

The 11 Steps to Hosting the Perfect Event for Sales Prospects:

Appointment Setting Pros, an AnswerNet Company, Recruits Attendees for over 100 Events This Year



As Appointment Setting Pros continues to actively recruit qualified attendees for over 100 sales events to date, we thought we'd take a moment to share what works – and what doesn't – when B2B companies host an event that is meant to attract, educate, and spark a crowd of sales prospects.

Don't have time to read right now? Scroll down to step #10 for a critical lead generation tip.

For a phone consult, call an Event Attendance expert now: 1(800)959-3682 x225

#1 Have a Purpose: It's important to start with a single important reason for hosting your event. Some examples include the following:

- Holding a pricing promotion
- Launching a new product
- Introducing a new technology
- Discussing best practices
- Exhibiting at a tradeshow
- Addressing an industry-specific development
- Reviewing a regulatory issue
- Customer/partner appreciation
- Training and certification

If you don't have a compelling reason, you are better off waiting until you do. You must leverage a sense of importance, especially if you are requesting physical attendance.

#2 Timing is Everything: Appointment Setting Pros recommends that you allow at least six weeks for attendee recruiting. Giving enough lead time does impact attendance numbers. Also, the time of year is important, as is day of week, and time of day. Appointment Setting Pros recommends

avoiding times of year when prospects are either caught up in holiday planning, or on vacation. We've seen that prospects may be more open to listening to vendors when they are in a "regroup" or "renewal" mode. Productive timeframes include the beginning of the year, the end of Q2, or the end of Q3, when decision makers are revisiting their goals.

We've also found that late morning lunches are a great way to pull folks from their busy days, without encroaching on their private evening time. The details around timing depend on your specific audience and should be taken into consideration. If you can't get the timing right, wait until you can. Events are too important to compromise.

#3 Location, Location, Location: Yes, venue does have a strong impact on attendance. As you know, most people who attend events, such as seminars, come from within a 20 mile radius or less. Keep this in mind when developing your list. Appointment Setting Pros often develops lists for its clients, based on proximity. This is mission critical to event attendance. Keep in mind how easy or difficult it is to access your venue. This is particularly important in larger metropolitan areas where traffic and/or parking can be an issue. Inconvenience spells empty seats.

#4 Spice up the Speakers and their Presentation: Even the most dynamic speaker can be a hard draw if they are unknown. We've seen very successful events leverage up the three speakers over the course of one and a half to two hours. It's well worth the time to hold a dress rehearsal, so that each speaker's points build on one another and create an integrated message. The dynamic of hearing from different speakers with different perspectives is often a very successful format for captivating your audience. Also, make sure to conduct a "tech check" before the big day. A blown light bulb, dead link, uncharged battery, or missing extension cord can really kill your momentum.

#5 Use Coherent, Relevant Collateral: Most audiences are very capable of noticing how much preparation went into your event. Be sure to respect their presence with customized collateral and messaging tailored to them. If you are recycling canned content, be sure to review each piece of material to not appear outdated.

For example, use only the newest case studies or example work. Review your messaging from the perspective of your audience. Give them only material that is relevant to their responsibilities, goals, level of influence, and type of company. Making your audience more successful should be the bottom line for any live event.

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#6 Simplify the Registration Process: Fortunately, making the process easy for both host and attendee has never been easier. There are a number of auto-registration portals that can be used for both paid and free events. Contact Appointment Setting Pros for suggestions. Many portals will allow you to send a confirmation message as well.

Best practice: Recruit about twice as many attendees as you wish to have in the room – especially if your event is free. People get busy, and opt out at the last minute, no matter how compelling your event.

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#7 Seal the Deal with Confirmation: Always confirm attendance 24 to 48 hours before your event. Like any appointment, your attendee can use the reminder and the human touch will increase their odds of attending. Immediately after a prospect registers send out a notification that they have indeed registered. Instead of sending a typical confirmation email, send it through Outlook. This way the prospect will be less likely to book other meetings over your event.

#8 Hit the Refresh Button: Yes, refreshments are important, and can be used to set the tone for an event. For example, one of our California-based clients likes to host some wine-tasting while briefing prospects on the latest technical developments. A free lunch is always a great way to consider your audience's busy schedules while thanking them for their participation. The way the food is set up, and when attendees are encouraged to eat, can either spur or minimize informal discussion and networking, depending on your goals.

#9 Choose a Promotional Gift that Keeps Giving: Besides letting your audience walk away with a full stomach, a relevant giveaway can help ensure that your event will be remembered and referenced to your attendees' co-workers, i.e. "Yeah, I got that at the XYZ seminar they had over at Nice Venue". Great giveaways Appointment Setting Pros has seen used this year include books that our clients have ordered cost-effectively online, and gift cards for things like gas, Amazon.com, coffee, and spa treatments. In general, those events that leveraged a relevant book happened to have a larger attendance.

Best practice: The promotional gift should be contingent upon attending the event, not offered beforehand.

#10 Have Back-up Offers: This is one of the best-kept secrets of holding an event. Prospects who can't attend an event are just as important as the ones who can. Use the invitation process to generate sales leads along the way. If someone knows up front that they can't make the event, always have a back-up offer or two to nurture their interest. Take advantage of having that prospect on the phone. For example, one Appointment Setting Pros client offered a webinar for folks who couldn't attend the seminar, and offered a one on one phone appointment for folks who couldn't attend either. Our client suddenly had a nice spike in one on one phone consults, as a by-product of hosting an event.

Best practice: Choice breeds leads – if you want someone to choose one option, offer more than one option.

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#11 Will You Still Love Your Prospects Tomorrow? If you're like most Appointment Setting Pros clients, the success of an event is ultimately judged by the integrity of the sale pipeline that it helped create. As you know, the lead nurturing process actually begins when your event ends. It's important to have a follow up plan for all events – whether they are seminars, webinars, or tradeshow. Each qualifying event can and should have a separate and distinct follow up process. Take advantage of immediate interest with immediate follow up.

Best practice: Engage prospects again within 24 to 48 hours of their participation in your event.

Throughout 2015, Appointment Setting Pros has seen B2B companies continue to allocate budget toward live meeting and greeting, whether it's at a nearby restaurant, conference center, or a tradeshow. As history has shown us, new technology that is meant to facilitate "getting to know one another", such as social media, ultimately serves to fortify traditional methods. Regardless of how vendors "meet" prospects, the prospect often leverages in-person meetings with vendors that they intend to do "meaningful" (read lucrative) business with.

Bottom line: Live events remain a mission critical aspect of the lead nurturing cycle for the complex sale. We are here to help your organization put best practices into place to achieve this.

Thank you,

Call Center Services, an AnswerNet Company.