

A person is sitting at a desk, focused on writing in a notebook. A laptop is open in front of them, and a pen is held in their hand. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a professional setting.

LUAN
Wise

Business Events: Driving Success with Social Media Marketing

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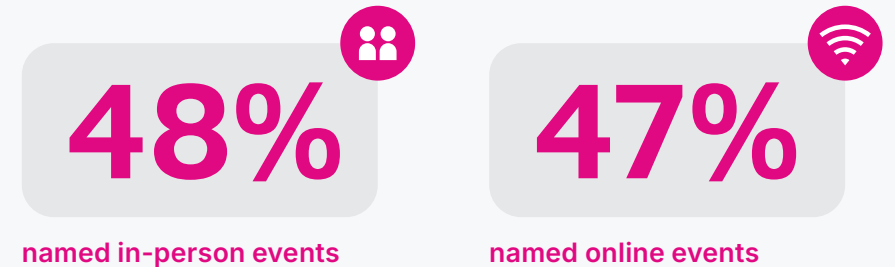
1. Introduction

Hundreds of workshops, webinars, conferences, and networking events are available each week on scores of different topics. For businesses, events are an important part of the overall marketing mix, encompassing hosting, speaking and attending to enhance networking and learning opportunities.

Integrating social media marketing with your business events can unlock new levels of engagement and drive unparalleled success, delivering enhanced visibility, fostering meaningful connections, and generating actionable insights that support your business and personal growth. Let's find out how...

A 2023 survey asked respondents which content marketing assets produced the best results:

Source: 13th Annual B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends, 2023.



The report also cited speaking/presenting at events as a top platform to distribute content (second place to using social media).



The IPA Bellwether report, 2024 Q2, highlighted events to be the best-performing mode of marketing from a budgeting perspective and shows growth with a **17.2% increase** on the previous quarter.



Event Types (Online)

Online events offer numerous benefits for a business, including cost savings and increased capacity. Unlike physical events, online events take up less time and eliminate expenses related to venues, catering and travel, making them more budget-friendly. Environmentally, online events reduce the carbon footprint associated with travel and physical materials, aligning with sustainability goals. And, for those with social anxiety, disabilities or caring responsibilities, online events are more accessible.

However, online events are not without their drawbacks. They can lack the interactivity and engagement that in-person events naturally provide, both for the host and participants.

Event Types (Face-to-Face and Hybrid)

Face-to-events provide the ability to create a controlled and immersive brand environment that can leave a lasting impression on attendees. For participants, the benefits are substantial: face-to-face events facilitate more meaningful and personal interactions, allowing for stronger relationship-building and networking opportunities. They enable participants to experience the event with all their senses, enhancing engagement and retention of information.

Combining the best of both worlds, **hybrid events** offer the flexibility and reach of online events with the tangible, personal connections of face-to-face interactions, providing a comprehensive and inclusive experience for all attendees.



Benefits of Hosting Business Events

Brand awareness

Showcase your brand, products, and services to a targeted audience

Lead generation

Attract and engage potential customers, guiding them through the marketing funnel

Customer engagement

Build stronger relationships with existing customers through direct interaction

Reputation building

Establish yourself and your business as thought leaders and industry experts

Networking opportunities

Connect with industry peers, partners, and influencers

Benefits for Attendees

Discover new opportunities

Explore new brands, products, and services that meet your needs

Knowledge and insights

Gain valuable information from industry leaders and experts

First-hand experience

Engage directly with brands and products, helping in decision-making

Networking

Build professional relationships and expand your network

Career growth

Learn from workshops and seminars, enhancing your skills and knowledge

2. Three Steps to Success

When you are hosting a business event, there are three key stages to be aware of:

1 PRE-EVENT PREPARATION

Why might you host an event? This decision is key. Start with the end in mind and consider what you want to achieve, and how you will measure success.

2 THE EVENT ITSELF

If you're hosting, your success metrics will depend on the purpose of your event but could include the number of attendees, revenue raised, leads generated, sales finalised, or number of followers and mentions on social media.

3 THE FOLLOW-UP

Hosting an Event

When **hosting an event**, it's helpful to spend some time asking what, who, when, how, which, and where:

What sort of online event do you want to host? A training workshop, Q&A interview, networking event or something else?

Who is your target audience for the event?

When will you hold the event, and will it be a one-off or a regular event? If it's a regular event, will it be weekly, monthly, or annually? How long will the event last?

What resources do you have available to support your event, for example, will you need a budget for advertising or for the tools to host your event?

How much will you charge attendees? Is it free to attend, or will you charge a fee?

How will you gather registrations for the event – via Eventbrite or a landing page on your website?

Which topics will you cover, and will you invite guest speakers? Do you already have content that could be repurposed for the event?

Where will you host the event? Do you need to find a venue? What's the best location for your target audience? If it's an online event, will you use a platform such as Zoom or GoToWebinar, or live stream on social media? Will the event be recorded, and will you send out a link to those who couldn't make the live session or who might want to watch it again? Perhaps you will offer hybrid options.

3. Event Marketing

If you're hosting an event, start by creating a marketing calendar showing clearly which activities will take place in the run-up to the event, during the event, and after the event.

It's useful to set out key milestones such as 'save the date' announcements, speaker reveals, pricing changes and so on. Every activity is an opportunity to communicate something to your target audience, so the longer the list, the more you have to talk about!

Consider how you can drive registrations by leveraging psychological principles such as the scarcity effect and FOMO (fear of missing out) and social norming.

For example, you might highlight that many others have already signed up to create a sense of social validation and encourage more people to register.

Answer your prospective attendee's question

What's in it for me?

All of your marketing messages should make it clear what attendees can expect from your event, how it will benefit them, and what difference the event will make to them. Even if your event is free, you are still asking attendees to give up some valuable time to attend, so make it an easy yes for them.

Create a list of all the assets you will need to curate or create such as social media graphics and presentation templates.

Including a call for speakers in your event marketing plan is a great way to boost awareness and generate interest. By promoting the opportunity for industry experts and professionals to apply, you can attract attention from potential speakers and their networks. Once you have confirmed your speakers, their influence and networks become valuable assets for drawing in attendees, as they will help spread the word and lend credibility to your event.

Be clear about which activities are dependent on others, for example, you might need to gather client testimonials from previous events before you set up a registration or website page. If it's a larger event you might be building a microsite to host all the information for attendees.

Finally, you should consider what data you need/would like to capture from attendees and ensure you do so with relevant permissions.



Use of Social Media

Leveraging platforms like Facebook, (X) Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok and others allow businesses to reach a broad and diverse audience quickly and effectively. Social media not only amplifies the visibility of events but also facilitates engagement with potential attendees through interactive content, targeted advertising, and real-time updates.

You can use your existing business social media accounts to promote your event, leveraging your established audience and presence to maximise reach and engagement. Alternatively, if you're hosting a large-scale or regular event, you might consider setting up separate social media accounts, groups, and social media pages dedicated to your event.

The content you post should be congruent with the platform where it's being posted and repurposed to suit each individual platform. Batch-creating content and images for social media saves a great deal of time as you don't have to work out what to post each day.

Keep a record of all materials relating to the event in one folder where it's easy to retrieve and keep a note of what has been posted, where, and the responses it received. That way you'll soon see which messages are effective at reaching your target audience and which ones need tweaking. Use a variety of different content types – images, video, text, infographics, testimonials, questions and polls – to maintain interest.

Top Tips

Consider creating a bespoke #hashtag for your event and use it on every social media post. That way it will be easy to find all the content relating to your event, and you'll be able to search for user-generated content using the hashtag to repost and reply to it. Check that the hashtag hasn't already been used, and use CamelCase to make it easier for screen readers used by the visually impaired. If your event is annual, consider adding the year to the hashtag to keep all the year's content together.

Posting in relevant social media groups (for example on Facebook or LinkedIn) can be a great way to speak directly to your target audience. Look out for posts that ask about events taking place, or get in touch with the group owner to check that it's OK to post about your event.

Use the collab features when posting to include any event partners such as sponsors and speakers. Ask your speakers to create short videos about their role in the event.

A powerful way to reach your ideal audience is by sending direct messages, to your existing network and new contacts. Use the advanced search function in LinkedIn to find people who fulfil your target criteria such as industry, professional level, or geographical area. Send a carefully crafted personal message to each person, explaining that you're contacting them because you think your event will be of interest to them and directing them to find and more and register. Also, let them know how they can contact you if they have any questions. Send a polite follow-up message a week later asking if they have any questions about the event.

Consider '**Creating an Event**' on Facebook or LinkedIn to share information with your followers and invite your network to register. Potential attendees might also use these features to search for events to attend.

4. During the Event

Event hosts should encourage participants to actively engage during an event by taking photos, using the event hashtag, and sharing their experiences across their social media networks. Include some time in the schedule for networking – whether it's over a break or in a live Q&A chat online.

Before the event ends, invite feedback from all participants. It's much easier to capture their immediate impressions and reactions while they are still energized and engaged with the event. Utilise quick and convenient feedback methods such as mobile surveys or instant polls.



5. After the Event

Ensure your event marketing plan includes follow-up. Send out thank-you notes, share event highlights or recaps, and continue engaging with attendees through feedback requests and perhaps an online discussion group on Facebook, LinkedIn or WhatsApp.

Repost and reply to all social media posts mentioning the event (by checking mentions and hashtag use).

After an event, repurposing content can significantly extend its value and reach. For example, a recording of the event can be uploaded to a YouTube channel, allowing those who missed the live session or wish to revisit the content to do so easily. Key insights and highlights from the event can be distilled into a blog post.

By repurposing content in this way, you not only maximise the return on your event investment but also continue to engage and provide value to your audience well beyond the event itself.

After the event, it's also time to establish whether you met your initial goals and how successful the event was. Gather and analyse your event statistics. Put together a 'lessons learned' document: what worked, what could be omitted next time, and what needs tweaking. This is valuable information to inform future events.

Analyse the feedback from attendees. What worked and what didn't for them? Which aspects of the event did they value the most? Are there any elements that need reformulating or leaving out altogether?

6. Case Study: LinkedIn Live Events

I've been using **LinkedIn Live** to host online events since 2020, when I first hosted a series of interviews with fellow marketing practitioners during the Covid lockdowns. I also used LinkedIn Lives for a series of deep dive topic discussions to launch my book, [Planning for Success: A practical guide to setting and achieving your social media marketing goals](#). Each month I co-host a monthly LinkedIn Live event discussing social media updates.

Our event marketing plan (shown on the right) includes a series of steps to set-up the event on LinkedIn, inviting attendees and following up with existing and new connections.

LUAN & ANDY SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATES - EVENT MARKETING CALENDAR

	-4	-3	-2	-1	EVENT	+1 -4	+2 -3	+3 -2	+4 -1	EVENT
SET UP LINKEDIN EVENT	X					X				
ADD LINK TO WEBSITE EVENT CALENDARS	X					X				
SHARE LINK WITH KEY PARTNERS AND SHARE IN RELEVANT FACEBOOK/LINKEDIN GROUPS	X					X				
INCLUDE IN EMAIL MARKETING NEWSLETTERS	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
EMAIL REMINDER					X					X
USE LINKEDIN EVENTS FEATURE TO INVITE CONNECTIONS		X	X	X						
SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
DOWNLOAD VIDEO FILE AND ADD TO YOUTUBE PLAYLIST						X				
FOLLOW UP WITH ATTENDEES (CHAT COMMENTS, SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS AND DIRECT MESSAGES)						X				
SLIDES TO ATTENDEES WHO COMPLETED FORM, UPDATE EMAIL LIST WITH TAGS/NEW DATA.					X					X
SEND INVITATIONS TO PEOPLE WHO REGISTERED ON LINKEDIN (BUT NOT YET CONNECTED)						X				

Setting up an event on LinkedIn takes just a few minutes; watch this video to see how it's done.



Click to watch the video on YouTube or copy the link below:
https://bit.ly/HowTo_LinkedInEvents

What you need to set up an event on LinkedIn:

1. Cover image (minimum width 480 pixels, 16:9 recommended)
2. Organiser details (will your event be hosted by a Company Page or an individual?)
3. Event type (online or in person)
4. Event format (LinkedIn audio event, LinkedIn Live event or an external event link)
5. Event name
6. Event date/time
7. Event description

As soon as your event is set up you can send invitations to your network (up to 1,000 per week). If your event is hosted via a company Page you can promote your event to a targeted audience using **LinkedIn Event Ads**.

7. About Luan Wise

Luan Wise is a chartered marketer and fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing (FCIM) with over 20 years' experience in agency, client-side and consultancy roles working across sectors including b2b and b2c professional services, higher education, manufacturing, learning & development and more.

A specialist in social media, Luan has trained thousands of business professionals across the world via open social media training courses and in-house programmes. She is a course instructor for LinkedIn Learning and an accredited lead trainer for Facebook and Instagram.

Luan has event marketing experience from organizing and hosting events, to speaking on stages in front of global audiences.

Luan is author of the 'Relax! It's Only Social Media' and 'Planning for Success: A practical guide to setting and achieving your social media marketing goals', 'Using Social Media for Work: How to maintain professional etiquette online' and 'Smart Social Media: How to grow your business with social media marketing'

If you're looking for support in using social media for event marketing, get in touch via email: sayhello@luanwise.co.uk

For further information about Luan, visit www.luanwise.co.uk or search @luanwise on:

