

THE LIVE EVENTS SYSTEM MANIFESTO

The B2B Live Events *Reset*

7 patterns from 100+ B2B events. Where **50-70%** of event spend disappears, and how to take it back.

By Hannon Brett · 5x VP/CMO · Founder, The Zulu Method

80%

of trade show leads receive zero follow-up.

SOURCE: CEIR



78%

of B2B event organizers say in-person events are their most impactful marketing channel.

SOURCE: BIZZABO 2026



\$36.3B

Projected B2B event marketing industry size by 2026.

SOURCE: DAEDAL RESEARCH

2026 MARKET

THE 7 PATTERNS

01 PRE-EVENT

Walk-up traffic is a myth.

Most exhibitors hope leads materialize at the booth. They don't. Pre-booked meetings are the moat.

A team with 20 pre-booked meetings in a 10x10 booth outperforms a team with zero pre-booked meetings in a 20x20.

PURE EXHIBITS 2026

→ Pre-event prospecting is the single biggest ROI lever in your event lifecycle.

02 QUALIFICATION

Most "leads" are badge scans.

Without an MQL framework, lead counts lie. A real MQL has fit, intent, and a defined next step.

Only 6% of exhibitors are confident they convert leads into customer business.

CMO COUNCIL & E2MA

→ Tighten the definition. One client cut reported leads 60% and grew pipeline 4x.

03 OWNERSHIP

Marketing owns the system. Sales executes the plan.

Run events in silos and the system collapses. Marketing-only events fail at conversion. Sales-only events fail at pipeline tracking.

In 42% of organizations, Marketing assumes Sales will follow up. Sales assumes Marketing will nurture. Nobody owns the lead.

CEIR · SURFOX 2026

→ A joint pre-event prospecting plan is non-negotiable.

04 SPEED · THE BIG ONE

Live event leads have a 48-hour half-life.

Speed is the single biggest variable in post-event ROI. Most teams don't move fast enough.

21x

more likely to qualify if contacted within 5 minutes

10x

drop in connection rate after 48 hours

57%

of teams take 4+ days to follow up

→ Response speed beats message quality. Every time. By a lot.



ZULU CHEAT CODE

Audit your follow-up speed this week.

If your first email goes out 48+ hours after the event, you have already lost the leads you paid for. Fixing this single gap typically returns 2-4x more pipeline from your existing event spend. No new tools. No new headcount. Only a faster clock.

05 BOOTH DESIGN

Your booth is a magnet or a backdrop. No middle.

Most companies design for visibility. Logo, banner, swag bowl. Winners design for conversion. Sub-events, contests, capture systems, planned conversations.

Open layout with one clear message outperforms expensive busy setups every single time.

PURE EXHIBITS 2026

→ Booth plus capture system drives 10x lead volume vs. passive setups.

06 CONTENT ENGINE

Every event is a 6-month content engine.

Customer interviews. Panel quotes. Booth video. Social proof. 24+ pieces of content sit dormant at every event. Most teams capture none of them.

One client walked away from a 3-day conference with 24 content pieces, 15 deal opportunities, and 10x event ROI.

TZM CLIENT CASE STUDY

→ Content capture must be planned before the event. Never bolted on after.

07 MEASUREMENT · THE CLOSE

No CRM-native KPI framework. No event ROI.

Event-sourced versus event-influenced pipeline matters to your CFO. Without the distinction, the channel has no defense. And you'll defund it yourself before anyone else does.

\$5.4B is wasted annually in failed U.S. B2B trade show follow-up alone. 40% of organizers still report difficulty proving event ROI in 2026.

CEIR · BIZZABO 2026

→ Defensible numbers, or you'll lose the budget you have left.



Hannon Brett

5x VP/CMO. 100+ B2B events. Founder, The Zulu Method.

Repost if your team still wings every event.
thezulumethod.com/liveevents