-on-request grew out of this reactive strategy, all with the aim of improving the proposition of an industry forced to operate remotely.*

*This strategy required a rethink of the sales team's duties. A single manager was put in charge of each account, responsible for both event and digital media sales. This allows for a clear vision and point of contact for customers who only want to deal with one person. The team's strategy was conceived to align its offering with the spending habits of its audience.*

**Anna Knight**
vice-president of licensing at Informa Market's Global Licensing Group



04



# A go-to-market checklist

Your go-to-market (GTM) plan will determine how successful you are at making the transition to a digital model. Whether you are monetising a year-round community or hybrid events, ensure you cover the following steps:

1. **Value-based pricing and packages**

   Make a break with legacy discounting, and create new ratecard based on the value clients will receive. Research competitor ratecards to ensure you don't price yourself out of the market.

2. **Create sales materials**

   Develop compelling branding and messaging to help tell your story, with packages covering branding, thought leadership and lead generation which are attractive for customers. Ask your technology vendor for any examples they have of great sales materials.

3. **Set KPIs**

   Make it clear what is expected from sales and marketing, breaking it down into weekly activity targets.

   Consider incentivising digital revenue more than physical stand sales, to encourage the revenue transition. For example, if you are expecting 25 percent of revenue to come from digital, consider it representing 50 percent of the sales target.

4. **Train your sales team**

   It is critical that your team is fully up-to-speed with the new offerings they are selling. Start with the importance of your audience, before moving into the new packages you are offering and their benefits.

   A gap with many exhibition sales teams can be with consultative selling that is required when introducing new channels to clients. Consider running training around consultative selling.

5 **Upgrades and upsells**

Define opportunities throughout the project to upgrade customers into a higher-level package. This can be at the point of when they first sign-up and from their dashboard when they become a user.

6 **Set up ecommerce payment**

How much of the sales could go through ecommerce payment? Set up a customer journey whereby new customers can purchase packages directly through ecommerce.

7 **Launch the marketing campaign**

Use all the channels you would typically use to drive interest in an event - email, PPC, social media etc.

8 **Exhibitor webinars**

Host a webinar to introduce the platform to exhibitors. This could involve working with your vendor to provide a demo which explains the benefits. Showcasing a fully completed exhibitor showroom with products, videos and downloads will motivate them to match the same level of quality.

9 **How To guides**

Help exhibitors to get the most from their profile by providing them with How To videos, PDF user guides and other helpful resources. The better the onboarding experience, the more likely clients are to be successful.

10 **Rebook using data**

Digital platforms provide 20 times the data that traditional events do, so use this to your advantage. Following an event, create a report to summarise all the prospects that have been reached or influenced by a supplier. This should bring together all data-points, including online and in-person leads, into one place to explain the full value of the campaign. And with this new level of information, don't forget the oldest trick in the playbook - rebooking!

# All you need to create smart events and communities

## 365. Virtual. In-Person

**Accelerate digital revenue growth**

Transform your business model with year-round lead generating marketplaces and digital sponsorship opportunities. Increase profits from events with a wide-range of branding and thought-leadership solutions.

**Create high-value connections**

Spark valuable in-person and virtual 1-2-1 meetings with AI-powered matchmaking and hosted buyer programmes. Comprehensive lead analytics dashboards provide exhibitors and sponsors with proof of ROI.

**Engage your community 365 days a year**

Grow an engaged audience year-round through an "always on" content hub, webinars, discussion groups and events. Create a seamless, personalised experience for your community, generating in-depth data and intelligence about users.

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