The State of Events

# Crafting Your 2021 Events Plan



INTEGRATE Where Business Starts

As marketers plan and budget for next year, the future of events is still up in the air. Webinars, virtual, hybrid, in-person – what should the event mix look like? When and how will in-person events return? How can marketers prepare for this uncertain future?

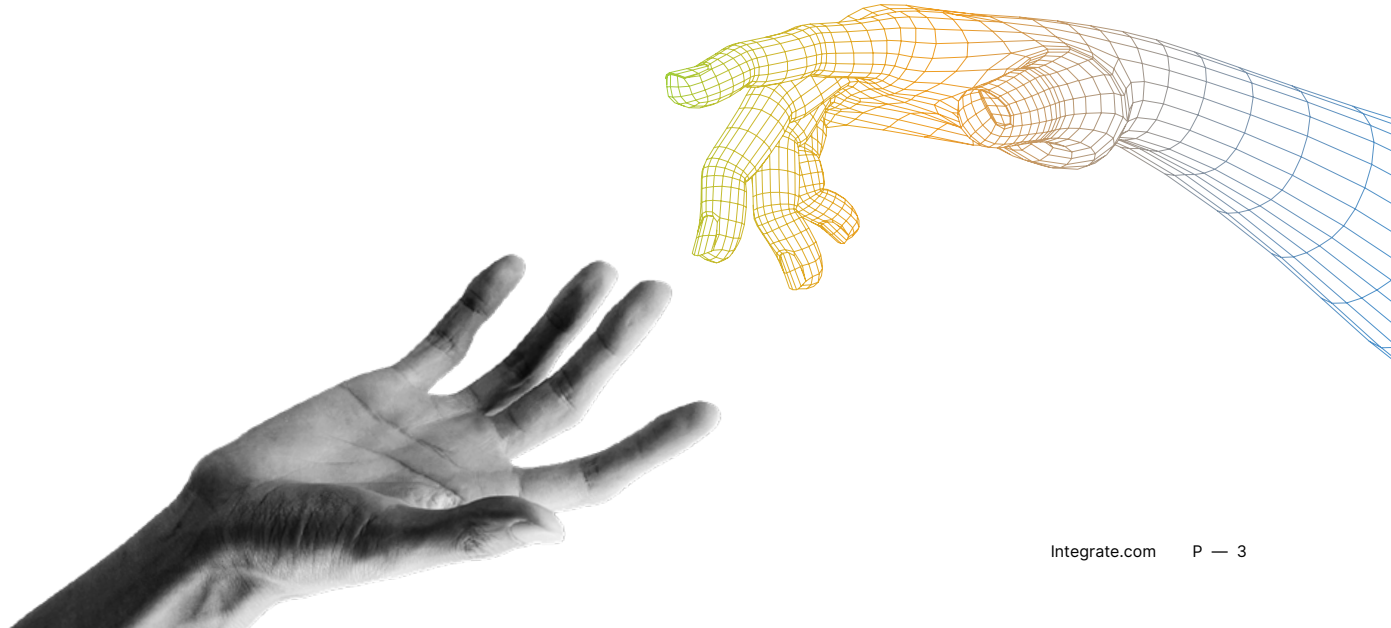
Integrate recently surveyed 500 senior marketers in the US and UK to answer these questions and get a pulse on how they are thinking about the future of events. Here's what we heard and our take.

While the world is still sorting itself out, marketers are confident that in-person events will return. Exactly when is still a topic for debate, but they will be back. In the meantime, marketers agree that we're moving to a hybrid world where webinars, virtual and in-person events will all have an important role to play. Success here will not just be down to the execution on each individual event; rather, it will be how each event aligns with and complements a Precision Demand Gen strategy. To achieve this, we must upskill, reskill and risk-forward to maximize the opportunity that awaits in 2021.

# Events in 2021 will require a hybrid, integrated approach.

Marketers agree that the future of events is a hybrid one where in-person and virtual events co-exist. However, there's no consensus around when in-person events will return, and marketers have different bars for when they'll be willing to participate again.

While you run webinars and virtual events and wait for the return of in-person ones, you can put the pieces in place to allow your events of any kind to work together with all demand channels your buyers rely on.






In August, most marketers thought in-person events would return in 2021.

**2021**

| Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 32% | 29% | 11% | 7% |

80% of marketers predict in-person and virtual events will coexist.

51% of marketers say they will participate in hybrid events in 2021.

We know this is a live situation, and information is aging fast. These responses were collected in August 2020, and if we asked this question again today, we'd probably see a shift in predictions toward H2 2021 or even early 2022. Regardless of when we see in-person events return, marketers can start thinking through how they need to connect the dots across events – whether in-person, virtual, or hybrid – and across their other demand channels.

However:

57% won't return to events unless safety precautions (e.g., mandatory masks, social distancing) are put in place.

29% won't return to events until there is a vaccine.

As we plan for 2021, we are looking at events more holistically. One change for next year is we're taking a full-year view in planning for online events (webinars and virtual). And we're planning physical events as if they're coming back on January 1st, 2021. My Magic 8-Ball says it will be Q3 or Q4, but we are staying agile in our approach to planning so we can respond quickly to whatever happens.

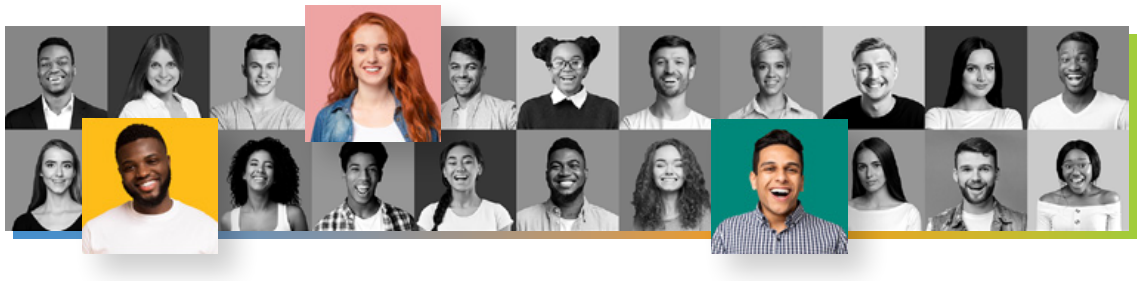


Sarah Dyerson
Senior North America Tradeshow & Events Manager, Hach

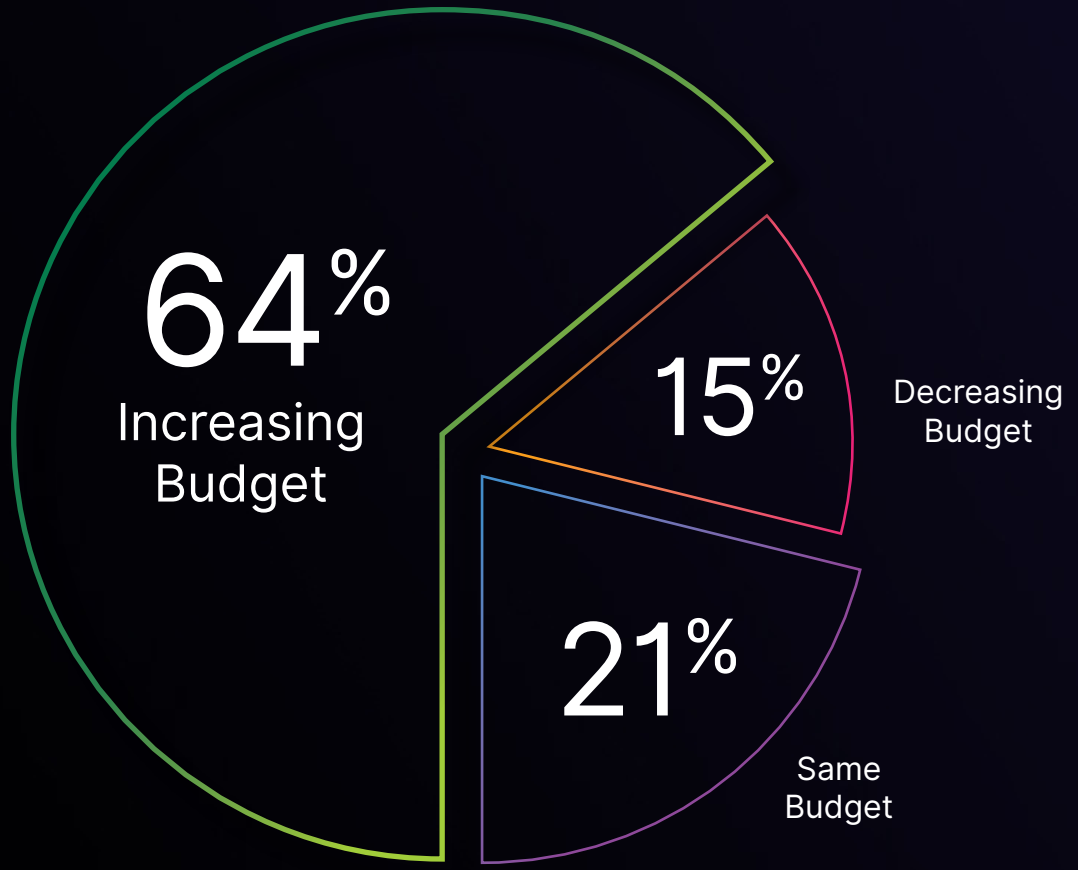
# The biggest challenge facing event marketers planning for 2021 is determining the right event mix.

Despite uncertainty, event budgets are increasing with more marketers betting on virtual events and webinars. What the events mix will look like, what format to use and when, and how to best engage attendees is still unclear.

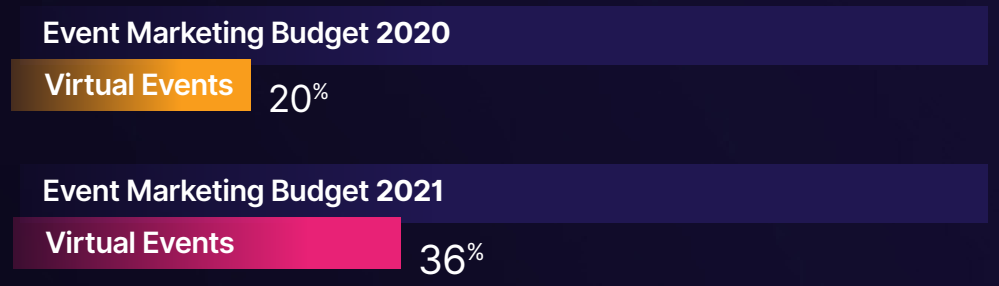
What is clear, however, is that the event landscape has forever shifted. Gone are the days where marketing teams have a tradeshow or events team who focus only on in-person events and have a separate demand team focusing on webinars and virtual experiences. The lines are blurring between all types of events and marketers must adapt and work together to keep pace.



## Despite uncertainty, marketers are increasing their 2021 event budgets.



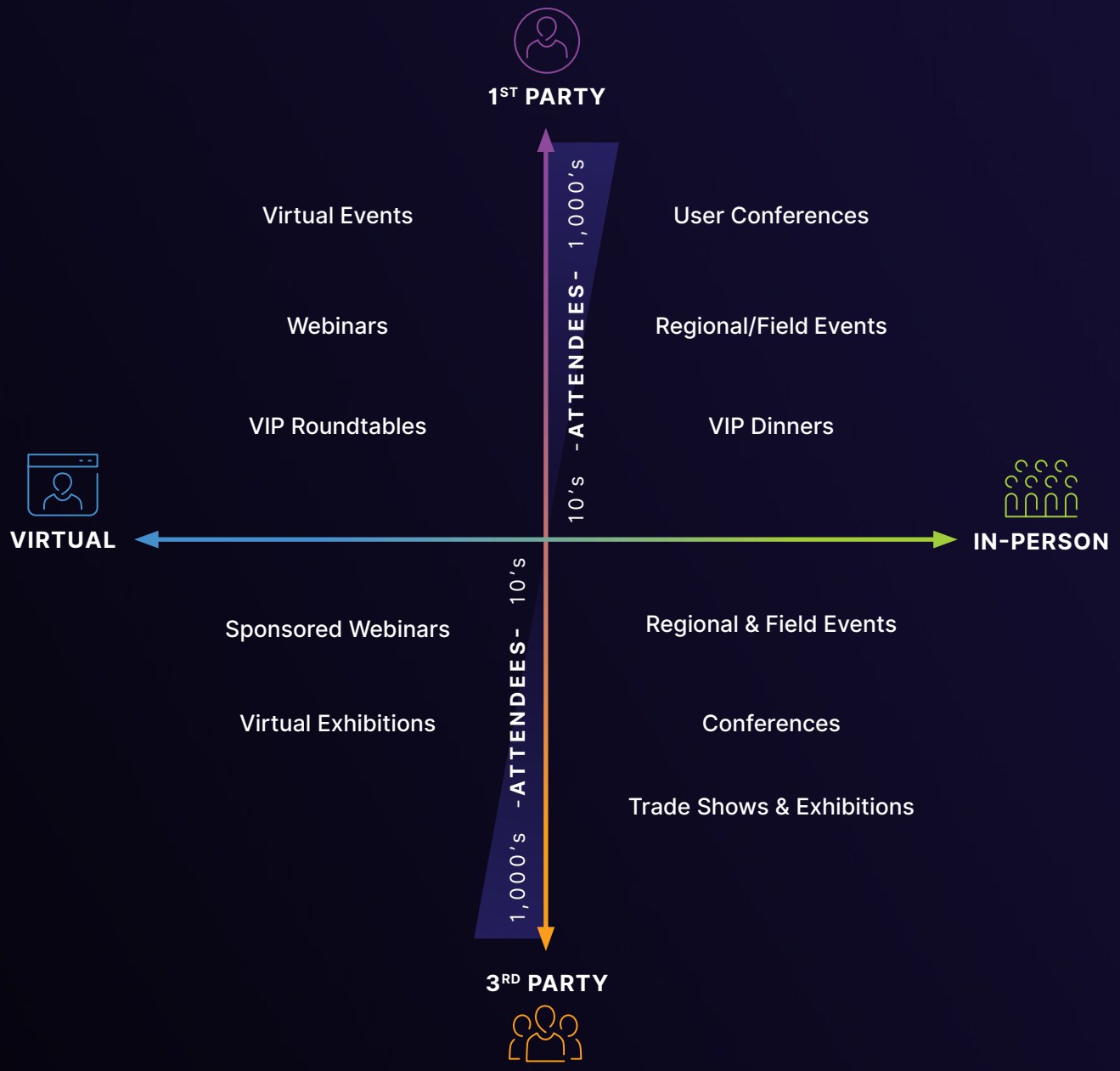

## Much of that increase in event budgets is coming specifically from virtual events.




Why would marketers increase their event budgets after such a rocky year for the industry? The increase comes down to a few reasons. First, some “correcting” is to be expected given the big hit event budgets took in 2020. Second, marketers (and buyers) are really missing in-person events so they’re being bullish about their return. Forrester predicts that in-person events will rebound strongly and that B2B marketers are eager to get away from their screens and reconnect with their peers, buyers and vendors. And finally, marketers are doubling down on virtual events and webinars. Not because they’re working incredibly well, but because for now, until in-person events return, virtual events are what we have to work with - particularly proprietary 1st party ones, which require significant investment.

# The lines between different types of B2B events are blurring.

As we enter a hybrid future for events, it's time for events to finally come out of their silo. Teams will have to learn new skills and learn to work together. And marketers must integrate events into their Precision Demand Gen strategies to create connected buyer and account journeys.



As we wait and plan for in-person trade shows in the second half of 2021, we are changing up our event mix. We have moved some of our event budget to external webinars and are reimagining those webinars to both drive new leads and nurture existing customers. As an event marketer, I've shifted my focus to be more demand and digitally-minded to drive results.



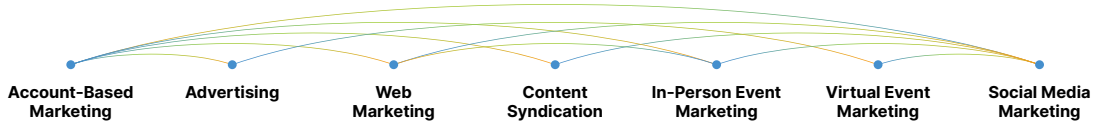
Emma Anderson
Events Specialist, Trojan Technologies

# Marketers are doubling down on virtual events. But do they actually drive pipeline?

As marketers pivoted to virtual events and other digital programs in 2020, they quickly realized that while virtual formats have plenty of advantages over their in-person counterparts, they aren't delivering the best experience for attendees.

Most importantly, marketers are finding that virtual event leads are more top-of-funnel. The ability to engage with and qualify attendees is severely lacking compared to captive audiences at in-person events.

To succeed in this new reality, marketers are using the Integrate Demand Cloud to drive a Precision Demand Gen strategy that aligns events to their demand activity across channels. This is what will guide prospects through connected buyer and account journeys that move them down the funnel.




OMNICHANNEL BUYER'S JOURNEY

# Virtual Events:
# What you should consider.

## ADVANTAGES

**80%**
Wider reach

**40%**
Ability to land great speakers

**21%**
Bottom line impact




## CHALLENGES

**69%**
Networking

**68%**
Attendee engagement

**53%**
Differentiation

**53%**
Logistics

**37%**
Value to sponsors

**Source:** Bizzabo Evolution of Events Report (https://welcome.bizzabo.com/evolution-of-events-report)

# Virtual Events: What our buyers are telling us.

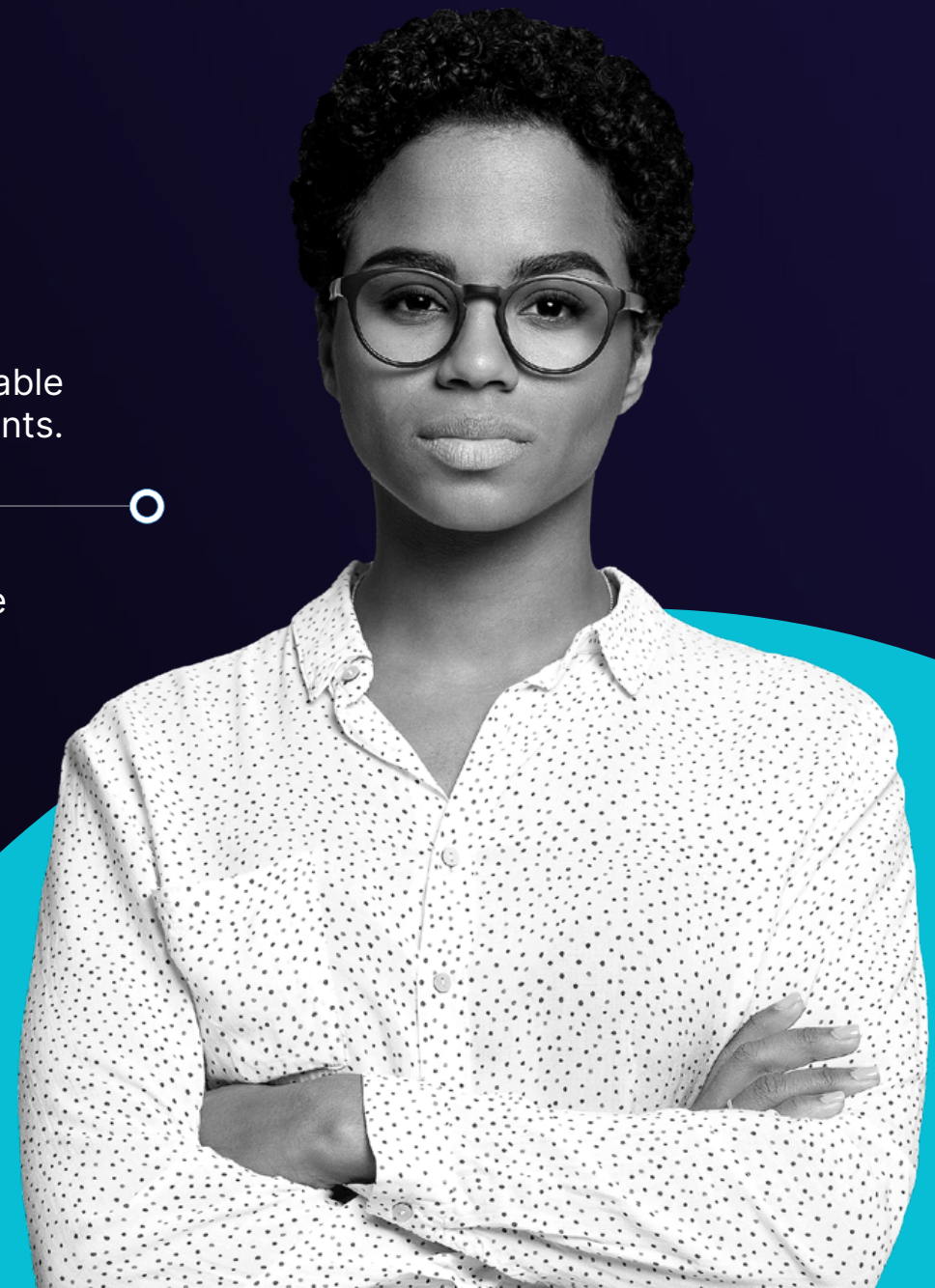
**90%** have been negatively impacted by not being able to attend in-person events.



9 out of 10 stated that virtual events were not as effective as in-person events in meeting their professional needs.

**Source:** UFI and Explori Global Recovery Insights survey (https://www.explori.com/gri_tradeshow_recovery_report)

As marketers invest in virtual events, buyers are telling us loud and clear that they want better experiences. Marketers can provide those by connecting their events - whether in-person, virtual, webinars, or hybrid - to their entire digital journey through a Precision Demand Gen strategy.



2020 has caused unprecedented accelerated digital decision making. While we understand times are uncertain, our customers are looking to 2021 as an opportunity to form the perfect marriage between their Demand and Event Marketing Teams. Events, both virtual and live, are now thought of as one key touch point of many along the account and buyer's journey versus a singular siloed channel. When live events do come back, they will come back strong. Forward-thinking Marketing teams will be poised to rise to the occasion providing a differentiated holistic Customer Experience (CX) that will be unmatched by their competition.

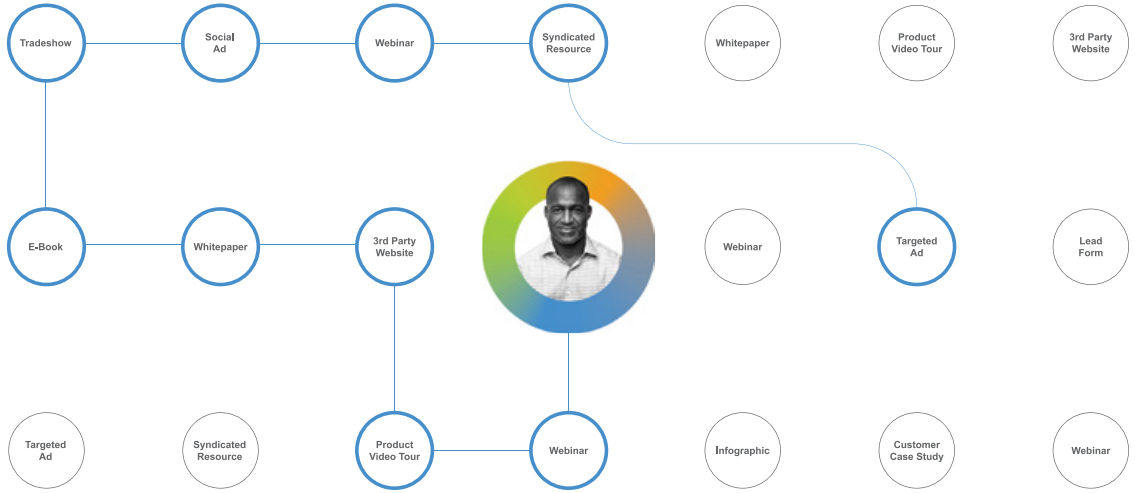


Stephanie Swinyer
Head of Revenue Marketing, Integrate

# Connected buyer journeys come from aligning events to demand activity.

The pandemic has made marketers realize that events are not standalone interactions. They are one touchpoint in a series of interactions with buyers.

To create multi-touch, omnichannel buyer journeys that accelerate pipeline and boost revenue, marketers are using the Integrate Demand Cloud to connect events to their other demand channels and digital programs. In the process, they are learning new skills and adapting to new ways of working.



# Event marketers need new skills and ways of working.

43%

43% need to learn new skills and technology to shift their in-person event focus

58%

58% need to rethink their events strategy in a new way to ensure it's successful and meets the organization's goals

31%

31% need to hire different vendors than those they usually engage with for in-person events

47%

47% need to work with different people or teams in their organization to get their job done



Our customers tell us that conferences and events are the leading channel through which they learn about new products and innovative technology. As such, we treat events as a critical part of our demand creation strategy and essential touchpoints within the customer journey. As we look forward, we are accelerating this effort by incorporating a wider variety of event formats targeting different buyer personas as we accelerate our account-based marketing strategies to increase impact.



Ajay Parikh
Sr. Manager, Digital Strategy, Edwards Lifesciences

# Learn how Event Marketing and Demand Gen can partner on a hybrid event strategy using the Integrate Demand Cloud.



Integrate is a marketing software provider that works with high-growth and enterprise organizations like Salesforce, Microsoft, Akamai, and Pluralsight to power their demand investments. We connect everything – your data, your channels, your tech, and your processes – in order to guide intelligent buyer and account journeys and deliver scalable demand generation.

Our core offering, the Integrate Demand Cloud, allows B2B marketing and revenue teams to create omnichannel journeys and make more informed decisions about where to spend marketing dollars in order to drive pipeline and revenue.

By connecting your in-person and virtual events to your demand cloud, you can integrate your event strategy with the rest of your demand strategy. All leads run through a single platform, enabling you to surround the buyers and accounts you meet at events in the other demand channels they rely on, providing them with better experiences and boosting your marketing ROI.

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