

You Paid for Dinner: Now What?

4 Best Practices to Turn Dinner Events
Into Deals that Close Faster

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IT executives who join your meetings are ready to buy – but most of the time, you're missing the opportunity to close the deal faster.

Why? Because they need more information – even if they don't know how to ask for it.

Delivering high-impact follow-on content consistently shortens sales cycles. Done right, it's systematic, automated and customized. And it repeatedly creates dozens of new, highly qualified opportunities.

Read on to learn:

- *The 4 smartest things you can do for follow-on event marketing – to turn the 'willing' into the sold*
- *How to leverage content marketing without overloading your team*
- *A tactical road-map that shows how to use the right content at the right points in the buying cycle – so that you're front-of-mind when they're ready to buy*

After Dessert: Closing the Deal

Too many companies drop the ball after dessert. That's a shame – and a waste of a good lead. But it's also surprisingly easy to fix.

The smartest B2B marketers are giving customers and prospects exactly what they want: a mix of smart, timely content – and custom, real-time invitations to special digital offerings. It's a streamlined, automated process that takes prospects already through the funnel, faster.

Working it as a program makes maximum use of every single piece of content you create – and content you already have. With custom tweaks, of course, for prospects, already-warm dinner guests, and customers ready for more.

It may sound complex – but shouldn't be. Here's a quick snapshot of how to avoid the most common mistakes, and make your events work harder, after the last guests leave/drinks are poured.

With CEOs paying more attention to marketing's contributions, marketing leaders are being held much more accountable for generating revenue. Program 'vulnerabilities' will become unacceptable weaknesses, quickly.

– from [HubSpot's](#)
2013 Marketing Trends

The 4 Smartest Things You Can Do to Turn the 'Willing' Into the 'Sold'

Chances are better than 50% that you're getting people to opt-in. But are you also:

- Giving prospects content that applies directly to their interests?
- Using personalization that integrates their actions – like registering, opening an email, attending a webinar, downloading a whitepaper?
- Synchronizing whole suites of customized content?

Few companies are at that level today, though it will become a much bigger priority by 2014.

Here are four strategies we're seeing – and applying – for better results, with a lot less work than it seems. And when you factor in the total cost of staff time, a lot less money.

#1: Tap your insiders.

Too many companies go outside for content. That's a huge mistake. Your biggest experts – and fans – are inside the company. They have the stories, the data, and know what customers care about. Most of the time, though, they don't want to make time to write it down, or, more honestly, they're afraid to write, or actually don't write well enough to meet your needs.

So turn them into resources – interview them. Product marketing managers are a great first stop. Then partner with an outsider or a writing specialist, to tie these specifics into the broader vision. This bigger message is key for customers – who urgently need to understand, and believe in – the direction, as well as the product.

The best content will also speak in a voice you understand, and like. This means more human, very authentic and less corporate. That's becoming more important – and something outside writers should be able to do with ease. It's a bit harder for the inside experts, who have probably drunk a little too much of the corporate Kool-Aid.

“79% of marketing leads never convert into sales. Lack of lead nurturing is the most common cause of this performance gap.”

– [MarketingSherpa](#)

#2: Ask your customers.

The best way to know what prospects really care about? Ask your customers. We consistently find a huge spread between what companies expect to hear – and what customers really say: about what they need, what they want to learn, and how they feel about the product and overall experience.

It's a mother lode of new business opportunity, and it reduces risk. It's also a ready-made source for content. Quite honestly, your customers will help you create your content that sells, if you just ask them.

#3: Decide what to measure: Brand? Leads? Or Deals?

Post-event marketing is a great opportunity to connect what marketing and sales really value – and should measure.

Site traffic and click-throughs are probably not enough; it's more important to know what visitors did after landing on a page. Then you can optimize your site – as well as your content, and what you send them – to drive the behavior that really counts.

Pro tip: The right message at the right time makes all the difference. Increase your conversion rate by developing a detailed lead nurturing strategy like the one below, and tailor your content to meet prospects wherever they are in the buying cycle.

Buying Cycle Stage	Awareness			Evaluation		Purchase	
	Immediate: post-event	Day 10	Day 20	Day 30	Day 40	Day 50	Day 60
Purpose	Information gathering. Identify the business need, introduce your solution.	Education. Urgency. More in-depth explanation of solution.	Demonstrate industry expertise.	Vet technologies based on most urgent business needs.	Connect solution to bigger business goals. Prove ROI.	Draw comparisons to success stories	Show innovation, competitive advantage, career benefit
Key Message	Why now, what's changed, new expectations	Unknown risks: Sources, magnitude and likelihood	How others solve the problem. Introduce solution category	How to know if solution is right for your company.	Key considerations for the business case.	Customer passion, benefit, peer recommendations.	Direct support for strategic initiatives.
Content Types	Introductory video, infographic	Vision whitepaper	Feature coverage	Microsite/resource landing page	ROI calculator	Customer video, case study	Free trial or download

#4: Double-check every single call-to-action.

Here's an uncomfortable surprise: A lot of content – and sites – are still bad at this.

- Some sites don't have a single call-to-action.
- Others bury it in a tiny box that's dark, hidden and not very inviting.
- Some CTAs lose sight of the real goal: conversion.
- Others just annoy people, requiring re-registration every time they visit.

Having a clear goal – driving demos, trials, or a sales call – makes it much cleaner experience. Customizing content after a significant interaction – like an executive dinner – makes just as much sense.

Net Promoter: Finding Your Advocates

Companies including Amazon, Apple, Costco, eBay, GE and Verizon rely on Net Promoter to identify their most ardent promoters – and catch customers at risk.

Outsized market growth is even more reason to know which customers love you. Companies with the highest Net Promoter scores in their industry outgrow the market by 4X, drive more revenue per customer and capture a bigger share of wallet.

The core question:

“On a scale of 0-to-10, how likely are you to recommend this company to a friend or a colleague?”

The numbers are meaningful, and, often, surprising.

We consistently find the most important insights in the comments people share – about what they value, and what they want more of. Companies scoring at 6 or less are very much at-risk; if no action is taken, there is a strikingly strong correlation revealing they are unlikely to remain customers 12 months from now.

It's an outstanding opportunity for intervention, with a clear path to convert these detractors into promoters. Simply start a different kind of conversation, and create an action plan for improvement.

As few as six or seven questions identify the most telling data points. It can be wrapped in under 30 days.

Closing the Performance Gap: Best Practices for an Outstanding Event

These four surprisingly simple steps will make your event perform – and close deals faster.

- **Have one very clear goal for each event.** Shocking, but true: Many companies miss the biggest opportunity: specialize your content to be relevant to business objectives and current messaging. This laser focus may mean a smaller list, but a more profitable one – with executives who belong next to each other. It will shape your seating map, content, and follow up, for starters. In our experience, it improves the ROI, because you are facilitating valuable conversation that reveals executives' most critical needs relevant to your products. Now, all that's left is for you to step in with the perfect solution.
- **Obsess on the front-end.** Know everything about your targets, their companies and profiles. Know if they're a current account, or a prospect. Have backgrounders on each executive. About half of the companies we see do this right – and it makes a huge difference.
- **Own the room.** Yes, create a seating chart. Yes, view accepts and declines on a weekly basis. Treat it like a launch, or a wedding. No detail is too small.
- **Follow.** Really. This is probably the most important activity of all – and it's the biggest weakness. Dropping the insight gained into a CRM package is only the beginning. Customers and prospects have declared their interest for more – as long as it's the right content, tailored to their interests.



Corporate Ink solves the biggest problems technology companies face: getting more at bats and closing deals more quickly. We drive high-performance results, leveraging social media, videos, SEO and the trustworthy, content-rich materials that buyers are seeking.

Want to improve your marketing performance? Let's talk. Please call Amy Bermar, our president at:

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