

The Association's Guide to Ad Targeting

Get in front of the right audiences, grow event attendance, and drive new revenue streams.



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A note from the author:

In 2019, adults in the United States spent an average of 6 hours and 18 minutes per day interacting with digital media, with half of that being spent on mobile devices. This number is even higher for professionals who spend most of their working hours on a computer. Smartphone owners check their precious pocket machines over 80 times per day – an average of once every 12 minutes during waking hours. Always on, always connected; this is the new normal.

Unsurprisingly, this trend is even stronger among millennials, who now make up a plurality of the workforce at 35%. As a marketer, you need to reach your audience where they are, which is online. This guide will give you an overview of how targeted digital advertising works, and provide specific examples, use cases, and best practices from the marketing teams at some of today's most successful associations and their events.

A bit about Feathr – we build digital marketing and web analytics tools specifically designed for live events! We've helped grow over 1,000 associations, trade shows, and conferences in the past three years, and our startup story is just beginning. More info about us can be found on the last page of this Guide, or at feathr.co.



Aidan Augustin
Co-Founder of Feathr

Retargeting 101

Programmatic advertising is the art of putting the **right ad** in front of the **right person** at the **right time**.

One of the most effective forms of programmatic advertising is **retargeting**.



The Basics

Retargeting builds **excitement**, increases **show visibility**, and converts window shoppers into **attendees**. It works by tracking which pages people visited on your site, then reminding them of your show via digital ads as they continue to browse the web.



That excitement and visibility pays off, because click-through rates on retargeting ads are more than **10x higher** than standard display advertising.

Merely placing an ad in industry media or boosting a social post isn't enough to convert visitors to attendees—it takes **sustained exposure**. That's what makes retargeting so effective and so valuable. It keeps your show in front of your audience long after they engage with your content.

Tracking Cookies

So, you've announced the show dates and you're seeing some social shares and a spike in website traffic. ***But 98% of your site visitors won't convert on the first visit.***

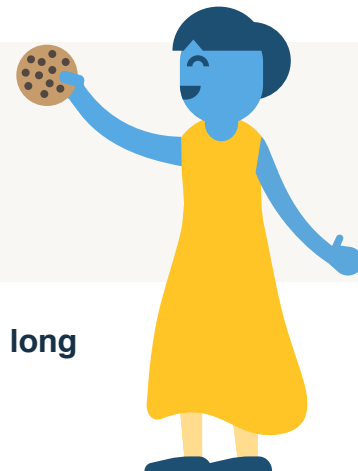
That's okay—the most important thing that happens when they visit your website is that you **tag them with a tracking cookie.**

Cookies don't tell you who a visitor is, but they offer valuable insight into your visitors' interests and browsing habits, which enables you to communicate more effectively to potential attendees and partners.

Cookies enable you to collect non-identifying information such as:

- ✓ Device
- ✓ Browser
- ✓ IP address
- ✓ Timestamp of visit
- ✓ Pages visited
- ✓ Duration of visit

Tagging each site visitor with a cookie allows you to follow them with ads on other sites **long after they've left yours.**



Ad Exchanges

The marketplaces in which digital advertising is bought and sold are called **ad exchanges**.

In traditional advertising, you call a sales rep, negotiate a price, and purchase a specific ad placement. The problem is, every reader would see your ad **whether it is relevant to them or not**. This changed with the introduction of ad exchanges. Ad exchanges place ads on websites through an automated process called **real-time bidding (RTB)**.

As a web page loads, its available ad space is automatically auctioned to potential advertisers in a split second. These ads are **unique to the viewer** and based on cookie data. That's why you see different ads than your friends and colleagues, even when looking at the same website. Those ads are personalized based on past web browsing behavior.

RTB is effective because it ensures that you are only spending money to reach people who are **already interested** in your show.



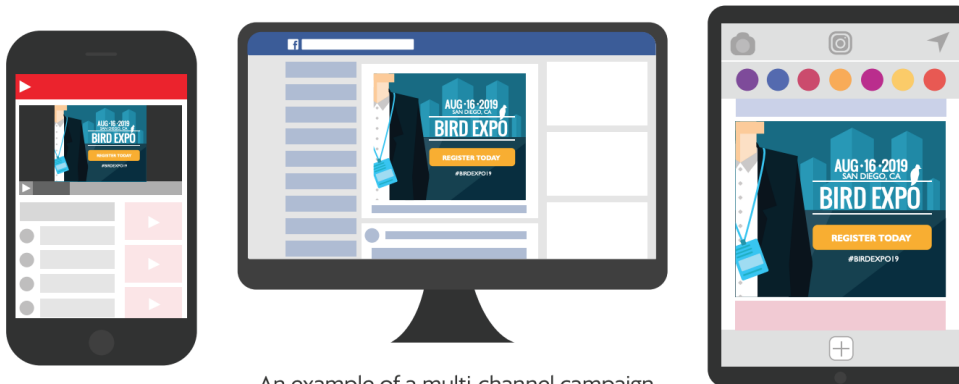
Beyond Banners

Retargeting is not just banner ads anymore. These days, retargeting takes on many more forms. It could be a 15-second “pre-roll” video on YouTube, in-stream social posts on Facebook and Instagram, custom ad units within mobile apps, and more. These are called **multi-channel campaigns**.

On average, multi-channel campaigns get a whopping **229% more conversions** than traditional display ad campaigns.

Multi-channel retargeting generates the most return for the least effort, since you are only paying to reach people who are already interested in your show. And you’re reaching them where they spend the

most time. And as you learned on page 5, it takes sustained exposure to drive conversions. That’s what multi-channel campaigns do so well.



An example of a multi-channel campaign across devices and channels.

Attendee Acquisition

As we stated, programmatic advertising puts the right ad in front of the right person at the right time.

Next we'll take a closer look at that concept and some practices that can help you **increase attendee preregistrations** for your trade show.

The Right Person

Your audience is made up of thousands of **individuals**, and each of them is interested in your event for different reasons.

Segmentation is the process of grouping visitors by their own interests. People attend trade shows for a myriad of reasons, and segmentation enables organizers to market to them with pinpoint relevancy. Segments power the idea of **personalized advertising** you may have heard about.



This example, from the USITT Conference & Stage Expo 2018, is a textbook example of segmentation. USITT serves theatre professionals, and in this case advertised to segmented audiences of sound engineers, costume designers, and lighting technicians. Segments are built based on web behavior. For example, USITT can serve sound engineering ads to website visitors who clicked on sound-related pages.

The Right Time

Consider the timeline of pre-show milestones that get people excited about your show. Each of these announcements is a **new opportunity** to vary your marketing messaging and **generate fresh interest** in your show. Here are some typical examples:

- ✓ Save the date/location reveal
- ✓ Registration opening
- ✓ Awards finalists
- ✓ New pavillions/categories
- ✓ Featured industry trends
- ✓ Educational content



In this example, National Confectioners Association ran a variety of campaigns throughout the pre-event timeline to announce event milestones. **Keep your ads fresh and they will deliver conversions.**



The Right Ad

As we've learned, retargeting can be done with traditional web banners, video ads, mobile-specific in-app ads, or in-stream social ads.

Each format has its own quirks, but best practices remain the same. Let's use banners as an example. Here are some guidelines:

- **20% or less of the image should be text**
- **Have a clear call-to-action e.g. "Register now!"**
- **A/B test - You should always, always, always run tests**
- **Make it dynamic - get their attention using GIFs or HTML5 ads!**



Appealing and unobtrusive with a clear CTA. You'd go, right?

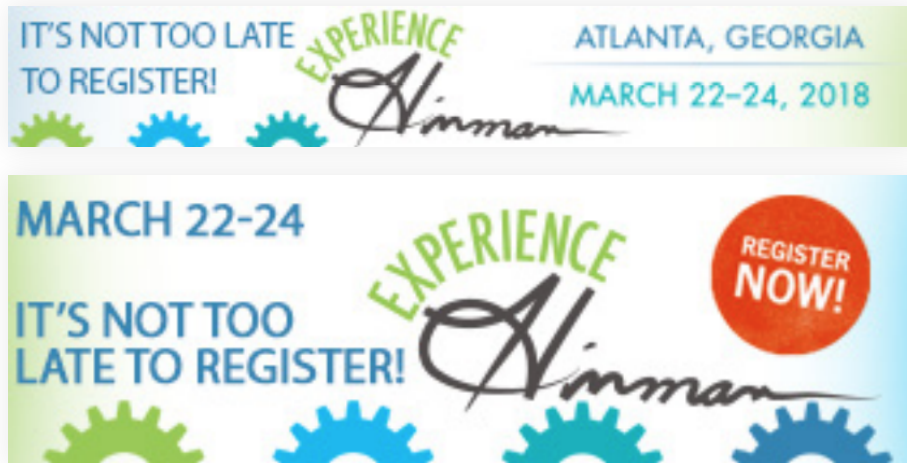
Too much text. Distracting and not to the point.

To go a little more in-depth into creating the perfect banner ad, check out this [article](#) on Feathr's Help Desk.

Abandonment & Drive-ins

Two common and successful retargeting campaigns are cart abandonment campaigns and “drive-in” campaigns. The idea behind cart abandonment campaigns is simple, but effective. Cart abandonment campaigns target only visitors to your event’s registration page, and only those visitors who did not register. Short of an actual registration, there’s no stronger indication of interest in your event than viewing the reg page. Cart abandonment campaigns simply put the event back in front of those visitors’ minds, reminding them to complete their registration.

Drive-in campaigns are similar to cart abandonment campaigns in that they “nudge” visitors who may be close to attending your event. In the case of drivein campaigns, however, these people are geographically



close to attending the event. These campaigns target website visitors who are within driving distance of your event, since the cost and effort of attending a nearby event is considerably lower than a trip that requires air travel.

Bring it all together

So, each of your visitors has a cookie. You've got them neatly organized by interest. You've laid out a detailed calendar with all of your upcoming ad campaigns. You know what a great ad should look like.

We can bring it together by looking at two individual members of an audience and their interactions with your marketing.



Bird Reynolds

- Longstanding association member
- Wants to expand his operations
- Visited exhibitors page



Al Batross

- Prospective member
- Wants to advance his career
- Visited speakers page

Bird can be served ads showing exhibitors who may be able to meet his supply needs face-to-face at the show. Al can get ads that announce the topics of various educational breakout sessions so he can improve his education and make an informed choice about becoming a member

Other Use Cases

As we all know, pre-registrations are only part of the equation.

Let's explore how retargeting can be used to increase verified attendance, engage your audience throughout the year, and even generate new streams of digital sponsorship revenue.

Anti-Attrition

Attrition from pre-registration to verified attendance is the bane of every trade show organizer's sanity—from marketers measuring their own performance to salespeople promising foot traffic to exhibitors operations teams planning F&B.

If your show is free to attend, your job as a marketer doesn't end with the completion of a registration form. Below are examples of retargeting campaigns from NAB Show that kept pre-registrants engaged and drove them to make incremental commitments (whether financial or psychological) which ultimately made them more likely to attend.



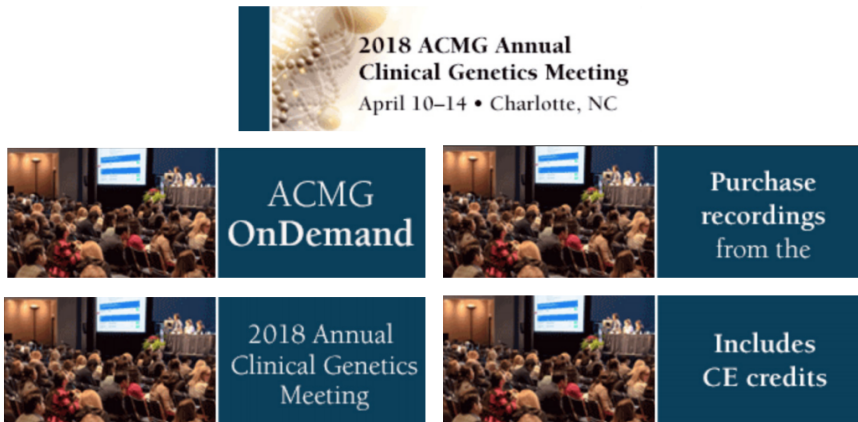
Some Anti-Attrition Opportunities:

- Book your room in the hotel block
- Download the mobile app
- Upgrade to VIP
- Schedule 1:1 meetings
- Browse the floorplan/exhibitor list
- “See you next week” reminders

Post-Event Engagement

The doors have closed, the booths have come down, and the attendees have gone back to their day jobs. Time for some post-show analysis and perhaps some much-deserved vacation. But as a marketer, you should resist the temptation to move on to other projects until registration opens for next year's event.

There are many ways to keep your brand on your audience's minds all year, and improve the chances they will return. In the example below, the Annual Clinical Genetics Meeting ran a post-show retargeting campaign to advertise session recordings for their OnDemand program. This is just one of the ways you can keep your audience engaged when the next show is a long way away.



Frames from an animated ad encouraging attendees to download post-event content.

More Post-Show Campaign Opportunities:

- Show recap blog posts/videos/highlights
- Subscription to newsletter or publication
- Membership
- Education/certification
- Research
- Announcements/brand news

Digital Sponsorships

Sponsorships are a traditional and reliable source of event revenue. Your sponsor pays you a fee for the opportunity to get its message in front of your audience. It couldn't be simpler.

And like most things these days, there is a digital version as well. Let's learn a little more.



Exhibitors at the International Builders' Show purchased digital sponsorships to advertise their products *and* their presence at the event to IBS attendees.

A digital sponsorship takes the concept of a sponsorship and moves it online. The same principles apply, except instead of a banner in the exhibition hall, it's a banner ad on the web pages your audience members visit. In a digital sponsorship, you offer your event partners the opportunity to serve ads to your show's website

traffic. That exposure to your audience is valuable to your partners, and your partners' products and services are likely to be relevant to your audience's interests.

Digital sponsorships can be a valuable addition to traditional sponsorship packages, exhibitor packages, or even as a standalone offer before or after the show. That's part of the versatility of digital sponsorships: no one will see a banner hanging in the exhibition hall after the show is over, but thousands will see it online.

Finding New Attendees

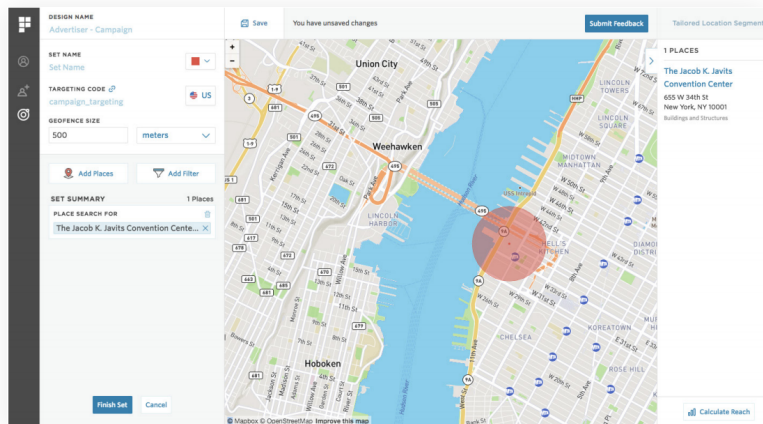
Marketing your trade show is all about reaching the professionals who would find the event valuable.

Retargeting is effective for engaging your existing website visitors, but you also need a strategy to expand your reach to new audiences. Let's review a few methods.

Geofencing

Wouldn't you love to run a campaign reaching every attendee and every exhibitors of your competitor's show? By geofencing the city block(s) around their venue during the dates of their event, you can do exactly that!

Here's an example using Manhattan's Javits center:



Geofencing is best suited for top-of-funnel awareness building. It is unlikely the people who see the campaign will make a snap decision to register for your show. Also, it should be noted that most of the exposure of a geofenced campaign will be on mobile devices, so the ads should be designed accordingly.

Depending on your technology partner and the data privacy restrictions of your country, you may be able to continue retargeting those attendees and exhibitors for weeks after the event (not only during the dates of the event itself).

Other Programatic Tools

Now that you have all your visitor data and your targeted campaigns have been running smoothly, there are several other simple programmatic tools to help broaden your digital audience considerably, boost brand awareness, and earn more conversions. Here's a quick overview:

Email Mapping

Got a massive email list but you want to reach them beyond their inboxes? You can upload an email list to your digital marketing platform and crawl the web to match cookies for as many potential attendees as possible. This connects the missing dots between email and cookie and provides you with more usable data about the matches.

Lookalike Modeling

Ever wish you could find more attendees just like the ones you've already won over? Lookalike modeling analyzes your existing audience by its digital traits and expands upon it to deliver new people with similar interests to target across the web.

Search Targeting

People's web searches reveal a lot about what interests them. While web searches for the name of your show will certainly lead people to your website, many related searches may not. Search targeting enables you to advertise to people who have searched for certain words and phrases. All you have to do is come up with search terms that might apply to the kinds of people you want to reach.



Analytics & Marketing for Associations

A little about us: from segmenting your website visitors to leveraging your show partners' audiences to running hyper-targeted digital ad campaigns, all of the techniques described in this guide (and more) can be accomplished from a single digital dashboard using Feathr.

Big and small associations—from NAMM to Michigan Society of Association Executives—and over a thousand more events of every type use Feathr to grow attendance, engagement, and revenue.

If you're ready to learn more about Feathr, email me at aaugustin@feathr.co or visit feathr.co.