

An Insider's Marketing Guide



How to Maximize ROI

at a Cannabis
Conference





The Evolving World of Cannabis

The world of cannabis is changing. Less than five years ago, you could count the number of cannabis conferences on your hand and most of them catered to consumers. Today, however, you would need your fingers, toes, and a couple of extra hands to keep track of B2B cannabis events. ArcView Investor Summit, MJ Biz Con, CannaCon— if you tried to attend every cannabis conference taking place in the United States, it would turn into a full-time job. Nevertheless, some cannabis brands like to cast a wide net and try to attend every nearby or semi-relevant cannabis conference they can.



Are cannabis conferences worth the effort?

It depends—there are several important factors at play. Let's find out more...



Factors & Considerations

As fun and exciting as cannabis conferences may be, they're also quite expensive. In addition to the price of personally attending, you also have to consider marketing costs, air travel, prep time, and the value of your staff's time and travel expenses.

Cannabis conferences are a great place to drum up new business and develop important connections, but if you're not careful, you could end up spending a lot of money for little or no return on your investment (ROI).

Consequently, you need to be calculated about which cannabis conferences you attend. Just showing up to a relevant conference does not always guarantee a good return; it takes planning and the ability to execute that plan in order to make the most of your trip.



How do you make the most out of a cannabis conference? What kind of planning is needed to make it all possible?

In this e-book, you will discover how to choose a cannabis conference, what to do before and after the event, and how to get the best ROI possible.



Pre-Event Planning

Which event is right for you?

Sun Tzu once said that the general who wins a battle makes many calculations before the battle is ever fought, and the same can be said of attending cannabis conferences. Before you purchase your ticket to a conference, you will need to have a strategy mapped out from the biggest to the smallest detail. If you do not have a plan for success, then you will most likely fail or, at the very least, see lackluster returns. Before deciding to attend or sponsor a cannabis event, consider the following:

- ▶ **COMPANY GOALS**
- ▶ **STRATEGIC TIMING**
- ▶ **SPONSORSHIP VS. ATTENDANCE**



Pre-Event Planning

Which event is right for you?

▼ COMPANY GOALS

The first and most crucial step is to list your goals.

Without defining your goals, your actions will be haphazard, and the success you might achieve will likely be aimless. Are you trying to attract more clients or investors? Are you looking for strategic partnerships? Are you seeking extra press coverage for a new product launch? Whatever your goals may be, write them down and start thinking about how you can reach those goals. Select the conference that will best help you reach your target.

▼ STRATEGIC TIMING

In the world of business, timing is everything.

Determine whether the event you're considering coincides with any important events in your company. Do you plan to launch a new brand or product during this time? If so, leverage the event.

▼ SPONSORSHIP VS. ATTENDANCE

The choice of sponsoring or attending is another critical move.

Each choice carries pros and cons, which will often vary depending on your company's goals. Sponsoring an event can increase brand recognition, while tying your company name to a high-profile event could improve existing customer's perception of your brand. On the other hand, sponsoring an event can be expensive.

If you're on a tight budget, attending might be your best option.

Some companies split the difference by simply attending the conference, but also reserving a suite in a nice hotel close to the event to host exclusive cocktail receptions or meetings with qualified leads. The method that best suits you will depend on both your budget and overall goals, so choose wisely.



Pre-Event Planning

Crafting an event brief

As part of your preparation for attending a cannabis conference, you need to create an event brief. An event brief should serve as a roadmap to guide and track your progress both before and during the event. Here are a few things that your event brief will need:

- ▶ **BASIC INFORMATION**
- ▶ **AUDIENCE**
- ▶ **EVENT GOALS**
- ▶ **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**
- ▶ **SCHEDULE FOR MEETINGS**
- ▶ **PROMOTIONS FOR SPEAKING EVENTS**
- ▶ **PACKING LIST**



Pre-Event Planning

Crafting an event brief

▼ BASIC INFORMATION

The event brief must include basic information about the event.

This information includes the event's location, date & time, team members attending, hotel accommodations, per diem, etc... While these details are not too difficult to remember, it's good practice to have them written down and shared with the team, just in case. The last thing you need is for someone to forget the name of the hotel, and have no way to recover it.

▼ AUDIENCE

As in branding, defining your target audience is crucial.

Different events cater to different types of people—cultivators, processors, consumers, investors, and so on. Ask yourself, who will be attending this event? And who, out of all those attending, are you hoping to reach? The answer to this question will help guide your actions towards your overall goal.

▼ EVENT GOALS

Event goals are slightly different from your overall goals.

Whereas your overall goal may be somewhat nebulous (such as: gain more clients or make strategic connections), your event goals should include hard numbers. Set a definitive goal for your company, like achieving X amount of new sign-ups for your newsletter or bringing in X amount in investment or sales. By setting these specific goals, not only will your actions be more guided, but you will also be better able to define success and failure.



Pre-Event Planning

Crafting an event brief

▼ ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Have you ever heard the phrase “too many cooks in the kitchen”?

This problem could plague your team if you don't explicitly define what each and every member on your team will be expected to do. Failing to define roles may also result in no one doing anything at all. When assigning conference responsibilities, consider logistics such as who will set up, operate, and break down the booth? Who will speak at engagements, collect promotional materials from competitors, gather business cards, or take photos? Once everyone has a defined role, it will be much easier for your team to work harmoniously and with purpose.

▼ SCHEDULE FOR MEETINGS

If you hope to land a meeting at a conference, schedule ahead.

Identify key companies and individuals you would like to meet with and schedule a meeting before you leave for the conference. Keep in mind, it is also important to leave room in your schedule for impromptu meetings that come up during the event.

▼ PROMOTIONS FOR SPEAKING EVENTS

If a team member is speaking at the event, promote it!

Ideally, you'll want to start promoting the speaking engagement at least two weeks prior to the event, using all available avenues of communication—from social media to email to word-of-mouth. Also, plan out how you'll share the event when it happens, whether through live-tweeting, Instagram story, or Facebook Live Events.



WICK TIP: Take advantage of the latest social media algorithms.

Currently, Facebook is giving preferential treatment to Live Events in its news feed algorithm, so more people will end up seeing it.





Pre-Event Planning

Crafting an event brief

▼ PACKING LIST

Create a checklist of items to bring to the event.

This may not be your first cannabis conference, but nevertheless, a list is necessary, every time. Additionally, you will need to take the time to assign which team members will be responsible for bringing what. In addition to your individual needs, here are a few items you may want to consider bringing:

- LINT ROLLER
- SCISSORS
- TAPE
- GUM
- BAND-AIDS
- WATER / BEVERAGES
- EXTENSION CORDS / POWER STRIPS
- CHARGERS / ADAPTERS
- BUSINESS CARDS
- CARD READER
- WIRELESS HOTSPOT
- _____
- _____
- _____



WICK TIP: Use this checklist, and add your own items to the bottom.

We've attended many cannabis conferences. While our list will always vary depending on the event, we consider the items above must-haves.





Pre-Event Planning

Before you head out to the cannabis conference of choice, it will be important to announce that you will be attending. Not only will it help generate buzz about your booth or speaking engagement, but it will also help clients or potential partners seek you out at the event. When devising your pre-event marketing strategy, consider the following:

- ▶ **SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS**
- ▶ **SHAREABLE GRAPHICS**
- ▶ **CONFERENCE-SPECIFIC LANDING PAGE**



Pre-Event Planning

▼ SOCIAL MEDIA

Use your platform to announce your attendance or sponsorship.

In the weeks leading up to the event, send out emails and social media posts informing customers and potential clients that you'll be attending. A great way to amplify this message is by crafting a shareable graphic.

▼ SHAREABLE GRAPHICS

Did you know that social media posts with images produce 650% higher engagement than text-only posts?

It sounds crazy, but it's true. When creating a social media graphic, include all of the relevant info that a person would need to engage with you at the event, including your booth number (if applicable). If you are offering a demo at the event, be sure to include a link for people to sign up at specific times.

▼ SHAREABLE GRAPHICS

When promoting your presence at a cannabis conference, you might be tempted to send people to your company's website.

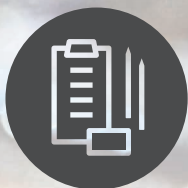
While this is not necessarily a bad idea, it will make it harder for you to track whether your marketing efforts were successful or not. Although trackable links can determine where your leads are coming from, a conference-specific landing page acts as a funnel, isolating your event-exclusive leads for more granular data. Devise a way to entice people to visit your landing page, and not just your main website. One idea is to give away a free demo, consultation, resource guide, or e-book (wink wink).



WICK TIP: Consider using a landing page builder to capture data.

Website builders like Unbounce make it easy to create professional-looking landing pages, as well as track leads.





Marketing - At the Event

At the event itself, it will be even more critical to market yourself and your company. Among the thousands of people in attendance, there are people who are interested in your company, either as a customer or as a partner. And yet, simply existing won't be enough to get their attention. You must craft a conference marketing strategy. Regardless of your plan, it is vital that you include the following:

- ▶ **PRINT COLLATERAL**
- ▶ **BOOTH DESIGN**
- ▶ **VIDEO REEL**
- ▶ **SIGN-UP SHEET**



Marketing - At the Event

▼ PRINT COLLATERAL

Printed marketing materials are often critical in capturing leads.

The most common form of print collateral is the standard business card, but there's so much more to it than that. Print collateral can include flyers, brochures, and branded handouts such as postcards or stickers that serve to inform potential leads about you and your company and ultimately, maximize your impact at the event.

▼ BOOTH DESIGN

Don't overlook the power of an eye-catching booth.

If you are an exhibitor or sponsor, then designing the perfect booth to grab attendees' attention will be critical to the success of your conference visit. What kind of booth you have will depend mainly on your budget and imagination. There are many vendors out there offering trade show booth design and construction that you can choose. A few vendors worth considering are Absolute Exhibits, Skyline, Displays2Go, and ExpoDepot. Below are a handful of booth design types, varying in price:

\$\$\$\$ **Budget Friendly** | If you are operating on a shoestring budget, focus on making your booth unique and comfortable. You can rent a couch, a rug, and a nice coffee table to create a nice space for attendees to take a breather... and engage in conversation with your team.

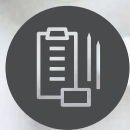
\$\$\$\$ **Portable Displays** | Ranging from pop-up back wall displays to banner stands, portable displays are quick and easy booths that you can set up yourself. Depending on the level of complexity, portable displays can range from \$700 to upwards of \$15,000.



WICK TIP: In a time pinch, seek out local print shops in the conference area.

If you find yourself running out of time to print promotional materials or business cards, you might be surprised by what local print shops can accommodate.





Marketing - At the Event

▼ BOOTH DESIGN (cont'd)

\$\$\$\$ **Modular Inline Exhibits** | Representing a happy medium between the simple and complex, modular inline exhibits often feature custom headers, backdrops, and desks. They may also feature video displays. Because modular inline exhibits are incredibly customizable, they can range in price from \$7,000 to over \$60,000. You should be able to put these together on your own, as long as you have tools.

\$\$\$\$ **Custom Island Exhibits** | This type of booth display is a lot more involved in setting up (you'll need professional help) and can cost you quite a bit. Custom island displays often involve elements like large headers with vivid graphics, workstations, curved towers, video walls, and more. The price for such booth can cost anywhere from \$15,000 to over \$125,000.

Don't forget about shipping.

If you are shipping a booth to the conference location, be sure to include this in your budget and timeline, as it can be costly and take longer than you think. If you have the budget for it, consider a trade show shipping service that will store and ship your set-up as needed.



WICK TIP: Ship only those items with no other delivery options.

Order locally—and in advance—to keep costs low. If available, opt for pick up. Account for promotional materials traveling with you in a carry-on or extra bag.





Marketing - At the Event

▼ VIDEO REEL

A custom video reel is a great way to advertise your brand.

Company videos can take a number of approaches, from telling the story of your brand, to explaining what your company does, to communicating what your company culture is like. Whatever video style you choose, make sure that you can deliver the message without sound. Words are important, and they may be included on screen as subtitles, but conference floors are noisy, and relying primarily on audio clips may cause your message to get lost in translation.

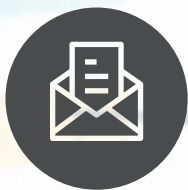
▼ SIGN-UP SHEET

Acquiring leads doesn't have to be hard. Use a sign-up sheet!

Whether you're offering pen and paper or a tablet, you want to be sure that you have a way for people to leave their contact information. While you may not always get a perfect lead from a sign-up sheet, the people that are most interested in your brand will almost always be the ones that take the time to give you their information.

We can't emphasize enough the importance of sufficient lead time.

Regardless of whether you're purchasing a custom booth display or just printing a small batch of business cards, it's crucial that you give yourself enough lead time for any design, fabrication, or production. Promotional materials and exhibit booths should not be created on the fly—it can take several months to strategize, develop, and execute a successful event. Be sure to speak with the producer of your promotional materials to find out how long it will take.



Post-Event Marketing

What you do following a cannabis conference is just as important as what you do during and before the event. This is the time that you will want to start sorting through all of the leads you acquired and figure out which ones you wish to follow up with. Generally speaking, you will want to follow up with all of your leads within the first week of contact; otherwise you run the risk of having the lead go cold. Considerations include:

- ▶ **EMAIL LISTS**
- ▶ **EMAIL SUB-LISTS**
- ▶ **AFTER-CONFERENCE REPORT**



Post-Event Marketing

▼ EMAIL LISTS

An event-specific email list keeps your contacts organized.

To keep yourself from mixing up old contacts and new ones, you should create a specific email list for the people that you met at the conference and ask yourself what exactly it is that you want these people to do next.

▼ EMAIL SUB-LISTS

If the conference garnered a variety of leads, utilize sub-lists.

Depending on your overall goals, as well as the diversity of your leads, you may have to create sub-lists for specific actions. After all, you don't want to send investors an email that's aimed at potential clients. Once you have your email lists sorted, divide up your leads amongst your team and have them get to work.

▼ AFTER-CONFERENCE REPORT

A vital part of the post-conference process is determining success.

Confer with your team and create a simple scoring system to qualify how well you performed. If specific goals were developed beforehand, it should be relatively easy to devise your metrics. Your results will inform how your team allocates time and resources next time.



What are the best cannabis conferences? Which conference is right for you?

Since choosing the right event depends on so many internal factors—such as budget, timing, and location—we've compiled a list of our favorites to get you started.



Cannabis Events in 2019

Not all conferences are created equal. To save you time and money, here are a few of the best cannabis conferences to attend in 2019:

▼ W&M APPROVED CANNABIS EVENTS

- ★ **Arcview Investor Summit** | Look no further if you are seeking a conference to help you acquire high net-worth investors.
- ★ **MJ BizCon** | Hosted by Marijuana Business Daily, this event is one of the largest cannabis conferences around. Many of the movers and shakers in the cannabis industry find themselves at MJ BizCon, which means you can't afford to miss out.
- ★ **New West Summit** | As the premier cannabis technology conference, this event is for you if you love big data and cannabis tech.
- ★ **Cannabis World Congress & Business Exposition** | Also known as CWCBE for short, this conference is held three times in different cities in the US: New York, Los Angeles, and Boston.
- ★ **CannaCon** | Dedicated to all things cannabis, CannaCon is one of the world's largest cannabis conferences—next to MJ BizCon.



Thank you for your time.

We hope you enjoyed our e-book.

At Wick & Mortar, we're committed to elevating the cannabis industry, one brand at a time. For us, this commitment means sharing what we've learned with all of you. For more industry tips & tricks, resource guides, design inspiration, stunning photography, lifestyle captures, & more—visit us on social media:

