



THE CMO SOLUTION GUIDE:

# MODERN EVENT MARKETING

*Viewing Events as an Asset not an Expense*

## WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO CONTRIBUTORS



**JULIENE CONWAY**

SVP, Enterprise Marketing  
and Communications,  
Bank of America



**ANTHONY CHRISTIE**

CMO, Level 3 Communications



**GAIL GALUPPO**

CMO, Aflac



**IVAN GARCIA**

CMO, GE Industrial Finance,  
GE Capital



**ALICIA TILLMAN**

CMO, SAP Ariba



**MELINDA WELSH**

CMO, JP Morgan Chase,  
Mortgage Banking and  
Auto Finance



## THE EVENT MARKETING CHALLENGE FOR CMOs

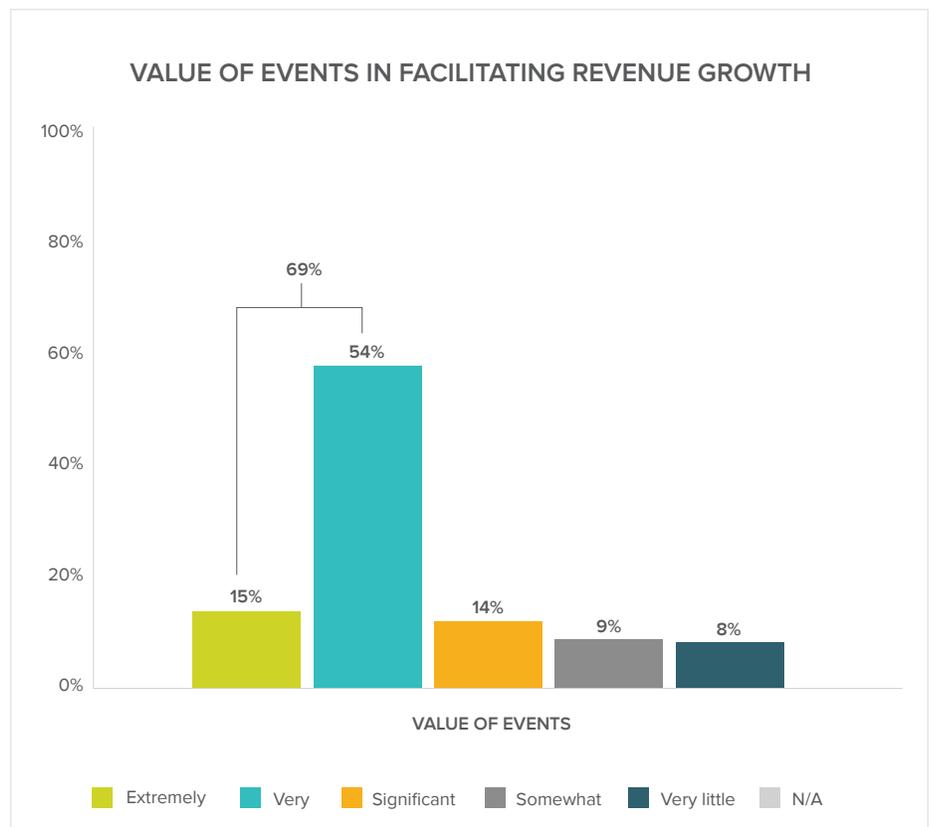
Even in the digital age of marketing where digital advertising, social media and mobile apps are the new normal, face-to-face events remain an important part of a CMO's strategy to engage customers and accelerate revenue. In fact, 69% of marketing leaders surveyed by The CMO Club believe that events are very or extremely significant in accelerating sales. "Events are considered a traditional form of marketing, especially with so many advancements in the digital space. But the reality is that face-to-face communication is still very important. Even as business sophistication has escalated in the technology space, being able to listen and have face-to-face learning is still incredibly powerful," proclaims Alicia Tillman, CMO, SAP Ariba. "Events are a significant driver of pipeline. We are seeing millions of dollars in pipeline being generated through our events," Tillman continues.

### TWEET THIS

Nearly 70% of CMOs say in-person events are extremely/very significant in accelerating the sales cycle.

*"In terms of our B2B marketing mix, events are the most important things that we do. Our customers are out in the field all the time, so, for example, sending an email, and thinking we're going to get a response, is just not how it works. Digital is an important part of the mix, and we have web portals and other digital efforts that customers are engaging with, but it's critical that we have that human connection. Ours is such a trust business - trust just doesn't develop when it's a digital-only relationship."*

**-Melinda Welsh,**  
CMO JP Morgan Chase,  
Mortgage Banking and Auto Finance



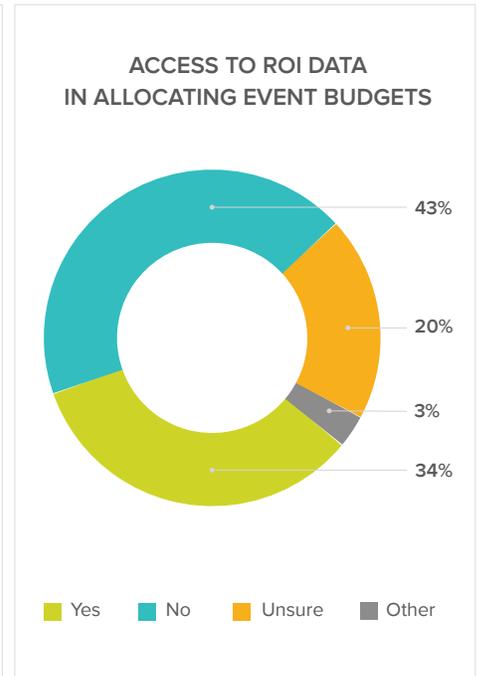
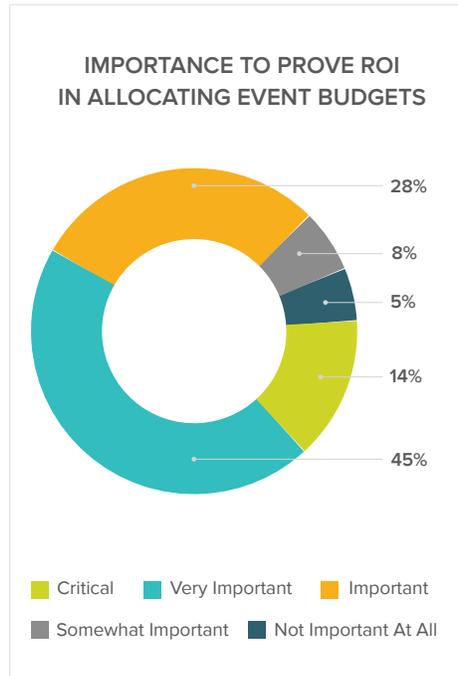
Despite the significant power of events, almost two-thirds of CMOs surveyed don't believe or are unsure if they are getting the data they need to fully evaluate the effectiveness of their event marketing programs. This creates challenges at budget time when the funding decisions are being made about events. While events are deemed critically important, they often lack the supporting financial data to objectively prove their value. Compared to other components of the CMO's marketing mix that have become more sophisticated in measuring ROI, event marketers are lagging in their ability to connect the dots between activities and demonstrated results.

**TWEET THIS**

87% of CMOs say ROI is important/critical when it comes to allocating budget to their events.

**TWEET THIS**

Only 34% of CMOs have the business analytics they need to validate their event spend.



The gap between needing ROI data and getting it is a major frustration for CMOs

*“I view face-to-face events as integral to closed-loop marketing process. So when my team wants to invest in particular events, I look for the marketing return on investment of a particular event just like I would, for example, on investing in digital media.”*

**-Anthony Christie**  
CMO, Level 3 Communications

“One of the key challenges is around baseline measurements. How do you make sure that nothing falls through the cracks in measuring how the client is moving through the sales cycle?” shared Juliene Conway, Senior VP of Enterprise Marketing and Communications at Bank of America Merchant Services. “Another challenge is deciding which events are the right ones to go to. I think many organizations historically go to the same events repeatedly. One of the things we’re looking at as we’re starting our planning cycle for 2017 is stepping back to ask ‘do we have the ROI information in place to help us make sure we are making the right investment decisions and attending the right events?’” Conway stated.

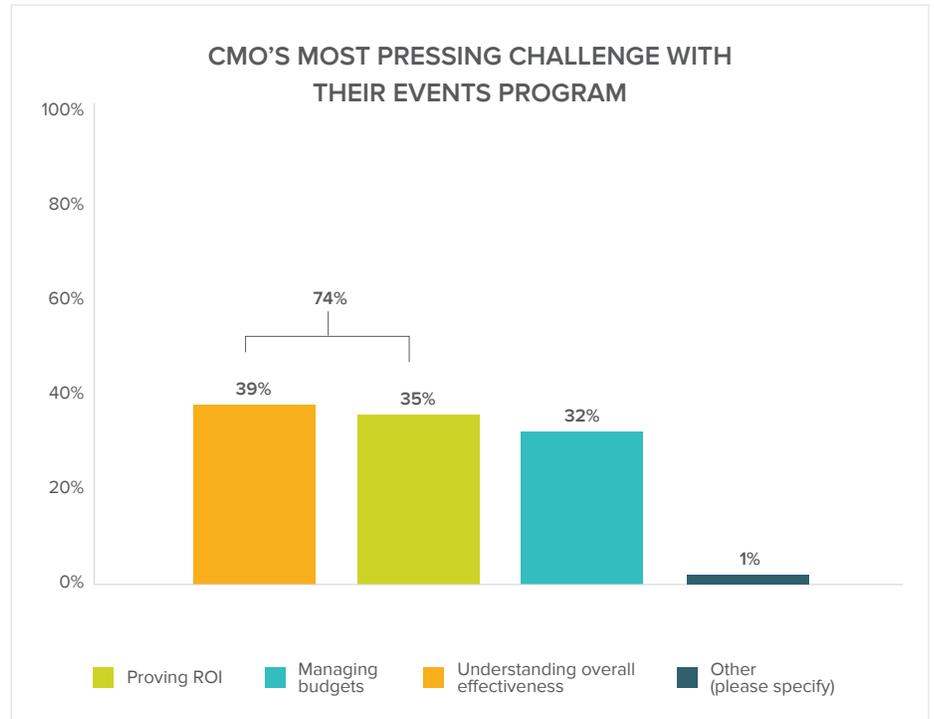
**EVOLUTION OF THE EVENT MARKETING PROFESSIONAL – FROM MEETING PLANNER TO ROI MARKETER**

For event marketing professionals, the pressure is on. The accountability gap requires marketers to move beyond the primary focus of being meeting planners and becoming results-oriented marketers. In general, CMOs are pleased with how their event marketing teams are running events. “All credit goes to the events team - they make it look seamless at every event,” says Ivan Garcia, CMO, GE Industrial Finance, GE Capital. “But the tracking of post-event ROI is always a tough one.”



 **TWEET THIS**

Nearly 75% of CMOs say proving ROI and effectiveness are their most pressing event challenges.



*Respondents could select multiple answers for this question*

Increasingly, CMOs are putting more pressure on their teams to improve the visibility of events' financial impact so that events can be viewed as ROI producing assets and not just a major expense. Gail Galuppo, CMO of Aflac, puts it this way, "My events department is a very lean team. I am amazed that they can get as much done as they can, especially with all the demands from the field. I have been impressed with my events team's discipline and rigor. But from a tracking and measurement perspective, we need to improve our game. We're working on an ROI analysis to measure events beyond what we have done before." Galuppa advises her organization, "Partner with the analytics team or finance team where they have good analytical minds. Look at new ways of thinking and bring that to the table. Leverage other experts in the organization to help you figure out the best ways to show the return."

## ACTIONS TO IMPROVE THE ROI OF EVENT MARKETING

Based on the insights of the contributing CMOs, here are specific actions marketing leaders can take to improve the demonstrable financial impact of their event marketing programs.

**1. Set appropriate goals for each event** - Not all events have the same purpose. Some are designed to generate new leads and accelerate opportunities currently in the pipeline, while others are focused on strengthening relationships with key customers and gaining feedback to improve how marketers can better respond to their needs. Regardless of what the goals are, having documented measures of success established before each event will help align the organization for a more successful event and will create a foundation for capturing the appropriate data to analyze the events against the stated objectives.



*“Be very clear about the purpose of the event, who the target audience is and set your expectations around goals. Being diligent up front will make it easier on the backend.”*

– Gail Galuppo, Aflac



*“It all starts with a plan. If we are just participating in events and we can’t assign a measurable KPI, then we need to think twice about it. When I first started that was the thing that seemed to be missing - where is the holistic look at all the different events? Whether it be a trade show, an owned event, a smaller customer advisory board or whatever the different event may be, I want to see a holistic plan and I want to see the KPIs associated with all of it.”*

– Alicia Tilman, SAP Ariba

**2. Establish marketing and sales plans for each event** - Since the goal of most events is to accelerate sales among new and/or existing customers, involving the sales organization in planning the pre-event, during event and post-event activities is critical. Assuring that the sales team will help recruit appropriate attendees, will engage with participants at the event and capture relevant data, and will follow up in a timely manner with qualified opportunities is essential to the success of all events.



*“Before each event, we make sure we have a really tight strategy for continuing to contact the people that come to our events. Marketing needs to provide the tools and information the salesforce needs post-event to make them successful. Then follow-up by the sales force is key.”*

– Melinda Welch, Chase Mortgage Banking and Auto Finance



*“There are limited opportunities and limited face-to-face events - how do you balance that with different businesses? If we are better together, we should bring our sales force and our brokers together.”*

– Gail Galuppo, Aflac

*“You have to make it easy for the people you really want to attend your events, from invitation to execution. Pick up the phone and call your customers ahead of the event. Be prepared with a strong value proposition for that customer, keeping in mind they are spending a day with you, it has to be value-add.”*

**- Ivan Garcia**

CMO, GE Industrial Finance, GE Capital

**3. Deliver a meaningful experience for prospects and customers** - Today’s event participants expect more than quick check-ins, good content and nice meals. They want event information to be at their finger tips in easy to use ways to simplify navigating the event. They expect presenters to be engaging, they want to participate with their peers and they want to share their opinions real-time. Having tools to improve engagement and to provide instant information on the participants’ experiences will help event marketers dynamically adjust activities to improve the current event. Combined with better post-event analytics, marketing leaders can make systematic enhancements to make event experiences more meaningful to attendees and more successful for the company.



*“I am doing some work right now with my two peers who are responsible for large account and small business segment marketing. We are putting in place the infrastructure that we need to measure that entire client experience.”*

– Juliene Conway, Bank of America Merchant Services



*“When we’re doing events for educational purposes, we measure how many people came to the event and we look at the feedback about what people thought. And if we get a good chunk of our customer base coming to the events and giving us positive feedback on their experiences, we check the box as successful.”*

– Melinda Welch, Chase Mortgage Banking and Auto Finance

*“One of the things that we do is scan leads and we endeavor to create a nurture track with a particular lead that we might get. In the case of RSA Conference, we were giving away pairs of ‘Star Wars’ socks. For the people in that crowd, the IT population, it was absolutely a huge hit. There is a temptation to immediately take the smile of that potential customer to mean that they are interested in purchasing something today and feed that into your qualification process, then have someone make an outbound call or worse feed it directly to the sales force and have that person say ‘no I am not ready.’ It absolutely kills that lead forever, versus understanding the context, understanding the follow-up necessary and then integrating that into the perpetual demand system.”*

**-Anthony Christie**  
Level 3 Communications

**4. Close the loop within your lead management system** - Rarely are events judged on the revenue produced at that event. Opportunities discovered at the event take time to close and require significant post-event nurturing from marketing and follow-up from sales. In order to activate post-event follow up and to assess the impact of events, participant data must be connected with both the marketing automation systems and CRM platforms used for other aspects of a company’s marketing and sales operations. With appropriate tools, that attendee data may include not only the binary “did they attend” indicator, but which sessions they attended and the content with which they engaged most. These valuable insights can be extremely useful in tailoring follow-up actions to be more relevant to attendees and more fruitful for sales.



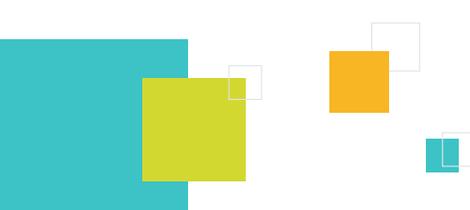
*“We work with our sales professionals as the leads are handed over to them and then they’re managed through our regular Salesforce.com process.”*

– Juliene Conway, Bank of America Merchant Services



*“Everything gets funneled in Salesforce.com. When leads are in the system, we pass them on to our sales reps. We put campaigns, reminders, and tasks in our CRM tool and track customer leads by event. The reps will then follow up and that lead will turn into an opportunity, and that opportunity will turn into business as funded and earning assets. The process has proven to be very effective.”*

– Ivan Garcia, CMO, GE Industrial Finance, GE Capital



**5. Measure both the experience and the sales impact** - Analytical data collected at the events should be useful to both improve the event experience and demonstrate the impact on revenue. However, event marketers should be purposeful in developing their reporting dashboards. The C-suite wants to see the ROI information presented succinctly in reporting periods sufficient to link the events with the lagging sales indicators. The myriad of other data such as attendance census, satisfaction ratings, presenter evaluations and cost-efficiency measures will be helpful for event marketers to make ongoing improvements to the effectiveness of their programs. CMOs can help guide their events teams in preparing C-suite appropriate reporting and help them move past the activity reporting, which is common at many companies today.



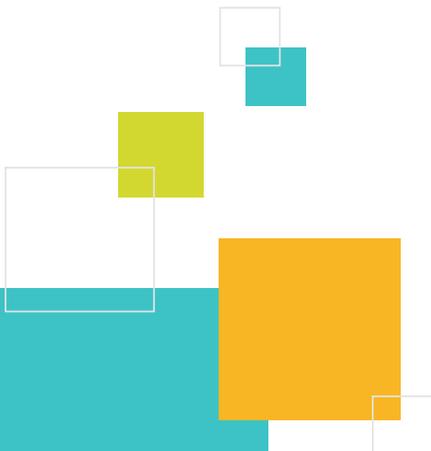
*“It all starts with our registration process. That process connects into our marketing automation system and that allows seamless activity of campaign planning and tracking of the leads and lifecycle from what we bring into registration, nurture stream, to the qualification process, then the hand over to the sales organization, then the process to watch that lead as it continues through the funnel. All of these systems are very integrated with each other. As a CMO, the better technology provides visibility into a more connected end-to-end event experience that holistically connects into my marketing automation system, the more relevant events will be as a component of my marketing strategy.”*

Alicia Tillman, CMO, SAP Ariba



*“We are really looking at efficiency and effectiveness across the board. For example, what are we spending on our booth? What are we doing right down to the logistics? What are we spending on food and entertainment? We are looking at absolutely everything. How can we have the image that we want to portray within the industry, but do it in a more cost-effective way. So, if we can save a couple of dollars here that gives me more money to spend on something else, those are the things we’re looking at from a logistics standpoint.”*

– Juliene Conway, Bank of America Merchant Services



## NEXT STEPS

CMOs are actively looking to improve the return on their investment in all marketing activities and events are no exception. As an important part of their marketing mix, events must be more measurable and more linked to the existing lead management systems and sales processes. Through the better use of integrated event technologies driving data and analytics, event marketing professionals will better demonstrate events financial impact on their businesses as well as improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their event experiences. As a result, events will be viewed as ROI-producing assets and not simply unmeasurable expenses.

### FIVE STEPS TO IMPROVE EVENT MARKETING ROI

1. SET MEASURABLE GOALS FOR ALL EVENT

2. INVOLVE THE SALES TEAM BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE EVENT

3. USE REAL-TIME DATA TO DYNAMICALLY ADJUST PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES

4. CLOSE THE LOOP USING YOUR CRM AND MARKETING AUTOMATION TOOLS

5. CREATE BOTH EXECUTIVE AND FUNCTIONAL ANALYTICS DASHBOARDS

#### ABOUT AUTHOR

John Ellett is author of The CMO Manifesto: A 100-Day Action Plan for Marketing Change Agents and CEO of nFusion, a demand generation agency that partners with marketers such as Samsung, Google and Sitecore to drive business results by leveraging customer insights, developing meaningful content and executing performance media plans. He serves as a trusted advisor to marketing leaders at several global corporations to help them transform their organizations and is frequent contributor to Forbes CMO Network.

#### ABOUT THE CMO CLUB

CMO Club is the world's most engaged and inspired community of Senior Marketing Executives who help each other solve their biggest challenges, within a candid, trusted, and sharing environment. Collaboration fueled by inspiring events and within the members-only Digital Solutions Clubhouse raises the standard for what is required to be a successful Chief Marketing Officer. With more than 850+ members and a no vendor selling policy, The CMO Club is the go-to center for today's Senior Marketer for peer-based personal and career success support. For more details on membership or becoming a thought leadership partner, please visit [www.thecmoclub.com](http://www.thecmoclub.com)

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