



# Creating a successful event to showcase your business

By Toshiba Marketing

**A**re you a small to mid-size company with a limited budget for events? Need to select the best option to introduce a new product or service to your customers? Need a demo that sales can show to prospects? Let's face it, an event can make or break a customer's experience and particularly your budget, so here are some handy planning tips and a variety of event options to kick start your next debut.

## BRAINSTORMING A PLAN

Start by deciding on the core fundamentals:

- What's the objective of your event?
- Who is your audience?
- What is the best way to reach your audience — a virtual session, roadshow, industry tradeshow?
- What is your theme?
- Do you need a speaker?
- Will you seek sponsors? If so, be prepared to show what they will get in return for their investment, whether it's a list of contacts, branding or building awareness.
- Do you need to show a live demo that will have power and connectivity requirements?
- Do you have co-workers or vendors who will assist?
- What is your promotion plan?
- What return on investment do you expect?
- Importantly, what is your budget?  
*Establishing your budget early on, but reserving a small percentage to address coverage for last-minute items, will help you achieve your budget boundaries.*

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Once you have your plan, the next step is to select the type of event that will best meet your goals. Prepare a detailed event spreadsheet, with deliverable dates, assigning owners to key tasks. To keep on track and ensure that

your investment pays off, you'll want to assign one person to take charge and map the overall event planning and process. Just be sure that your overall plan includes a wrap-up assessment to measure your outcome.

## VARIOUS EVENT OPTIONS

There are a number of options, with varying costs, to reach your target audience.

**Virtual Events**, such as web-based presentations, online conferences, live Q&A chats or virtual demonstrations can often be quick, cost-effective ways to reach many people across many locations. You'll need to ensure the registration process is simple and definitely send reminders. Sounding the trumpet and promoting your content are the most critical aspects to help your audience decide if they want to participate and to keep them engaged once the event begins. Follow-up, perhaps with a "thank you" and downloadable brochure after the event, as a refresher, will keep your messages top of mind.

**Roadshows** can be very effective for smaller, regional events and allow your experts (whether your master inventor, engineer or salesperson) to directly engage with your target audience. Think bigger than a chart deck. Seeing is believing, so demonstrations are recommended. By providing targeted and technical information and resources tailored to the specific sector, ideas can easily be exchanged and any questions answered on the spot, demonstrating a higher degree of intimacy and enthusiasm for your brand as well as building confident advocates.

**Tradeshows**, whether specific to your company, an industry association, or even large recognizable industry events such as NRF, typically come with higher price tags but can produce a strong list of contacts and brand recognition. Tradeshow events tend to



require more advance planning, including a wealth of logistics, such as contract negotiation and space selection, 3rd party management for technical aspects (lighting, electrical, bandwidth) and a dedicated person to manage the event planning and financials. Marketing considerations include a theme, company branding, drive-to activities and marketing materials. However, the return can be great — whether it's a strong contact list, prospective partners or recognition from the media or industry pundits.

## AN AMAZING AND OUTSTANDING EVENT

Just remember — every event company will mention the importance of buzzwords for people to remember and a nice feeling. What you ultimately want your audience to walk away with is that great experience, the one they want to share with others. It's not that the person attended an event (everyone does that), but the engagement with your brand created a lasting memory. A good rule of thumb for each of us is to always strive for the anticipation that Steve Jobs garnered when he first announced the iPhone — that special feeling of excitement. Just remember to thank your incredible team afterward and then get your calendar out to plan for your next performance! **c**