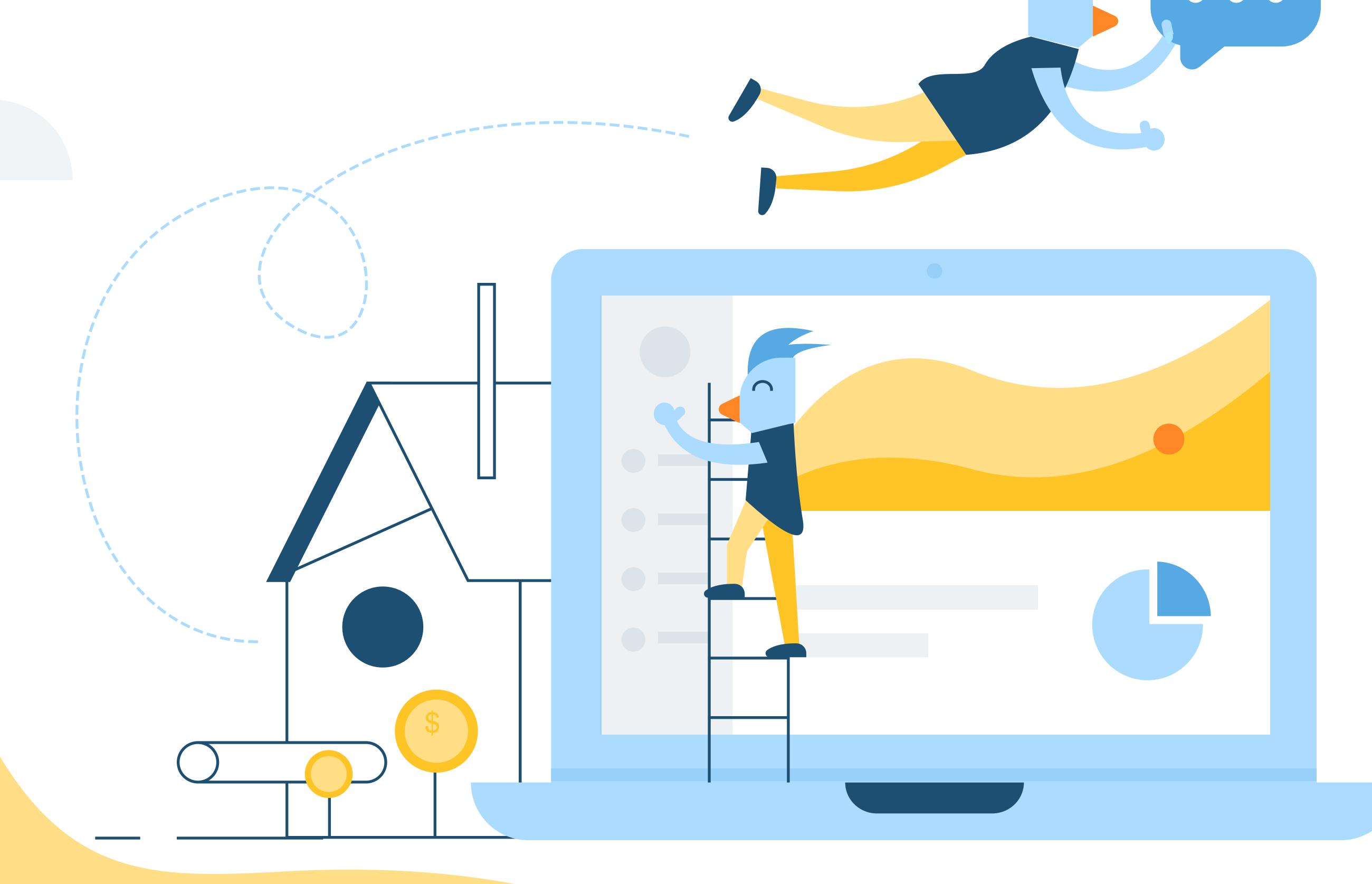


The Modern Marketing Toolkit for Events & Associations



### Introduction

Finding the right set of tools is crucial to the success of any job. That's what this guide intends to help you and your team do. This is a simple, actionable guide to the modern marketing tools that we've seen work across 500+ associations and 1500+ events.



Aidan Augustin

President & Co-Founder, Feathr

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# A Modern Challenge



# A Modern Challenge

#### Marketing for events and associations is harder today than ever.

Attendees and members have more options today than ever. Information, education, networking, and purchasing have all been democratized.

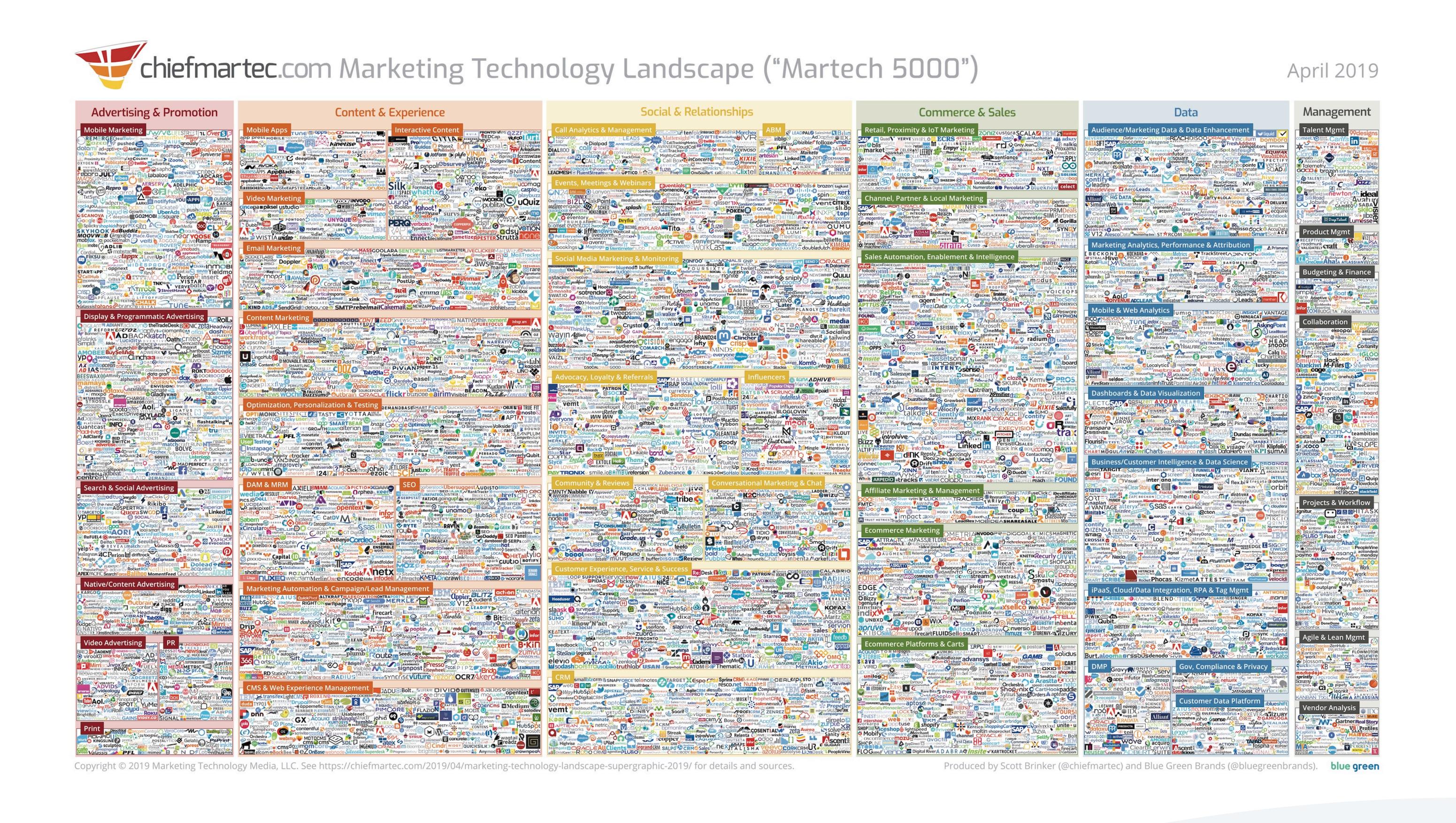
Sponsors, exhibitors, and other partners have more options, too. They no longer rely on one big annual event to collect the majority of their leads or to put new products in front of qualified buyers.

Why? Because of the internet, of course.

An enormous amount of information sharing and commerce that once required face-to-face interaction has been spread thinner and thinner across the internet landscape, requiring incredibly creative problem solving to compete in this digital era. This competition is healthy for the industry as a whole, but it presents an enormous challenge to individual marketers who must rise above the din.

But that isn't even the hardest part – we event folks have always found novel ways to deliver value to our attendees and brand partners. We have always risen to the challenge.

### The hardest part is this:



Mentally raise your hand if this stresses you out. We'll join.



# Only The Tools Have Changed

#### Demonstrating value remains the driving force.

The number of tools, technologies, and channels marketers have to choose from today has grown to a laughable level of complexity, and it shows no sign of tapering off any time soon. The current list (early 2019) counts more than 8000 marketing tools.

But despite the staggering number of technology choices, the basic tenet of marketing events and associations hasn't changed: demonstrate your value to qualified people, and make it easy for them to join, register, and attend.



That wasn't easy. This guide will be.



### Attract & Convert

#### The one-two punch to knock out your marketing goals.

Ideally, technology should make that basic tenet of marketing easier.

Well, the **right** technology does.

That's why Feathr's mission is to build the ideal marketing technology toolkit that makes it simple for event and association marketers to do their best digital marketing and grow their organizations.

So far 1500+ events and 300+ associations have used our technology to grow membership and event attendance. We've seen the value having the right marketing toolkit provides, and we're obsessed with perfecting and providing those tools. That's why we're excited to publish this guide for you.

Whether you get your digital marketing tools from us or not, we want to share what we've learned. What works. What you can start using today to both improve your marketing results and simplify your technology stack.

For clarity, we'll separate the tools in this guide into two categories based on their most effective use cases: **attract** and **convert**.

### Attract

These are the tools we recommend to fill the top half of your marketing funnel, expanding your online audience and increasing awareness. They excel at familiarizing more people with your brand and what it has to offer. The bigger your online audience, the more potential members, attendees, and event partners you can convert.

- Geofencing
- Paid Search
- Paid Social
- Invites

### Convert

The tools that perform best at getting conversions exist in the sweet spot between informative and persuasive. They offer the information prospects need to make a decision, and are expressly designed to motivate that decision. These conversion-oriented technologies excel at moving the needle.

- Retargeting
- Email
- Chatbots
- Landing Pages

So keep reading to learn all about how this ideal marketing stack can supercharge events and associations in 2020. We'll discuss what the tools do, how you can get the most value and performance from them, and specific suppliers we recommend for each.

# Geofencing

Recommended Providers: Feathr, Factual, Simpli.fi





## Geofencing

#### As targeted as targeted advertising gets.

Powered by GPS, wi-fi, and RFID technologies, geofencing is a technology that enables marketers to advertise by targeting ultraspecific physical locations. We're talking neighborhoods, city blocks all the way down to a specific street address. Geofencing is a powerful and simple way to put a hyper-targeted message in front of a hyper-targeted audience. It's one of the most accurate advertising technologies there is.

If you've got a strong pulse on the large employers, educators, and competitors in your industry, geofencing can be a powerful way to get a focused message in front of new, qualified audiences.

Let's look at some geofencing use cases for events and membership.



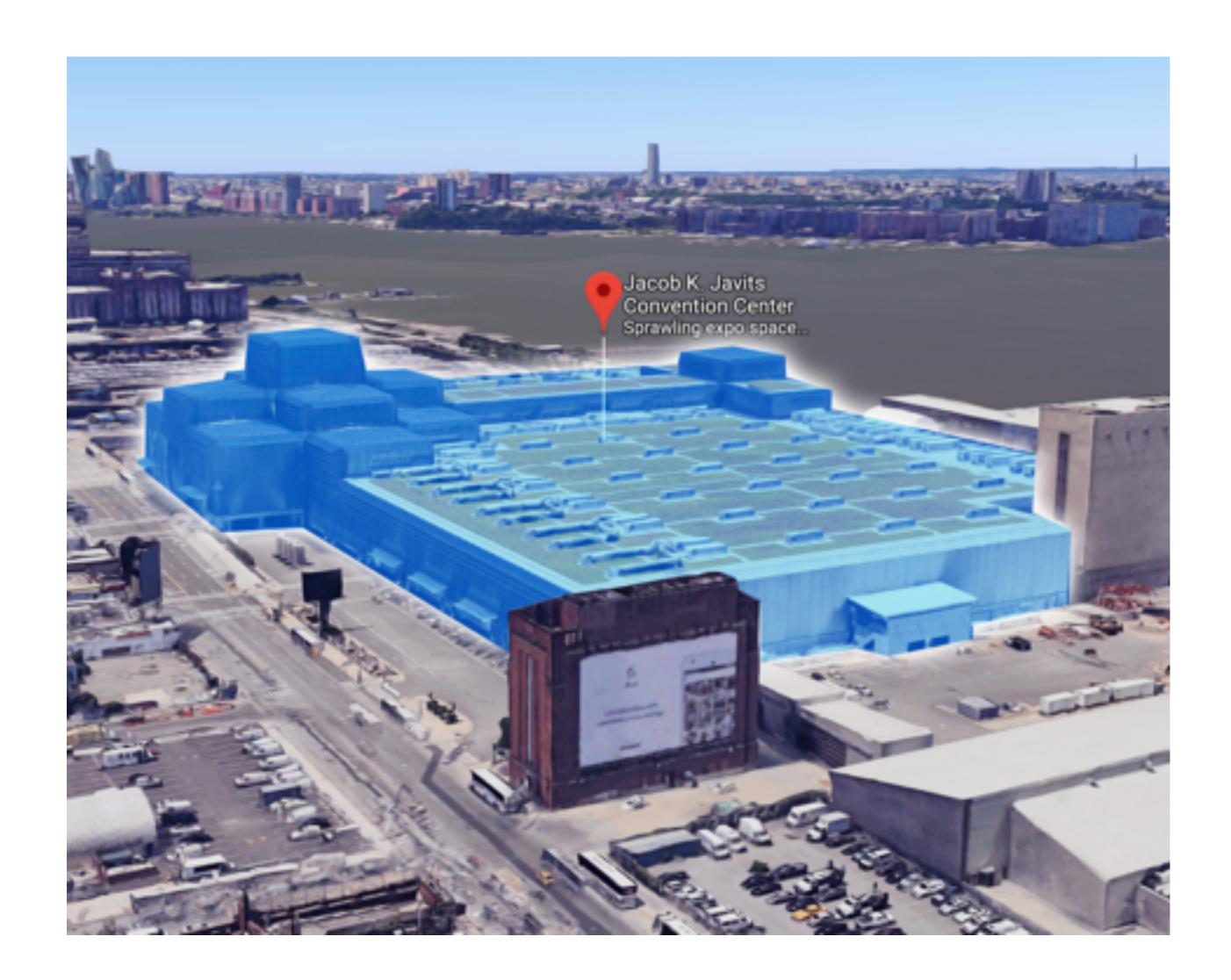
# Geofencing a Competing Event

#### Captivate a captive audience.

If you organize events, you're likely not the only event in the world that's relevant to your audience. You're already aware of your competition, but what are you actively doing to win over their audiences? A simple and effective play is to run a brand awareness campaign during the dates of a competing event, geofencing the address of the event's venue.

This way, when your competitor's attendees open just about any web page during their time at the event, they will be greeted by your message. Attendees there are in career development mode and will be open to learning about opportunities at other relevant events and associations.

For even deeper marketing saturation, geofence nearby hotels with the same campaign. Your message will be visible to prospects during their downtime, too.





# Geofencing a University



#### Be the Big Membership On Campus.

One of the persistent woes we hear from association marketers in particular is the difficulty of reaching students for membership and career development. If you've got a good pitch that will resonate with students, such as a student focused event or membership program, geofencing a university is an excellent way to get your message across to a student audience.

Geofencing is so precise that you can advertise only to specific colleges within a university. Even individual classroom buildings can be geofenced, depending on your geofencing tool's capabilities and settings. Keep your eye on new traffic from this campaign, and maintain fresh, student-focused creatives and messages to move student prospects down the membership funnel.



# Geofencing Potential Exhibitors

#### Introduce yourself to the big names.

Geofencing is the perfect tool to drive partner awareness by targeting companies that would get value from sponsoring your association or exhibiting at your event. It is also effective when targeting companies that may find value in sending whole teams to events and meetings for continuing education or networking opportunities.

Geofencing is a precision alternative to "spray n' pray" advertising to make new exhibitors aware of your event. If there's a prestige brand you want to land as an exhibitor, targeting their HQ with a highly personalized ad campaign will make them aware of your event.

These geofencing campaigns perform best for awareness-building. That's why it belongs in the *attract* category. Combine geofencing with other touches further down the funnel, and the results will magnify each other.



# Paid Search

Recommended Providers: Google Ads, Wordstream





### Paid Search

#### Your message, right where prospects need it.

Paid search campaigns are a powerful way to get a message in front of **new, qualified audiences.** Paid search is a staple of the digital marketing world, but it remains underutilized as a marketing tool by events and associations.

Spearheaded by Google Adwords (now Google Ads), paid search works by showing targeted ads to people who search the web for any number of related terms, thus indicating their interest in those topics, industries, or events.

To use paid search, first you need to figure out which search terms (keywords) to target. Continue reading for a simple checklist to get you started.

### Paid Search To-do List

- Don't begin by trying to list out precise keywords. Instead, start by thinking about the broadest possible topics, categories, or ideas that relate to your event or association.
- Rank the topics, categories, and ideas from the step above by their relevance to your brand particularly by thinking through how "sales-ready" someone interested in a given search term would be.
- Input each of those categories into Google's Keyword Planner to get a full list of keywords related to those categories.
- Select the top 10 keywords that you'd like to start with from each category and add them to an ad group for that category. As a rule of thumb, balance the amount of competition and the bid range to determine which to prioritize. If there is a low competition term with a low bid price that is highly relevant to your event or association, grab it!



# Keyword Generation Ideas

#### Word association for associations.

Here's an example. Let's say you are a marketer for the International Association of Coffee Roasters. Some search terms that would indicate interest in your industry and thus your association might be:

Coffee

Coffee beans

Sell coffee

Coffee equipment

Coffee roasting

Coffee meetup

Coffee events

Coffee professionals networking

The list could go on, and there are a lot of variations on essentially the same searches. What matters is anticipating the search terms that are relevant to the value you provide, and combining it with compelling marketing communication and creatives that will resonate with the individuals performing those searches.

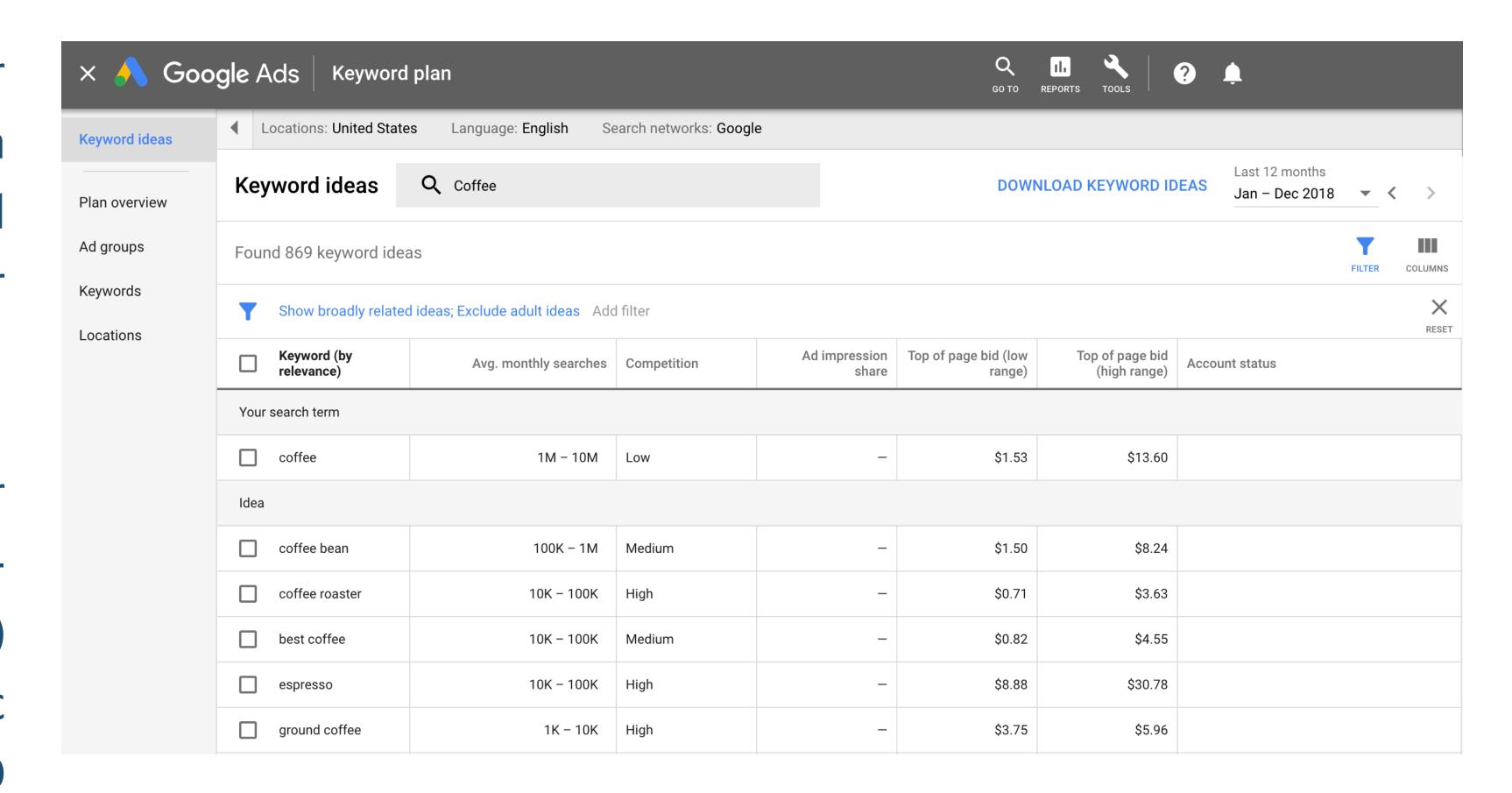


### Paid Search

#### What happens next?

The individuals who search for the terms you targeted will see your ads right in line with the search results for that term. Depending on how compelling your message is, a percentage of those people will click on your ads to find out more, leading them to your website or landing page.

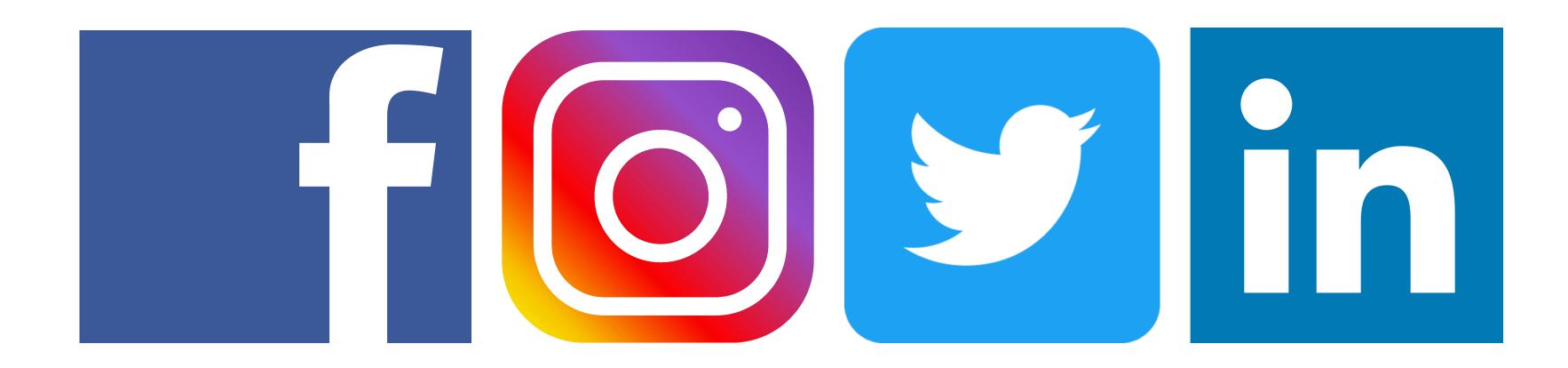
Once they visit a web property you own, they have entered your main audience and you can include them in other, more conversion-oriented campaigns. Retarget them (more on retargeting in chapter 6) and over time, convert them. Paid search campaigns are a terrific top-of-funnel traffic source and are an essential tool in your 2020 marketing toolkit.



Google's Keyword Planner

Recommended Providers:
AdEspresso; native ad platforms on
Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter





#### Prime virtual real estate for your targeted message.

It's hard to overstate just how important social networks are for business today. The prominent social networks like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube collectively receive over 12 billion visits per day. Per day! The average American visitor spends more than 2 hours a day on social media.

And they're not just sharing baby pics. Social networks, especially Facebook and LinkedIn, truly span the gamut of user demographics. That means that regardless of your industry, your customers and potential customers are right there, ready for your message.

Marketing, in its essence, is the art of getting the right message in front of the right eyes at the right time. The right eyes are on social media, and the right time is now.

And here's the kicker: Fortune 500 brands are still not spending any real money advertising on social media platforms. That means the value of social media advertising is considerably underpriced in the advertiser's favor. The volume and quality of the attention these platforms draw is just part of the picture. The more valuable part is the precision with which you can target users to create highly qualified audiences.

2

The targeting options vary slightly per social network, but broadly speaking you can use the following information to inform your campaigns:

Age Industry

Gender Employer

Income Title

Location Work history

Interests ...and much more.

Imagine the quality of audiences you can build. They can be stunningly precise.



#### Three campaign ideas to get you started.

Using the native ad platforms of each social media brand is straightforward and doesn't require purchasing any software. Whether or not your association has a social media presence, paid social campaigns are an essential tool for audience building. I'm sure plenty of ideas are already going through your mind, but to help jumpstart that process, here are three effective social campaign ideas you can start today:

Drive awareness and new traffic by targeting an audience of professionals in your industry, further filtered by their title, with ads highlighting the overall value of your event or association.

Target a lookalike audience of your website visitors to drive net new awareness and traffic to your event or association website. A lookalike audience is an audience that "resembles" a source audience—in this case your website visitors—by their demographic and behavioral profiles.

Use social ads to retarget non-converting website visitors with ads on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn that drive them back to your website to convert.

# Partner & Attendee Invites

Recommended Providers: Feathr, nvytes, Gleanin



### Partner Invites



#### Referral marketing, 21st-century style.

Every marketer knows that the best marketing channel is word-of-mouth. It's the best in all aspects: conversion rate of leads to customers, retention of customers, speed of sale/registration. The problem is that it's hard to affect directly. Increasing word of mouth is not a marketing goal you can just throw money at.

But there are some ways to use technology to directly increase word of mouth marketing for events and associations. It starts with leveraging one of your most powerful kinds of relationships: your relationships with speakers, exhibitors, sponsors, and brands.

Your partners each have their own audience that is composed of prime leads for your event. These are individuals that are loyal to, or at least interested in, the brands you partner with. They may have never heard of your event, despite being well qualified potential attendees. If you can get your partners to actively promote their involvement with your events, education programs, or membership, you'll be getting valuable exposure to hundreds or even thousands of new, qualified, prospects.

The greatest benefit of this kind of referral invite program is the shift in authority that occurs. Promotional messaging coming from your organization is expected. Of course you want people to attend your event. But if the message comes from a third party—especially one an audience already follows and trusts—the authority of the message lands with considerably more weight.



# How it Works for Associations & Events

#### Compelling incentives are the key to success.

This kind of referral marketing isn't a totally new concept. In fact, we've seen many associations attempt it before. The problem is that the traditional programs—usually based on coupon codes, printed invitations, or PDF passes—are 1) not easy or compelling for partners and 2) difficult or impossible to track.

But with new solutions (like Invites from Feathr), you can run a digital referral program that auto-creates custom, inherently shareable collateral for each partner, highlighting them as a premier partner of your organization, which encourages participation and simplifies performance tracking.

Here's how it works. The first hurdle to get over is creating a program that partners actually want to participate in. A properly arranged digital referral program handles that by providing beautiful, ready-to-use marketing collateral to partners and including a strong incentive for partners to participate.

We suggest giving your partners a few types of digital marketing collateral, specifically **landing pages, email templates, and banners.** 

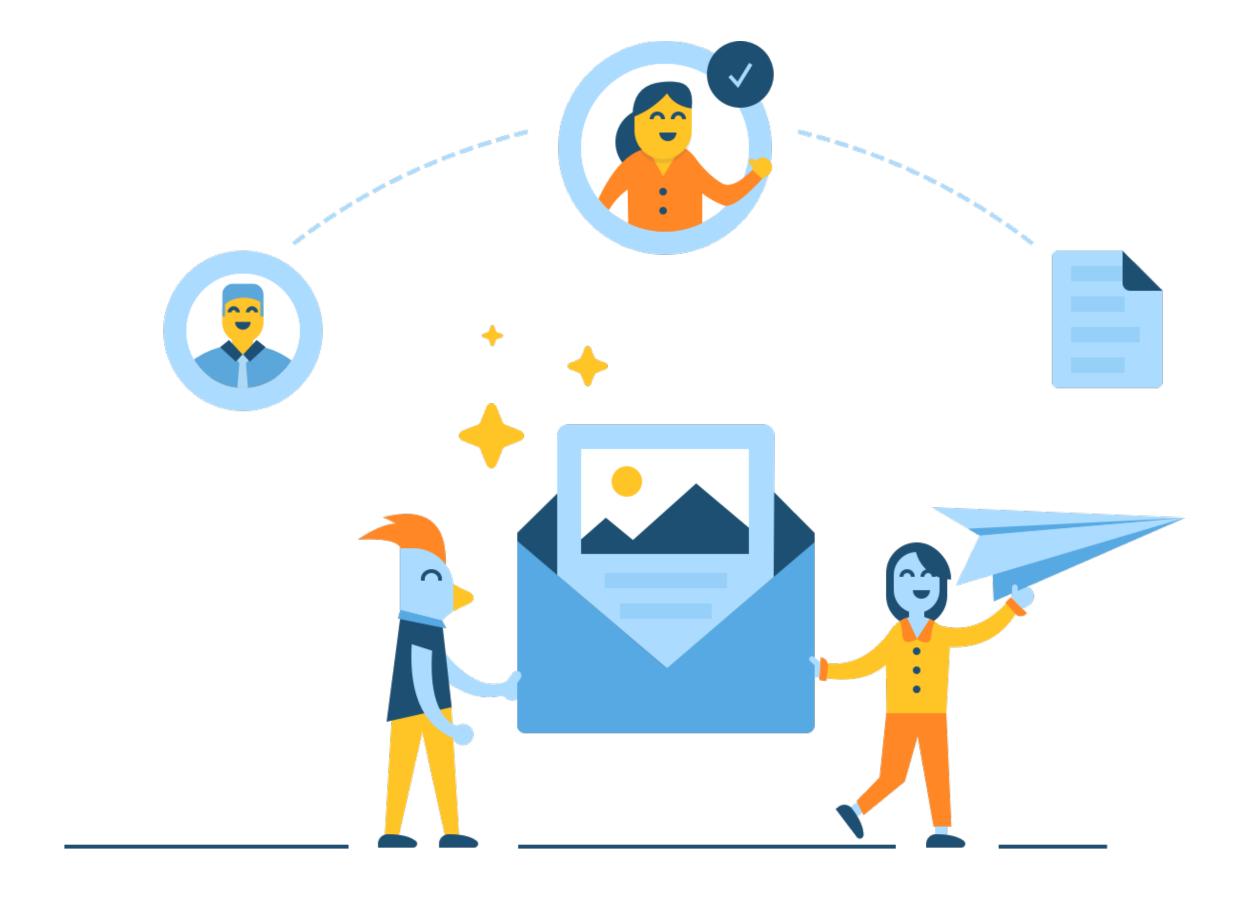
Providing your partners with this set of collateral shows them that you are invested in the program. And since they are predesigned and ready to use, the friction your partners experience in promoting your organization is almost zero.

Offering a compelling incentive can further expand the success of your invite program. We've seen associations offer rebates on booth or sponsorship costs, additional booth passes for exhibitors, and even run a competition reserving a specific activation for the partner who refers the most attendees – like a branded meal/refreshments area or a digital sign in the lobby.

The specific incentive you offer is up to you. Be creative and understand what will add genuine value for your partners.



#### Attendee Invites



#### Attendees are influencers, too.

Attendees are another powerful source of referrals. They are unlikely to have the reach of brand partners. But they have one critical advantage: the trust that comes from a personal recommendation.

As with partner invites, events have tried to generate attendee invites for some time – usually by including a request and maybe a special coupon code or registration link in the registration confirmation email to each registered attendee.

But, just like with partner invites, new solutions (like Gleanin) make attendee invites more compelling and trackable than ever. With such a solution setup, each event registrant will be prompted to invite friends and colleagues that are part of their network right as they register online. Then, as the organizer, you can see how many attendees are actively advocating your event in this way and how many new registrants have been driven by those invitations.

Some invites programs (like Feathr's) even offer a customized dashboard for partners to log in and track how their program is performing. Combine a powerful feature like that with a good enough incentive, and you'll have partners and attendees alike competing over how many people they can get to register!

# Retargeting

Recommended Providers: Feathr, AdRoll, Perfect Audience





90-95% of people who visit your website leave without converting, registering, or subscribing. 90-95%! Not to mention you're spending valuable time and money to drive them to your website (especially if you're using any of the attract tools we've discussed so far).

Imagine how valuable it would be if you could spend 100% of your ad and more. budget only advertising to people who are interested in your services. Well, that's what you get with retargeting. It is the most Then, as they browse other sites online, that cookie allows your effective tool for staying in touch with an interested audience and driving them back to your website to convert.

Here's how it works, provided that you're using a retargeting tool: when people visit your website, a tracking pixel (often called a cookie), is dropped on their device that begins to track data about that visitor—the pages they visit on your website, how long they remain, where they are in the world, what kind of device they are on,

marketing message to display to them on those other websites. Simple. And it's **10x** more effective than standard display advertising.



### Segmented Retargeting



#### The engine behind personalized marketing.

The main reason retargeting outperforms all other forms of display advertising is because the people seeing your ads are "warm"—they've already expressed interest in your organization by visiting your website.

They already know you. They already like you. And as a result, they are significantly more receptive to your advertising, which makes your retargeting budget incredibly efficient.

Retargeting for beginners just retargets everyone who visits your website with the same ad with some version of "register now." It's better than nothing, and will produce some conversions, but it's not the best you can do.

Instead, segment your visitors by some of the behavioral data points mentioned above to create more useful "buckets" of visitors who share some common traits. This simple expansion of retargeting basics is called segmented retargeting. For example, build a segment that includes everyone who began your registration process but exited without completing it. Then target that group with ads focused on driving registration: "You're almost done", "Last chance for early bird pricing", and so on. Any updates to your event while registration is open are a perfect reason to launch new retargeting campaigns promoting each update. Since it makes such efficient use of your budget, it's cheap.

Another strategic use of segmented retargeting is to segment out visitors of your "why exhibit" page with ad creatives describing the benefits of partnering with your event. Potential exhibitors are not likely to engage with the same message that brings in attendees. That's the beauty of segmenting: It's easier to predict the motivations of your audience when you know a little more about them.



### Get Creative

#### Know your audience, grow your audience.

Retargeting is a perfect example of how data helps you do more creative and engaging marketing. Without intruding on any identifying information, you can design campaigns that are more specific to your audience's demands, more cost effective than any traditional form of advertising, and more successful at converting.

With segmentation properly configured, the only work involved is building creatives, choosing a per-campaign budget, and selecting campaign options. Some of our customers run a dozen or more different targeted advertising campaigns in the months leading up to their events, earning thousands of registrations and ROI that will make you blush. And like every technology discussed in this guide, using retargeting in combination with other data-driven marketing tools will multiply your results.



# Email

Recommended Providers:
Mailchimp, Higher Logic, Constant Contact, Emma



### Email

#### An old dog learns new tricks.

Oh email, the perennially-favorite tool of marketers worldwide. In the past few years, many marketers have tried to proclaim that "email is dead." And sure, while open rates have reduced over time to an average of ~20% from upwards of 60% 15 years ago, email is absolutely here to stay. It is ubiquitous and remains the primary method of digital communication (by a longshot) across the globe. It's still a crucial tool in every marketer's toolkit. What has changed is where, how, and why the tool is applied.

We're all familiar with the "broadcast" style of email marketing. Draft an email, choose a list to send it to, send it out.

Broadcast email marketing has its place, but a much more powerful and modern kind of email is automated, or triggered, email.

With modern email marketing or marketing automation systems, you can set up rules that, when triggered, automatically send emails to the individuals who triggered the rule. For example, if someone begins to register for your event and then leaves, that could trigger an automated email on a 30 minute delay inviting them to come back and finish registration.

You can select virtually any trigger—a website visit, a form submission, an email click, a video play—and then send any email that you create based upon those actions (provided that you have the email address of the person). Turn the page for some triggered email campaign ideas we've seen succeed.

# Triggered Email: Download Delivery

When someone signs up to download a piece of gated content, triggered emails can:

- Deliver the content
- Deliver related content in a "drip campaign"
- Highlight event sessions related to the content
- Offer attendee testimonials related to the content
- Call to action for event registration

As long as you are providing genuine value, your audience will engage with these emails, which keep you top-of-mind in any membership or attendance decisions.

# Triggered Email: Cart Abandonment

Cart abandonment reminders have some of the highest conversion rates. When someone begins event registration but does not complete it, triggered emails can:

- Send a reminder to finish registering
- Deliver special offers/incentives to encourage registration
- Notify them of any price change deadlines
- Offer a countdown reminder to create a sense of urgency
- Provide educational content throughout the year

Nearly any interaction with your marketing campaigns or website can trigger an automated email. Be imaginative, but always focus on providing value.

# Website Chat & Chatbots

Recommended Providers: Feathr, Intercom, Drift



### Website Chat & Chatbots

#### Helpful for visitors, invaluable for you.

Your website is like a retail store. It gets hundreds of visits per day from people with some unique traits and some common traits.

Each visitor has a particular set of needs, desires, and motivations, and your challenge as a marketer is to ensure that those particular needs are satisfied to the best of your brand's ability.

The retail industry long ago figured out the best (and simplest) way to make that happen: have a conversation with each visitor to understand what they're looking for and how you can help.

**Website chat** is the digital equivalent of that same dynamic. It's a powerful way to engage with and learn about each visitor to your website – to understand those particular needs and then, ideally, guide them to the information, products, and services that best suit those needs.

Without it, you are essentially running a retail store where every potential customer goes in and out without ever saying a word.

**Chatbots** are the leveled-up version of standard website chat. They let you automate the questions, responses, and follow up actions that you deliver to your website visitors. Chatbots began as an automated solution to the frequent problem of customer service request volume. The usefulness of chatbots soon expanded beyond the original intention of the technology, and marketers started finding chatbots useful for both offering information to and soliciting information from web visitors.

A typical chatbot interaction might go something like this:

As you start browsing a website, a blinking window at the bottom corner pops up with the smiling face of a service rep saying "welcome to our website! Is there anything I can assist you with?" The message will typically include some pre-written choices for how to reply, like "no thanks, I'm just browsing", "I have a question," or "Get pricing information."

Depending on your reply, the chatbot can either serve up another pre-written response, or route you to a human on the back end who can start a one-on-one conversation with you.



### Using Automated Chat



#### Information in front, segmentation in back.

Since event and association websites don't offer a product that requires customer support in a traditional sense, chatbots can be used as friendly information gatherers that help you segment web visitors into more useful buckets.

To begin, ask yourself (and your marketing team) "what one thing do we wish we knew about every visitor?" For some teams that might be "what brought you to our website today?" For others, it might be "How did you learn about our event?"

Let's use "What most interests you about attending our event?" for our example here. Your chatbot can ask that question to every single website visitor. Let's presume the answer options are:

Networking opportunities
The event speakers
Exhibiting opportunities
The event location

Once you've launched the bot, you'll immediately begin seeing useful analytics about the overall interests of your audience as the answers come in. Maybe more people are interested in the event location than you initially anticipated – perhaps your speaker lineup isn't as compelling as you thought.

The analytics are insightful and actionable on their own, but you can (and should) also target each segment with ad campaigns that highlight that which your audience has told you they care about most.

That way, the visitor who said the most appealing part of your event is that it takes place in Orlando starts seeing ads that include Orlando highlights, rather than a general promotional ad.

Chatbots help organizers distinguish the many reasons people visit the website, and narrow down the most appealing possible marketing message for each visitor. And that increases both engagement and registrations.

# Landing Pages

Recommended Providers: Feathr, Leadpages, Unbounce

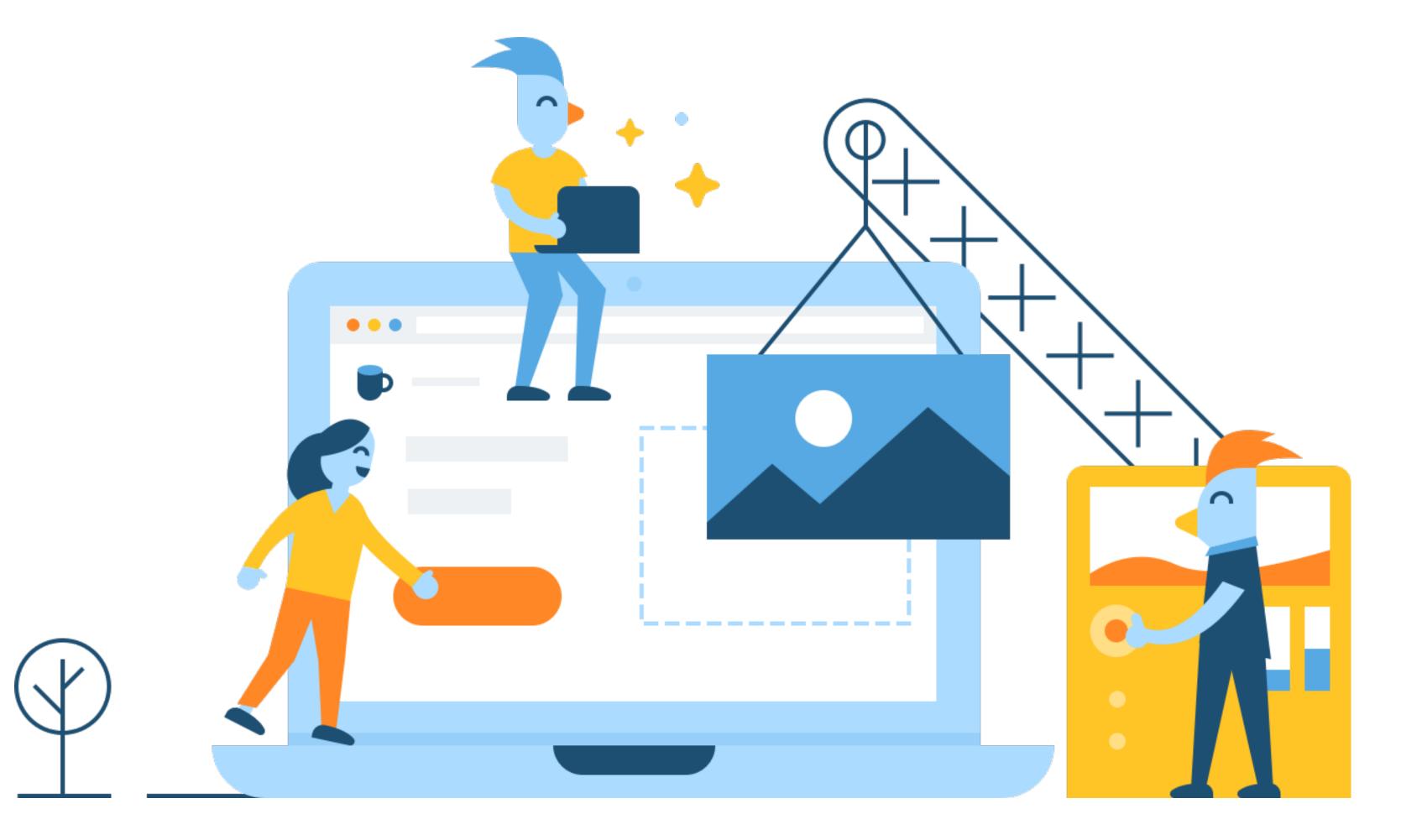


# Landing Pages

#### Boost conversions the beautiful way.

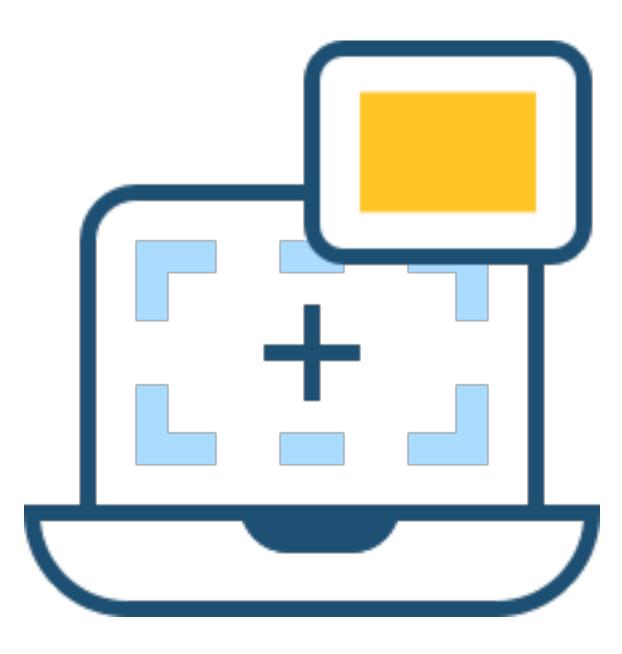
So far we've covered several tools that help you drive awareness, interest, and traffic to your event or association website. But unless you're converting that traffic into subscriptions or registrations, how valuable is it really?

That's why using campaign-specific landing pages is such an important digital marketing practice. Landing pages more effectively convert traffic (especially from paid channels like the ones we've discussed above) into conversions by featuring a clear and compelling message without unnecessary distractions.





# Use Cases for Events & Associations



#### Keep messaging consistent and stay on point.

Landing Pages are the modern alternative to the common practice of directing email, paid advertising, and referred traffic clicks to either your homepage or a registration page.

Homepages tend to bombard visitors with information. They have menus with several links, contact info, membership services, a member portal login, event information and more. And all of that information is useful...for the right visitor.

Another common place to send people who click on ads and emails is directly to first step of registration. But that can harm conversion rates. Registration pages tend to be not much more than a form that solicits a lot of information, but offers little in return. They don't do any selling.

People who respond to your marketing or advertising still need to be sold. They want to know what's in it for them – who is exhibiting, who is speaking, how many accreditation points they can earn, how much it costs, where to stay...the list goes on.

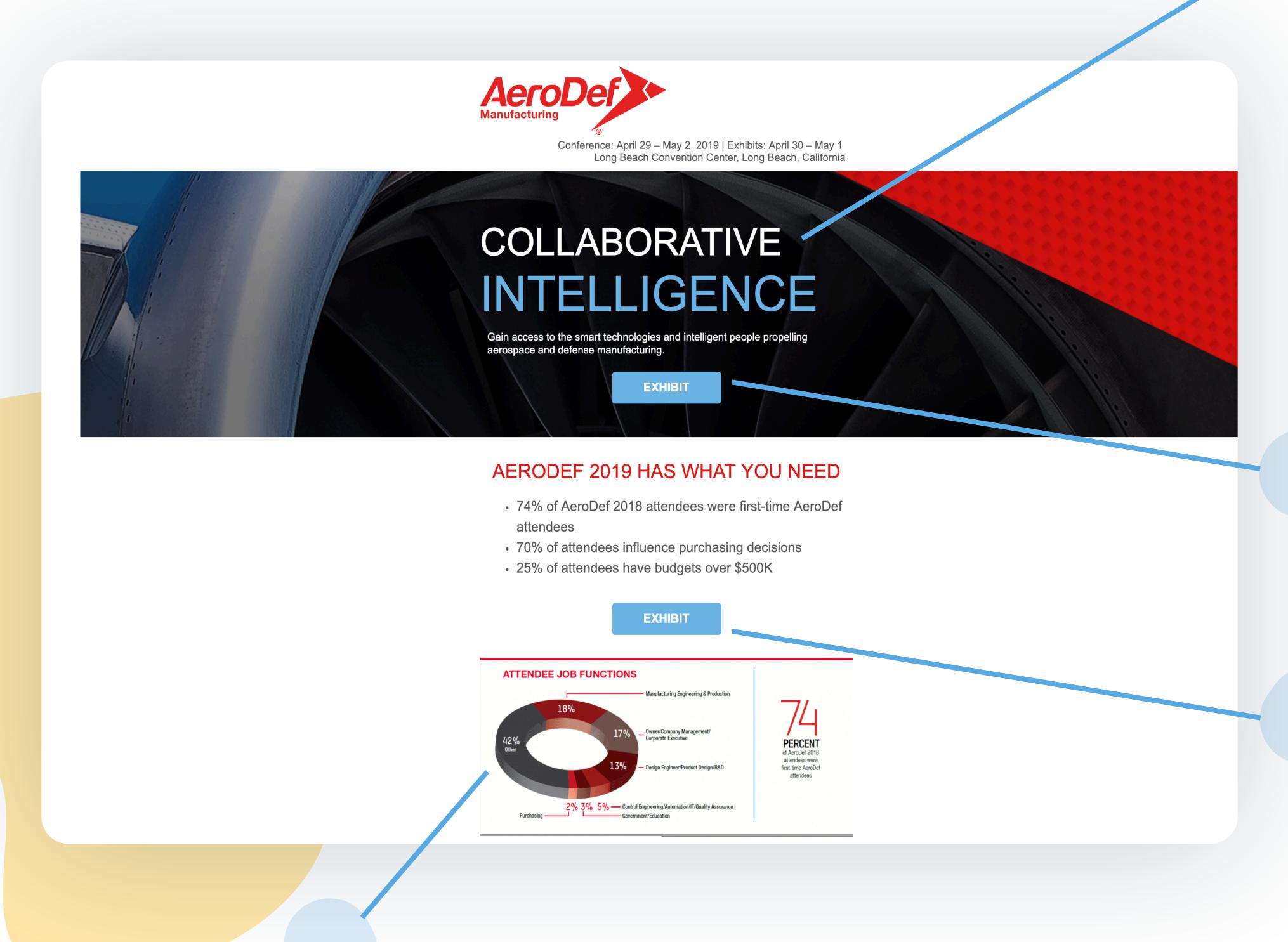
The sweet spot is to give visitors all the information they need and none they don't, based on the interest they've displayed through responding to a specific ad or email.

That's exactly what landing pages are for. In essence, a properly designed landing page will include just the information required to drive responders from a campaign through to **one particular action.** 

To employ landing pages as an effective marketing tool, you must clearly identify the action you are trying to drive, and build a landing page that encourages that action. Designing a new webpage for each marketing campaign that you launch can be an overwhelming amount of work, which is why landing page builders have recently become popular timesaving tools. They make it easy for marketers—not web developers—to quickly and automatically build beautiful, high-converting landing pages.

Check out the next page for some illustrated best practices.

# Anatomy of a Landing Page



Include social proof that proves the value of your offer. This could be brand partner or attending company logos, testimonials, customer videos—in this example, it's attendee demographic information to attract potential exhibitors.

Use above-the-fold space to clearly tie back to the message of the campaign that drove traffic to the landing page. Make sure that the first thing people see when clicking through to the landing page for the campaign tells them they are in the right place. A headline that matches the creative they clicked, like in this example, from SME's AeroDef, does the trick.

Always include your primary call to action above the fold. This is the space visitors see before they scroll.

Include multiple calls-to-action on the landing page so that any individual piece of enticing information about the event is not far from a quick and easy way to register.



### Thank You!

There you have it. The toolkit of a modern event and association marketer. Each of these tools is powerful on its own, but, when combined together, the results can expand exponentially.

Paid social, search, geofencing and partner invite programs drive highly-qualified prospects to optimized landing pages, retargeting keeps your brand top-of-mind as they are considering their purchase or registration, and attendee invite programs turn your registrants into further sources of new prospects.

It's beautiful. It works. It's what is possible with today's marketing technology. And each of these tools is something that any team can realistically implement.

We know setting up so many tools can be a chore, so we're making it easier by building the all-in-one marketing platform for events and associations. It includes many of the tools outlined above and is continually evolving through the addition of new tools that help you take advantage of the cutting edge of marketing technology.

Even if our platform isn't right for you today, we hope that learning about the tools specified in this book, along with specific ideas for how to get value from them, will make your job easier and your marketing results better.

If you'd like to learn more about any of these tools and how they can suit your organization's unique needs, please visit us at **feathr.co** to get in touch. We'd love to learn more about you.

