Gabriel Sales White Paper
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Maximize Your Trade Show Lead Generation Results

Pre-show, In-Show & Post-Show Tips and Best Practices

GS Gabriel Sales

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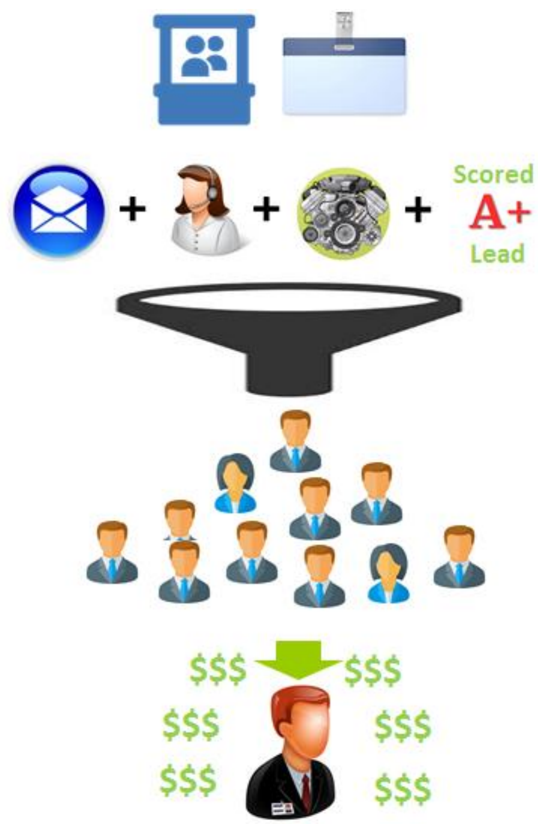
OVERVIEW

According to data from the CMO Council, Fortune 2000 and large companies are much more effective in how they allocate resources and approach trade show lead generation.

- Large and enterprise companies expect a 4:1 return on their trade show investment and typically spend as much as 17% of their annual lead gen budget on trade show and event marketing
- Mid-sized companies typically only spend only 4% of their budget and attend multiple trade shows, with in show sales and brand awareness as their typical goal
- Small businesses can spend up to 10% to 30% of their annual budget on one major show annually, with lead generation and new business as their primary measurement of return



However, according to Exhibitor Magazine, less than 60% of SMB companies have a plan to fill the booth prior to the event. And 70% don't have any systematic follow up strategy post-event. As a result, 70% of leads from the show are ignored.

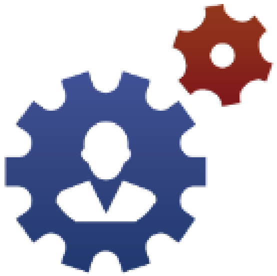
This whitepaper will discuss:

- The differences (beyond budget) between different size companies approach to trade show lead generation.
- How SMBs can maximize their budget to generate more leads.
- How SMBs can turn leads into sales opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

While one of the stated goals of a trade show investment is to develop leads with potential buyers, companies often get distracted by all the additional goals and tasks required to make a trade show successful. These tasks include:

- Focusing on closing business during the show
- Dealing with the media exposure
- Managing the logistics of the show itself
- Focusing on brand awareness
- Entertaining customers during the event
- Jumping on the hottest deals post-show



This lead generation challenge is even greater for SMBs because they:

- Don't have a dedicated event planner to manage the show
- Don't have the capability and capacity to support lead generation pre-show
- Don't have the capacity to manage the post show follow up

SMBs are stretched to keep up with the day-to-day of the normal course of business.

However, all of this can be overcome with best practices:

- A simple pre-show and post-show strategy to maximize event-based lead generation results
- Improved content curation and organization
- Smart content distribution
- Simple but effective lead nurturing campaigns
- Systematic calling with smart marketing automation lead scoring tactics

With limited effort, smarter planning and pre-show preparation, SMBs can turn a trade show into a game-changing event. The next several pages will discuss the competitive landscape SMBs face. The remainder of this whitepaper will share tips and best practices you can implement to consistently generate more qualified opportunities from your events.

THE RESURGENCE OF TRADE SHOWS AND EVENTS

From its record low in 2010, trade shows and events have rebounded dramatically. Trade shows are once again a primary tactic for companies to drive awareness, acquire new leads and generate revenue.

- The U.S. Bureau of Labor predicts that the event industry will grow by 44% from 2010 to 2020, exceeding most growth predictions for other industries *(U.S. Bureau of Labor)*

- Trade shows and events are the second most effective tactic for lead generation in a marketer's mix, after their company website *(Forrester)*

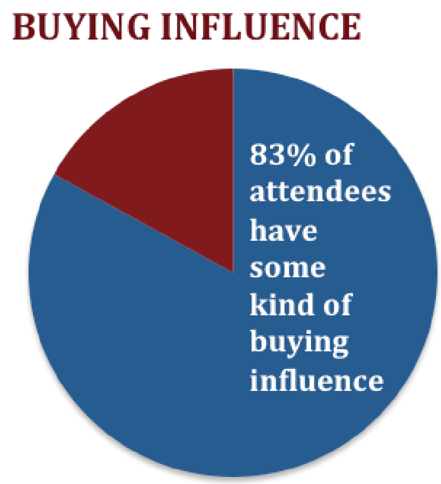
79%	**Of event planners responded that they anticipate their event revenues will be higher in 2018.** ***(PlanningPod)***

In fact, Informa's Global Exhibitions—a leading player in the exhibitions industry—is expected to grow by as much as 22% from 2015 to 2018. This growth is driven by two primary factors.

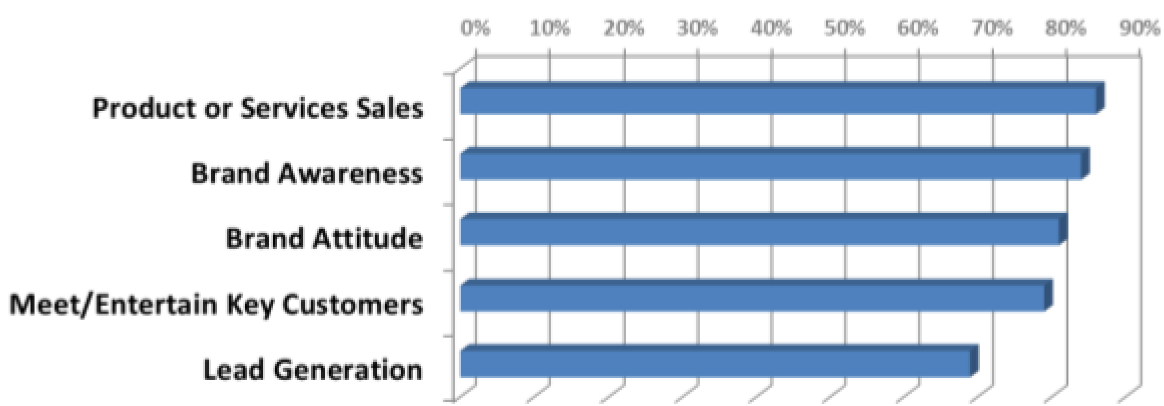
Attendees Are Looking for New Products and Solutions

1. The quality, caliber, buying power, and purchase intent of attendees:

   - 46% of trade show attendees are in executive or upper management roles (CEIR)
   - More than 90% of trade show attendees say they are looking for new products (Exhibits Survey Inc.)
   - 79% of the attendees say attending shows helps them decide what products to buy (*CEIR Report ACRR)*
   - On average attendees will share information with 6+ after the event (Circle Research)
   - 91% of attendees get useful buying info from trade shows and events (Exhibits Survey)
   - 87% of attendees said they purchased a trade show exhibitor's product or serve 6 months post event (CEIR Report ACRR**)**



2. Companies that are sponsoring these events can meet multiple sales, customer service and marketing goals with one budget, in one location at one time:



THE COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

Your lead generation challenges are simple to quantify. Here is what you face according to Exhibitor Magazine:

- The average trade show attendee spends 9.5 hours on the exhibition floor (over a three-day conference)
- 90% of attendees (as mentioned above) are actively looking for new products and solutions
- The average time an attendee will spend at your booth is less than 5 minutes

At the typical show, you are competing for 5 minutes of the buyer's time

According to data from the CMO Council, when comparing Fortune 2000 companies to mid-sized companies and SMBs, their percentage of budget, money invested and return expected (from the trade show itself) are wildly disparate:

- Large and enterprise companies expect a 4:1 return on their trade show investment, and typically spend as much as 17% of their annual lead generation budget on trade show and event marketing
- Mid-sized companies typically only spend 4% of their budget and attend multiple trade shows, with in-show sales and brand awareness as their most common goal
- Small businesses can spend up to 30% of their annual budget on one major show per year, with lead generation and new business as their primary measurement of return

<u>The Bottom Line:</u> Small and mid-sized companies are at a competitive disadvantage when tasked to compete with larger companies in maximizing the results of events because:

- Enterprise Companies have larger in-show budgets (booth size, entertainment, staff, sponsorships, etc.).
- Enterprise Companies have the capability and capacity to amplify pre-event and post-event efforts to maximize engagement with new leads and new business opportunities.

For many small businesses, what makes or breaks the success and ROI of a trade show, is their capacity to produce two key results:

1. In-person meetings and booth traffic at the show
2. The ability to follow-up with all the leads generated (not just the hottest leads) within 2 to 6 weeks after the show

This is where Fortune 2000 and larger businesses have the greatest advantage because:

- ✓ Fortune 2000 companies have specialists (field and event marketers), whose sole focus is the trade show, while SMBs depend on a Marketing Executive and/or Sales VP where the event is a part-time focus.
- ✓ Enterprise Companies have both the capability and excess capacity that most SMBs don’t have, including:
    - a content team
    - a calling team
    - automation technologies
    - manger bandwidth
    - existing databases

Most SMBs <u>do not have</u> the capacity to manage a spike in lead volume

According to Exhibitor Magazine, less than 60% of SMB companies have any strategy to fill the booth prior to the event, and 70% don’t have any follow-up strategy post-event. As a result, 80% of leads that are generated during a show are ignored after the show.

In this age of marketing automation, content marketing, and increasing competition, simply showing up at a trade show and then blasting every lead with the same, tired email message instantly upon your return, no longer works – and dialing every lead is simply too cost prohibitive.

Callers with digital insights and scored leads can produce 4X the sales opportunities

The average company can increase lead generation ROI by as much as 4 times. This increase requires a little more planning, tight execution, leveraging the right tools and technologies, and temporary staffing focused solely on lead generation prior to the show and lead qualification post show. This integrated approach produces lifts in the following areas:

- Building awareness prior to the show
- Driving more meetings and booth traffic during the show
- Identifying more short-term sales opportunities
- Identifying more mid-term sales opportunities
- Closing longer term business for three quarters post-show

The rest of this whitepaper will be a series of tips and best practices for how you can get the most out of your trade show investment to:

- Drive more top of funnel leads and more booth visits and face-to-face meetings.
- Learn how lead scoring can save time and money to drive more sales-qualified opportunities 90 days after the show.

We will also look at how this strategy can give you the ability to identify opportunities that are one to two quarters out.

TRADE SHOW MARKETING & LEAD GENERATION TIPS

Here are a series of pre-show and in-show tips to drive more traffic to your booth and post-show tips to turn show leads into real sales opportunities. To get the most from these simple tactics and strategies requires:

- The ability to leverage a smart content management system
- The basic lead scoring features of a marketing automation platform

These two technologies help to optimize calling efforts and continued buyer education at lower costs and higher returns. If you do not have these tools in place they can be rented as part of Gabriel Sales Turnkey Support Packages.

Drive More Traffic to Your booth - Trade show Marketing Pre-Show and In-Show Tips

The first step in a successful trade show lead gen campaign is driving traffic to your booth prior to the event and during the event. Here are tips to help you achieve that goal trade show marketing goal.

Build a Microsite Dedicated to the Event

Attendees are excited about the event. Help add to that excitement by creating a microsite that aggregates multiple landing pages, dedicated to highlighting reasons they should be excited to meet with you.

A quality dedicated microsite makes it easy for the attendee to understanding of who you are and what problems you solve for customers. Your microsite can include the following features:

- Highlight one or more solutions (remember, 90% of attendees are at the show to find new solutions)
- Social media connection options to capture followers
- Booth information, location and details on how to schedule a face-to-face meeting
- Break-out sessions or panels you will be participating in
- Any special events you will be hosting at the event
- Thought leadership content

- Customer testimonials and case studies

Build a 3 to 5 Part Pre-Show (and In-Show) Trade show Marketing Email Campaign for Any Known Attendees

If you have a marketing automation platform, run a dedicated trade show marketing campaign. Best practice is to start as early as 4-6 weeks prior to the event. You can also run an abridged version in the two weeks leading up to the show (if you get a last minute attendee list). With a well-built microsite, you already have the offers you will need. Having tested many communication flows across a variety of clients, we recommend the following order for optimal results:

<u>Pre-Show</u>

- Share your microsite highlighting the problems you help companies solve
- Share a thought leadership asset (and any panel you will be on at the show)
- Ask for a meeting prior to the event content
- Provide a reminder to visit the booth with a special offer or product highlight in the 48 hours prior to the start of the show

<u>In-Show</u>

- Share a reminder in-show to visit booth the first day of the event
- Share a reminder to engage in social media (ideally during the keynote)
- Share a reminder to visit breakout or presentation session (optional)

Run a 3-Part Campaign to a Rented Opt-in List of Any Potential Attendee Prior to the Show

You need to build awareness prior to the show. You also need to drive top of funnel leads and awareness every month and every quarter of the year. A trade show is a great “artificial” event to accomplish both – especially if the exhibitor is charging a lot for the list.

20% to 30% Open Rates

Click Through Rates from 4.5% to 7.5%

We have had great results running campaigns to a rented, opt-in list of potential attendees that may be attending the show (not necessarily registered attendees). Sending to this broad list of potential attendees we have seen the following results:

- 3X to 5X the typical unique open-rates of a cold outbound email campaign
- 2X to 4X of the typical click-through-rate
- Depending on the show and size of the list, you can generate 3,000-10,000 new, top of funnel leads for $1.00 to $2.00 per lead.
- In addition, emails are often forwarded to known attendees within the company by the original recipient
- Inside reps are able to set meetings with buyers both at the show and buyers that are not even attending the show

Remember to use the name of the show in the subject line of at least 2 of the 3 emails in the campaign.

Why does this work? Even professionals not attending want to be in the know and remain relevant and helpful to their organizations. This includes the social aspect of engaging with superiors and peers that are attending. So, even if these email recipients aren't attending the trade show, the content allows them to still reap a tangential benefit of the trade show by learning about a new offering or having the opportunity to connect with those in their industry. If they are interested in your solution, they may recommend a peer stops by the booth. Dollar for dollar, we have seen this approach produce some of the best results across clients and across verticals.

We recommend the following flow for the event offer emails, to ensure the content is relevant for any buyer (not just attendees):

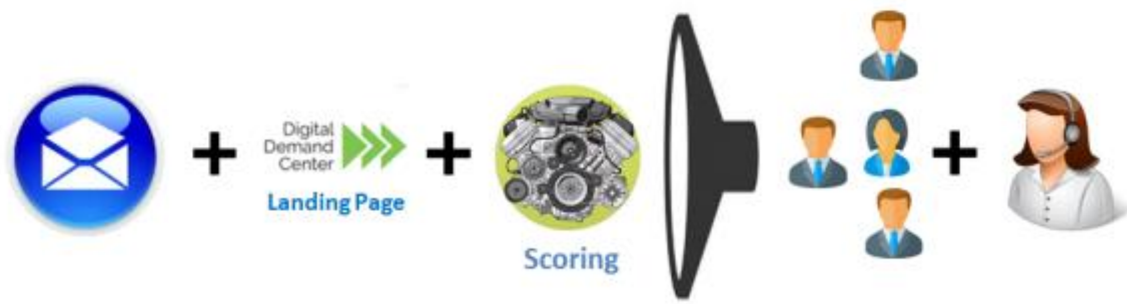
- Share your show microsite and a thought leadership asset
- Share the solution landing page and case studies
- Share a thought leadership landing page and panel info (if applicable)

Score Your Content and Make Sure to Call the Most Engaged Buyers to Ask for a Meeting Prior to the Show

According to a joint study by *Ascend2* and *Marketo*, one of the most under-utilized functions of a marketing automation platform is lead scoring (75% of companies are not fully utilizing this feature**)**. We highly recommend setting up a specific scoring campaign for your pre-show campaign to score your most interested leads. Some of the most predictive pieces of content may not even be on your trade show microsite:

- Case studies page
- About us page
- Any touch of the scheduling page
- Any touch of thought leadership and/or booth location

We have found that engagement with these pages show buying propensity and interest. Since you have limited time (and bandwidth), and only about 10% of the calls you make will actually even be a connection, we highly recommend calling these leads first, prior to the event to ask for a meeting at the show.



In-Show Emails

Remember that trade show attendees will have multiple distractions once the show begins. To stay top of mind, we recommend you:

- Send an email reminder to visit your booth again; schedule deployment for 6AM (event time zone)
- Push Twitter and social media landing pages; schedule to deploy during the initial keynote session
- Send a reminder the day of your panel appearance; once again, schedule deployment for 6AM

Database Management

We highly recommend renting show scanners, and then remember to prioritize your leads at the end of every day. Taking this 15 minutes each day will make a huge difference when you get ready to execute your follow-up campaign after the show. Note your high priority leads immediately and designate second and third tier leads, so you know who your inside reps should prioritize after the show. This simple step will save a great deal of guess work after the show.

Use Social Media Pre-Show and During the Show

88% of U.S. marketers use social media to increase awareness about their events before and as they occur (*FreemanXP*). Do likewise, and if possible, run as much of the following through your automation platform for increased lead scoring. Prior to the show, we recommend sharing the same information you are using in your email campaigns across your social media channels. During the show, we recommend leveraging Twitter to:

- Comment on sessions you thought were cool
- Provide your perspective on keynotes
- Shout out your partnership relationships
- Run a special offer for Twitter followers only
- Mention after-show events
- Mention other cool products/booths you have seen

Pre-Show Checklist

With a little planning and a little extra effort, you can double your next trade show's booth traffic. Here's what it takes:

- Re-organizing content that already exists, specifically for the trade show
- Sharing that content:
    - With a nurturing campaign to past and present show lists and your existing database
    - An outbound email marketing campaign to a wider audience to generate new top of funnel leads
    - In your existing social media network
- Finally score those leads with your automation platform to maximize 800 to 1600 calls prior to the show.

Generate More Real Sales Opportunities - Post-Show Tips

87% of attendees said they purchased a trade show exhibitor's product or service 6 months post event (*CEIR Report ACRR)*

But according to Exhibitor Magazine, 80% of leads generated during a trade show are ignored after the show because 70% of companies don't have any follow-up strategy for after the event.

With a little incremental investment and a systematic and sustained effort post show, most companies can generate dozens of additional sales qualified opportunities to increase both the volume and revenue amount in their sales pipeline by as much as 4X.

What follows are simple best practices you can implement to focus your team on developing, qualifying and generating more sales opportunities after the trade show.

Generate a Show Highlights Blog

You're either sitting in your hotel room and unwinding after a long trade show, or you're already at the airport or on a plane home, so what's next? You had a great show—you talked to folks across the trade show floor; including vendors, potential customers, competitors, and successful innovators in the space.

Now, it's time to create some content to share with all of the prospects you talked with and met at the show, all of those people who gave you business cards, all of those scanned leads and your existing nurturing database. The first thing we recommend doing is jotting down some notes on the following:

- Cool, interesting or valuable speaking presentations that were given
- Any break-out events or smaller sessions where you learned anything interesting, new or helpful
- New companies or solutions in the market that are worth paying attention to
- Any future industry trends that came to light during the show
- Anything interesting you learned or saw
- New innovations, solutions or ways people can do business better

Using these notes, our best practices recommend that you write a personalized blog recapping all of these items to share with your entire database – both existing and new leads. As you'll see in the "Post-Show Content and Email Flow" section, this is the first piece of content and email we recommend you lead with, within 48 hours of the show ending. You can assume that the large majority of your competition will be following the same old process of loading all of their new leads into their CRM, and blasting everyone with a hard ask: "Can we set a meeting?"

Differentiate yourself in your first post-show follow-up email by sharing relevant, educational and informative news and topics with your network. The goal here is to share some honest, interesting content that will benefit your network, whether they immediately transact with you or not. This greatly aids in cutting through the noise that's ever-present after a show, and helps you stand out as a real resource, while building trust and brand awareness.

Focus on Continued Buyer Education First After the Show with a Nurture Campaign

Exiting the show (since you have been diligent with daily list management as suggested above), you will have the hottest 10% of leads distributed to the appropriate sales reps. Your competition will have done the same thing. For the next two weeks, buyers are going to be flooded with follow-up calls and follow-up meeting requests. Buyers will be inundated with these requests, while they are also catching up on more pressing work after missing 3 to 5 days in the office.

The goal of your campaign is simply to stay top of mind until the attendee has time and is ready to engage. If you do this, you will not miss a deal and your buyer will appreciate the respect and persistence. Here are our email best practices to help you stand out from the crowd:

- Show highlights blog – 1-2 days post show
- Piece of educational content – 7 days
- Thanks for visiting us & reminder of how we can help – 10 days
- Special post-show offer – 14 days
- Product demo offer, soft ask – 21 days
- Hard ask - 30 Days → then drop into the nurturing engine.

Does this cadence mean you should not ask for the meeting immediately? Absolutely not! Our best performing emails are those that give leads the option to do both. We recommend you offer the meeting or demo, but you also offer continued education.

To do this, you will need to have a couple of educational pieces ready to send immediately after the show. You don't need to create new content. You can simply recycle old material to provide options that appeal to a range of prospects at various stages, and with different preferences for different educational formats.

- White paper and blogs for early stage education
- Webcasts for mid stage
- Thought leadership videos or a clip of your panel at the show (if applicable)

When these are combined with the show highlight blog discussed above, you will stay top of mind. And when schedules settle down over the next 2 to 6 weeks, you will reap a significant bounce in your scheduled meetings.

Lead Scoring

With calls to connect ratios (a buyer actually picking up the phone when you call) at 10%, it is critical that you make the most of every connection possible. To do this, it's important to prioritize your calling on your buyer's engagement with your follow-up email campaign and digital content consumption.

Once again, this is where you need to leverage marketing automation to maximize your calling efforts. Similar to the pre-show lead scoring, we recommend giving escalating scores to engagement with your post show content. If a lead is moving from the content offer and into more specific pages, we highly recommend that you follow-up immediately with an email and phone call. You can use an automation system to notify your caller when this occurs.

Coming out of the show, we also recommend that you segment your leads into three groups of follow-ups to maximize results and minimize costs. The basic idea behind segmentation is, you should not have senior reps—with loaded costs exceeding 100K—attending to an early stage prospect, and you should not have inside reps, your email marketing campaign, or BDRs following up with executives you know are ready to engage.

As mentioned above, you can't connect on the phone with every lead immediately, especially if you do not have the excess calling capacity to handle a spike in lead volume. To maximize your results and manage your cost of sales percentage, you should prioritize follow-ups with different types of leads accordingly:

- **Hottest Leads** – Leads where leaving the show, the next step is already scheduled (or promise of next step scheduled) and is to be followed-up by sales reps.
- **Hot Leads** – Deals that are worth being pursued until they have been reached on the phone, but not worth a senior rep spending hours on that connection; prioritize these leads in batches of 50 (in order of importance) and then they should be given to your BDRs and they should call until they connect. It is OK to drop these leads into your post-show marketing campaign.
- **Warm Leads & Your Entire Pre-Show Database** – Call these leads based on their digital engagement. These leads merit a direct follow-up only after they start showing predictive buying behavior in their automation score.

Post-Show Summary

Exiting the show, you are going to generate business from your top leads. Maximizing your results simply requires a systematic plan and smart use of your calling resources executed over 4-6 weeks after the show. Remember, the majority of buyers stated they do not transact until 3-6 months after the show.

- Continue to educate your buyers after the show
- Be persistent and continue to build trust with the buyer with a consistent, but not overly aggressive, nurturing campaign
- Call the hottest buyers first
- Use your automation platform to:
    - Score leads to prioritize calling
    - Give the buyer the power to schedule with you when ready
- Pursue the buyers for at least 2 months post the show

SUMMARY

The recent resurgence of trade shows presents today's sales and marketing teams with both new challenges and new opportunities for growth. While trade show attendees have more interest and buying power than ever before, small and mid-sized companies are at a disadvantage to Fortune 2000s when it comes to budget, staffing and technology. Consequently, many SMBs end up losing out on the opportunity to maximize event-based lead generation and sales revenue, both immediately after the event and for months following.

However, SMBs can regain a competitive edge in the trade show world through the use of automation technologies and digital content solutions. As we've suggested, this approach simply requires a little more planning, tight execution, the right tools and temporary staffing focused solely on lead generation and qualification. While it does take some effort, if you execute your trade show strategy right, you can ensure:

- You never miss a hot lead
- You don't let warm leads slip away
- Everyone knows who you are and how you can help
- You maximize your ROI for the remainder of the year

How We Can Help

Depending on the size of your show, your sales targets, and your lead generation goals, Gabriel Sales can provide turnkey solutions to support your trade show events. Trade show event packages start for as little as $4K for full service digital support, and can scale to $20K for a comprehensive large event support that includes:

- Best practices
- Content production and curation
- Email marketing and marketing automation support
- Temporary calling support both pre- and post-show

Who We Are

Gabriel Sales is a full-service sales and marketing consulting and execution firm that provides outsourced sales and marketing services. We combine sales strategy consulting, digital content marketing, marketing automation expertise and sales execution in order to produce self-sustaining, scalable, and measureable sales engines – all designed to put more sales qualified leads in your closers hands to generate revenue. Visit us at www.gabrielsales.com .