



# social media for exhibitors

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## intro

Social media is an essential tool for every modern marketing team, especially for event marketers. Consumers expect an engaging social experience with the brands they trust, and social media offers a simple way to reach on-the-go consumers.

This guide will show exhibitors how to harness the power of social media to expand reach and create an open dialogue with consumers before, during and after face-to-face events. Building and maintaining a social media presence can be a significant time investment, so follow these steps to streamline your efforts.

### did you know?

Not surprisingly, 73% of event marketers rely on social media to connect with attendees (CEIR)!

# targeting the audience

Knowing the audience is the first step for any event or trade show. Understanding the target audience allows you to determine which platforms best reach which group. Audience social media preferences can vary by industry, so research thoroughly before investing resources into a social media platform.

Creating a buyer persona - a fictitious character that represents a brand's average consumer - will help determine best platforms, best messaging types and ideal messaging frequency for your core audience. Consider factors like job title, purchasing priorities, personal preferences and goals when creating a buyer persona. To learn more about creating buyer personas, download [Nimlok's Smart Marketer's Guide](#).

Understanding your target audience will help align your efforts with organizational goals, on and off the trade show floor.



Nimlok dealer experts brought this brand to life on the show floor by understanding their target audience's interests and pain points.



## set qualitative goals

Since the value of using social media at events is largely qualitative, quantifying the value of social media efforts around an event can be difficult. Use a return on engagement (ROE) system to quantify shares, likes and reposts so you can better understand the return on your efforts and make improvements for the future.



### need a refresher?

Download Nimlok's ROI Playbook for step-by-step instructions on setting and achieving trade show goals.

# Score Major Points

To quantify ROE, implement a point system to calculate return per platform against overall social media goals. Your first step in creating a point system is to assign a value to each social engagement. Because buyer personas vary from platform to platform, it is important to understand the audience on each platform before assigning value to each engagement. For a strictly B2B company, a LinkedIn share is pure gold because it reaches other industry professionals directly. For a company with a lot of end-user interest, Facebook or Twitter may rank higher because it promotes general brand exposure.

## Example

Twitter	Point Value	Facebook	Point Value	LinkedIn	Point Value
Favorites	1	Likes	1	Likes	1
Mentions	5	Comments	5	Comments	10
Retweets	10	Shares	15	Shares	20

It can be difficult to determine a realistic engagement goal, but non-event related social media metrics (i.e. average engagements, followers) and historical event metrics (i.e. event attendees, quantity of leads) can help as you set initial goals.

## Example

Twitter	Point Value	Facebook	Point Value	LinkedIn	Point Value	Event Points Total
Favorites	28	Likes	14	Likes	8	335
Mentions	40	Comments	30	Comments	30	
Retweets	110	Shares	15	Shares	60	
Point Total	178	Point Total	59	Point Total	98	

After you set your goals and your campaign is drawing to a close, it's time to tally up your numbers and see how your engagement totals fared against your pre-event expectations.

## Example

Twitter	Point Value	Facebook	Point Value	LinkedIn	Point Value	Event Points Total	Event Points Total
Favorites	27	Likes	47	Likes	12	341	335
Mentions	35	Comments	30	Comments	30		
Retweets	50	Shares	30	Shares	80		
Totals	112	Point Total	107	Point Total	122		



Nimlok dealer experts designed this exhibit around client ROE goals.

## Deciphering the Results

After the show has ended and the points have been tallied up, it's time to evaluate the results.

### **If the goal is not reached:**

Re-evaluate your approach and adjust the plan for future events.

### **If the goal is reached:**

Research how you can successfully expand future campaigns.

### **If the numbers are way above target:**

Then evaluate whether you underestimated campaign success and plan to set higher goals in the future.

# create a winning strategy

Successful social media campaigns are not built overnight; it takes time, patience and consistency to create a buzz around your upcoming event. While platforms may function separately, they must maintain a common mission: excite attendees and consumers about the event.

Create a multimedia content mix that works for the event marketing campaign. Allocate efforts to include teaser videos and blog posts about event activities and other easily sharable content to build anticipation.

Strategically plan a promotional content calendar well in advance, reminding followers to attend and anticipate show updates.

- Plan, draft and schedule posts for before, during and after the show as part of the initial campaign plan. This will save you time when the event planning tasks start to pile up.
- Designate specific booth staff members to monitor social media posts during the show. Make sure they understand the importance of timely responses and engaging comments.
- Diversify messaging between platforms and posts. Posting the same content repeatedly during an event can annoy rather than inform.
- Build content specifically for each platform when possible. For instance, Twitter posts can be more casual and upbeat, whereas LinkedIn post should stay professional and value-driven.



# automation and aggregation

Social media's greatest overhead cost is the time devoted to maintaining each platform. Automation and aggregation tools pull together social media content across multiple platforms, allowing teams to monitor, schedule and measure the success of your promotional event campaigns from one place.

## sprout social

This robust automation tool allows marketers to schedule posts, engage and comment, while utilizing seamless reporting features to track metrics.

Sprout Social features a simple user interface and mobile applications for the on-the-go event marketer. The site supports all major platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and more.

## hootsuite

HootSuite combines all major social media platforms into one integrated tool, and has the capability to run specialized campaigns like sweepstakes or giveaways. Training resources set HootSuite apart, as its resource library teaches users how to run successful (and painless) social media campaigns.

## meet Edgar

This automation tool is a little bit different. Instead of scheduling posts in advance, users create a library of social media-friendly content that MeetEdgar posts and recycles periodically. Categories dictate which content is posted and when, allowing MeetEdgar to run autonomously.



## top three b2b platforms (and how to use them)

Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are the large players dominating B2B social media. Each platform functions differently and attracts different types of audiences.

These top three platforms are essential for B2B marketers because they support event outreach, sales growth and ultimately build consumer trust.

## How They Can Help:

**Facebook** pages are the best way to organize business information and invite followers to events. Integrated lead gathering is another perk for promotional campaigns.

**Twitter** allows consumers to share news, ask questions and participate in conversations. This gives event marketers the chance to join conversations, post latest news and more.

**LinkedIn** is a professional networking site that connects people based on specific industries, companies and job titles. Find LinkedIn groups for the event and reach out to attendees via InMail.



Keep in mind, whether some, all or none of these platforms are used in the event marketing campaign depends on which target audience an organization is reaching.



## facebook

Use the most popular social media platform to connect with attendees.

With over 2.2 billion active monthly users, Facebook is by far the world's largest social networking site ([Statista](#)). Brands use Facebook to update followers with latest news, product launches, videos, educational content and more.

Consumers can engage via likes, shares, commenting or reaching out to companies directly with a messaging feature. Facebook is a powerful brand tool, and offers many features to help marketers achieve event goals.

## Platform Specific Perks

### Facebook's Best Features For Boosting Your Marketing Campaign

#### Targeted Advertising

Facebook has dynamic advertising features that can refine audience interests with impressive specificity. Ads can be filtered by age, gender, location, job description and more, ensuring that your ads reach a precise audience.

One trade show hack is to purchase event attendee lists, which can be used to effectively reach people through Facebook's retargeting feature. Simply upload the attendee list into Facebook's ad manager to promote your presence at the event to all attendees, saving on time and guesswork.

# facebook (continued)

## Videos

Facebook features video uploading capabilities that are seamlessly included in social media posts. Uploading videos directly to Facebook (rather than linking to YouTube) makes metric tracking easy with insights that include total video views, minutes viewed and average watch time. Tracking the attention each video receives on a granular level will indicate the content followers want to see.



### try posting:

- Teasers of your booth, in-booth promotions or new products being unveiled at the event
- Customer testimonials that highlight product or service benefits
- Booth staff profiles that add a personal touch to the campaign

## Facebook Live

Facebook Live streaming is a way to instantly share footage from the event, encouraging attendees to stop by your booth. Live streams include real-time conversations with viewers, so encourage questions and participation. Plan these streams during high traffic times, to show viewers the exhibit's popularity and emphasize attendee interest.



### additional live stream opportunities:

- Inviting attendees into your booth each day of the show
- Showcasing grand prize drawings or contests
- Demonstrating how products or services function, with an emphasis on the benefits



Twitter allows its 300 million monthly users ([Statista](#)) to post 140 character messages similar to a standard length text message.

Twitter makes it easy to follow latest industry news, share website links and give attendees short, real-time event updates. Posts move quickly on Twitter, so it's important to figure out a time and frequency that reaches the highest volume of attendees.

## Platform Specific Perks

### Twitter's Best Features For Boosting Your Marketing Campaign

#### Hashtags

Most events and trade shows will have an official hashtag (#) that allows attendees and exhibitors to find conversations about an event and connect with each other.

Including a hashtag also allows Twitter users to find your tweets, even if they aren't following the account.

#### Free-Flowing Feedback

Because Twitter is such a fast-paced platform, it is easy to get responses from your followers, pose questions or jump-in on related conversations.

#### lightning-fast ways to reach attendees:

- Create a poll asking attendees to vote on favorite event activities or workshops.
- Converse with vendors, trade show pros and newbies about trending event topics.
- Retweet information that is generally helpful, like logistical event updates.
- Monitor conversations about your brand and answer any questions that arise.



## linkedin

Connect with industry professionals on this social media platform designed for networking

Business-oriented social networking site, LinkedIn, has over 450 million users to date (**Statista**). LinkedIn allows event marketers to leverage connections to boost a marketing campaign and share important event updates with industry professionals.

Additionally, LinkedIn offers businesses the chance to share content on a no-nonsense platform designed to aid, inform and promote thought leadership. Results are measured using likes, comments and shares.

Context Tips for Brands:

- Share informative, industry-friendly content on a regular basis
- Enhance event-related posts with attractive visual media
- Create clever headlines and introductions that encourage engagement

# Platform Specific Perks

## LinkedIn's Best Features For Boosting Your Marketing Campaign

### Showcase Pages

LinkedIn allows users to create showcase pages for products and services. Utilize this feature to create a showcase page for the product or service that will be featured at the event, allowing connections to get familiar with products beforehand. LinkedIn's showcase page also includes a "recommendations" tool that allows users to help rate products and share feedback about company offerings. Showcase pages can be linked on any business page, so everyone can view the information.

Users can also:

- Watch testimonials from satisfied customers.
- Read outstanding reviews of the product or service.
- Browse community discussions centered on using the product or service.
- Strong showcase pages will boost and support your event, while creating social media capital.

### Educational Hub

LinkedIn gathers information and inspiration from a huge panel of industry leaders, creating a valuable resource panel in the weeks leading up to an event. High-quality educational content rules the platform, so provide informative articles about showcased products, teaser videos and event information to populate business page content. Make sure your posts promoting events and trade shows include all the necessary information, such as dates, venue, booth number and activity schedules, as your social media audience will likely align with the attendee list.

Remember to:

- Keep an eye on the latest communications trends.
- Connect with other event marketers to share helpful tips.
- Create a business page that supports attendees before, during and after the event.

# trade show tactics

## Pre-Show

### Build Anticipation Before the Show Doors Open

#### Make a Schedule

Plan to start sharing promotional posts two to three months before the show's start date, using a set content calendar that follows the lifecycle of the event campaign. This will give followers time to make plans to attend. Include in your calendar pre-written posts and tweets that feature the event hashtag and your booth number, and use media and text to tease about in-booth activities. Utilize automation tools, so when things get hectic, social media strategy does not suffer.



#### Connect

Leverage social media to connect with attendees, as well as show management, press and vendors. Networking is the most valuable trade show perk, so make sure to maximize this opportunity.

Here are some ways to grow your network:

- Follow **show coordinators** to stay up to date with the latest news and events.
- Publicize event activities and promotions by connecting with **press outlets**. This puts your booth in the spotlight, and is an established way to connect with attendees
- Join the conversation by reaching out directly to the **target audience**. It is important to be helpful and engaging throughout the event.
- Visit neighboring **vendors'** social media pages to see what activities are planned, like posts and create good rapport with other event marketers. This may also be a good way to find a new vendor or business partner.

# trade show tactics

## During the Event

**Pre-show Social Media Posts Have Built a Buzz Around Your Booth, Now Take the Time to Increase Engagement at the Show.**

### Keep Followers Updated

Facebook and Twitter are your best-friends when it comes to keeping attendees in the loop with real-time updates. Rely on tactfully-planned posts to boost traffic while sharing your stunning exhibit with a larger audience.

Here are some ways to grow your network:

- **Observe activity** on the official event page or within the hashtag.
- Monitor event happenings by **following your competitors**.
- Listen to **visitor's feedback**, and adjust accordingly if comments are valid concerns.
- Boost traffic by **personally inviting attendees** to visit your booth for face-to-face engagement.
- Engage with attendees by **responding to comments** on the event's social media platforms.



Use social media to create buzz, but focus on engaging face-to-face while at the event.



## trade show tactics

### During the Event (continued)

**Pre-show Social Media Posts Have Built a Buzz Around Your Booth, Now Take the Time to Increase Engagement at the Show.**

#### Share Contests & Giveaways

Encourage attendees to stop by your booth for promotions, product demonstrations or to speak with a sales representative. Contests and giveaways are exciting and attractive, so leverage social media and hashtags to drive people to your booth.

#### People First

Introducing staff members and contest winners will add a much-needed human element to social media posts. People respond better to posts about people rather than products, so find ways to creatively couple both.

# trade show tactics

## Post-Show

**When Everything is Packed and it is Time to Head Home, Reach Out to Attendees to Continue Newly-Established Connections.**

### Follow Up

Use all social media platforms to reach out and thank all your followers. Include product and resource links to drive traffic to your website. Ask for feedback to improve the show next year while it is still fresh in attendees' minds.

### Post-Show Engagement

Sharing your company's experience on your page is great, but also ask your followers to share what they loved about the event. Try posting a question on your page to initiate that engagement. Additionally, you can also call on your followers to tag you in funny, inspiring or cool event-related posts on their respective Facebook pages.

Example posts:

- "We gave out three **\$500** prizes to our visitors. How should they spend their winnings?"
- "We revealed three new colors of widgets. Which do you think was the best?"
- You can also call on your followers to tag you in funny, inspiring or cool event-related posts on their respective Facebook pages

### Teaser for Future Events

When the buzz begins to wind down, make teaser videos and posts to inform followers about future events. If there is room for flexibility, it can be fun to create a poll to gauge interest in several event options. Cluing followers into future events lays the groundwork for your next event marketing campaign.

# golden rules of social media etiquette

As an event marketer, you must cultivate a culture that values listening and responding to your audience. Maintaining a two-sided conversation allows event marketers to build longstanding relationships with consumers. Use these general guidelines to help form each new engagement effort.

## Make Friends

While monitoring event social media feeds, you will likely run across attendees asking a question to which you have an answer. Answering questions will invite attendees to connect again for further help. Be responsive to comments and questions to encourage other attendees to join the conversation.



## Don't Beg for Attention

Desperation is a huge social media turn-off, especially when it comes to marketing a brand. Avoid begging for event attendees to retweet, share or like your event content. Simply share insights and content that is inherently valuable, no begging necessary.

## Mix it Up

Repeatedly sharing the same content quickly spreads the word about your brand, but attendees will notice repeated posts and either ignore or stop following altogether. Aim for complementary messaging, diversifying across all outlets.

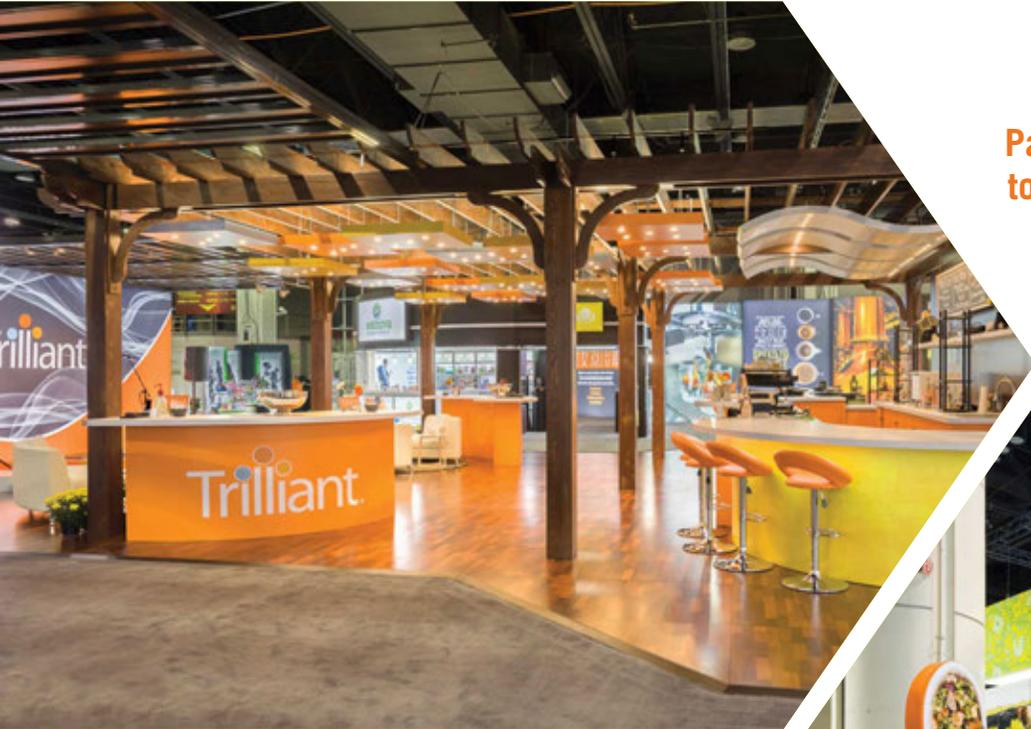
## Proceed with Caution

It can be easy to get wrapped up at an event and you may think that every witty idea in your head is worth sharing. Before you hit the “post” button, think to yourself, “Is this really something of value? Is anyone interested in this information besides me?” If the answer is no, then find something else of value to share.

# conclusion

While social media can help organizations and individuals connect with clients and prospects, these connections should translate digital connections into face-to-face realities. The tips and tactics outlined in this guide are designed to help you build the strongest social media foundation possible, which will lead to an increased return on your trade show investment.

Nimlok's exclusive network of dealers are experts when it comes to planning, designing and building the perfect trade show experience. Partnering with a helpful Nimlok dealer will save valuable time and energy, so you can focus on promoting your next event.



**Partner with a Nimlok dealer expert today and bring your brand to life!**



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