



JAMES **S**CHRAMKO

EVENT MARKETING STRATEGIES: MAXIMIZING PAID AD CAMPAIGN RESULTS

Step up your marketing game by integrating events into your strategy. James and Charley Valher look at the power of promoting an event plus paid ads.



Charley Valher

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to my podcast. This is episode 1064. I've brought back [Charley Valher](#), from [ValherMedia.com](#), to talk about event marketing, because we teased this in a [previous episode](#), and it was too good a topic not to come back to. And we didn't have time in the previous episode. So, Charley, welcome back.

Charley: Thanks, James. And I concur, this topic deserves its own episode. It's a big topic.

A new desire for face-to-face?

James: I think there's a slingshot effect in the market, because what are we up to, four or five years now of the pandemic phase of our lifetime, certainly, for me, first time in my lifetime, and for most, I imagine. And there was a period there where we weren't pretty much restricted in terms of movement and discouraged from having in-person events.

And I'm not surprised that humans have sort of been building up this desire to connect with people face-to-face. And I would have predicted that there would be some kind of a slingshot effect where it will go back to the way it was, where people want to connect. And it seems to be happening, but it seems to be happening in an even more intensified rate. So I'm curious what you've been observing in the space.

Charley: Well, I'll speak from personal experience first, and then I'll talk about what we're doing with clients. I've literally just got back from a - I'll call it a mastermind event - in Sydney, which was incredible. And after going to this event, I've noticed my own desire to go to more events and be around people has gone through the roof, because I haven't had it in so long. So that, like, buildup, or demand creation is here, and here in a big way.

But the thing I noticed the most is that when I look to going to events is that the amount of events that are running haven't come back. Like, a lot of people who used to run events got burnt really hard in that pandemic experience. And they're in the camp of, never again. Like, I can't take the risks of running a business like that, because, like, I've been burned, I put my hand over the stove, got really, really hurt. And I don't know if I'm up for that anymore.

They've pivoted their businesses to online and other approaches. And I could understand and even have empathy towards it, it was a very difficult time. However, the ones that have started to run events again, or are doing more of that, or maybe they're starting for the first time, on the accounts I'm behind and involved with, I'm seeing results that are far exceeding what was created pre-pandemic, like in a really powerful way.

So like, in the experience of, let's just say, the last six months, the results that are coming through are just, I think worth paying attention to in a really big way. So if you're a business owner that hasn't run events, or it's something you've been thinking about, like I do hope this episode kind of sways people to put more attention into it, because I think it could serve them really, really well. Really, really well.

When in-person teams up with online

And I just want to put in one side caveat, because a large part of what we talk about today is like, you know, the in-person aspect. But what's interesting is that I'm seeing really good results in combining in-person and online events. Like, there's a great strategy to be out laid here or thought about in, like, combining those two to kind of like, get an even bigger enhancement in what you can do.

James: I'd be interested to see the modern take on that. Of course, that was my formula from 2009 until 2020. So I had a good 11-year run of combining online and offline. A little bit of a history lesson. In the early days of my community, I found that the easiest way to fill it was to sell live events, bring people to the live events, indoctrinate them into my world, and offer them a subscription to my membership. And those people stayed seven, eight, nine years, like super, super long-term.

The best cohort of my online membership came from offline events. They were highly qualified, they'd got a fast track to the culture. They got a community of people around them who were peers, who they could move through their business life with. So for me, the secret sauce to an online membership was running live events at least every year. Sometimes I ran a few a year.

And then I sort of stacked more towards my passions like the Maldives, mastermind surfing type thing, which I ran last year, again, first time since the pandemic. And it was really magical to combine good people in a contained environment with a clear purpose, even if, counterintuitively, that purpose is to not have a lot of structure. That's where you create magic. But we'll come back to that in another discussion, I imagine.

But I'm a big believer that the online plus offline world is a great yin yang relationship. It's the main reason I succeeded online, is because I got on a plane and went to America, and went to that Underground 4 event in Los Angeles in 2008. Like, six weeks later, I was back to Las Vegas and two weeks after that, I'd quit my job. It happened that quickly. Having seen you and three other of my partners go to this event in Sydney, it actually made me think, oh, maybe it's time to start going too.

The rewards of attending live events

Charley: Is that a little bit of FOMO? Is that a little bit, James wants to get to the events?

James: No, it's not FOMO, definitely I have a lot of JOMO. Right? I have so much joy of missing out. Like, let's just say up until 2020, I'd had a good run of running events, I'd had a good run of attending events. I've spoken at huge events all around the world, everywhere from Dubai, to Thailand, to the United States, UK, etc. Like, most people who know me now wouldn't even know that back history.

I did a lot of speaking. I've ran a lot of events, spoken from the platforms, I've networked and masterminded. Some of my greatest clients ever, like [Ryan Levesque](#), [Andre Chaperon](#), [Ezra Firestone](#)... I'm thinking about - who's our book guy?

Charley: Allan Dib?

James: No, not Wolfe. Of course, Allan Dib. Yes, I met him at [Dean Jackson's](#) event. Basically, everybody came from live events. They all came from live events. So [Chandler Bolt](#), I'm thinking of. I mean, I met him when he was a tiny little kid. And he did a book on productivity and time management. Right? Way, way back.

So I can trace most of the significant things that have - even my most successful client ever who's sold his business for over \$500 million in the last few months. When I met him, he was the event crew at an event where I spoke. Like, that's just mind-blowing, the journey that he's been on, but I met him at an event.

So huge believer in that medium. It does take more cost and effort and risk to run events, which is probably the barrier to entry for a lot of people. But I would strongly encourage people to try it. And whilst I wasn't - there's no fear of missing out - I was admiring the success of the event from afar thinking, it's good to see it done well. And it might be time for me to go and visit a couple of events.



So actually, next week, I'm speaking at someone's super high-level mastermind as a special guest. And I prepared three talking points that I want to do. So one of the greatest things about events, it forces you to create content or think about your offer.

Events as a campaign element

But anyway, back to your situation, Charley. From what I understand, and the way we introduced this episode, you're using events, both online and offline, for clients, as part of the campaign.

Charley: Yeah, it's an acquisition strategy. Events is just like VSLs could be an acquisition strategy, or straight book-a-call could be an acquisition strategy. Like it's a method of getting clients, or customers depending on what you want to call them. I just want to drop one little seed here because I don't want to go past it, I want to make sure we add as much value as we can.

Let's say you run three events in major cities near you. Like, to go into how online and offline can combine here, if you've just spent money marketing three online events, one of the most powerful things you can do is then run a webinar after it. So do something online where you market to all those people that didn't attend the in-person event, right? You've already paid for these people, they've already shown interest. Like, that's your little power play you can put in to really leverage the power of both, which we're seeing some great results with here.

But coming back to this, because I wanted to prepare some things that I think help people have the chance of being successful with this. Because to your point, like, the risk of getting this wrong is where it can be very, very dangerous. And if you don't nail things in a certain way, it's like, it's a great way to melt a credit card. It really is, because of the risk that comes from it.

James: Absolutely, because you're going to be paying people, you're going to be paying an event, a lot of venues will want you to pay for meals or to cover rooms, etc. There's so many traps for young players. It's one of my teachers used to call them. I did a comprehensive event run sheet to try and remove some of the errors, but yeah, it's not something to take lightly. But it's so powerful.

I think your main point is there's a massive demand and not many people are doing it because of those reasons, and we're going to cater for that. And I do want to just support you on that point. Back in 2009, I said to the event promoter, Let me send an email out inviting everyone who said they're going to come to your event but didn't come. And just let me do my presentation to them as a webinar. And I pitched it, this was to Universal Events. And so, again, the email, they sent it, I had people turn up to the webinar, and I sold 25 people at \$4,000 on a webinar in 2009. So it's not a new strategy.

Charley: I wish I had some sort of siren or button to press, I don't, right, I could have set it up. But it's like, that's 25 sales you wouldn't have got, it didn't cost any extra to market to them.

James: And you know, the event company had given up on those people. And I said, Well, there's no downside. And the email was something along the lines of, Hey, look, you know, life happens, you get busy, you couldn't make it for whatever reason, but we've just run the event, and one of the presentations was particularly popular, and we thought we'd ask if he could present it to you. And he's agreed to do it. And here's the details to register for the online education event. I didn't call it a webinar back in 2009.

So I was doing all these sort of pioneering things. And also, people would tell you you can't sell \$4,000 over a webinar online or whatever. But that was wrong. This is the cool thing. At the event that I ran, I didn't really know what I was going to present, I just had my workbook with the outline of my process.

And in that event, I was going to get case studies from the audience, to build a business on the fly in real time. And no one had anything useful. The event was called Business Internet Formula. And so, I just came up with just the week before I'd spoken in New Zealand, I'd got pitched by some people from India about selling their SEO service.

So I said, let's start an SEO business. And that was where SEOPartner was born in that event, which I then later, it's the biggest amount of money I've ever made in my life was selling the business that was built from that event as a case study. So it's like the serendipity of these things stacking together is phenomenal.

Anyway, let's talk about what some of the hits or misses are for these online events, to minimize our risk.



Getting your topic right

Charley: Right. So the biggest one, by far, in my opinion, is getting the topic right. Like what you hold the event on makes all the difference. And if you nail this part and get it perfect, you can honestly be average at a lot of the things down the line and still get a great result. But if you miss this part, you can almost be excellent at things down the line and you'll get a terrible result. Like, if you create an event no one wants to attend, everything is just pushing uphill from here.

So when we think about the topic, a lot of people really come into this thinking they know what their audience wants. They'll be like, I've been doing this for years, right? I know what my audience wants. And they'll bias towards the topic. And I just think that's the wrong approach. I think events are their own beast. And while you might have topics that have worked for your business, or things that have worked for the past, in the event space, you almost want to treat it like nearly a blank canvas.

So the thing I love to do, when we have the opportunity, is we'll actually create three lead magnets on different topics, and do testing to where the market demand is, before going into the risk of like, we're going to book a room and pay for all the event things that go into it or front ad spend for ads before we start there. So part one, do not pass go until you are certain there is demand for the topic. I just think this is a huge thing to really nail down in a big way.

James: Yeah, I like that you didn't just say do a survey, because we have this difference between preference versus performance, you're actually putting the lead magnets out and then assessing the actual performance. So it's reducing the gap of error significantly.

And again, I always look for data. When I was putting together an event, I'd be looking at which sections of my community were the most discussed. What were the biggest threads or pain points that people keep drawing upon? And then I'll try and source a topic or an expert to cover that.

And then I'd go a little - even the extra dimension in event planning, I would ask people, if, let's say Charley's going to come and talk about ads. What questions would you have for Charley? What would you hope the presentation's able to cover for you? And then I'd really refine the expectations. And then I would actually give that to Charley, the presenter, and say, Here's what - people in the room - this is what they're earning, this is what market they're in, this is what their pains are, and this is what they'd like to ask you. That's very helpful for making sure that the product is on spec.

Charley: I have been a speaker at one of your events in the past, James, it was fantastic. It was great as a speaker to get, but also knowing that you connect with the audience, it's like, magic can happen in a really, really big way here.

James: It compounds because if someone comes to that event, and they get what they're looking for, they're more likely to book again, and it actually makes selling the next event easier or selling the next product after the event easy because they're getting what they needed. And the expectation has been delivered upon.



I learnt this one thing about events that really changed my whole thinking. And it was, in the beginning, when I sold from stage I sold my event, I actually thought that was the sale and that was the thing I was selling. And that was the end delivery. And then I realized, no, this is like when I was selling Mercedes-Benz, that thing is the first step in a long relationship. So that event, basically, at any event, there's always an opportunity to sell the next thing, whatever that thing is, even if it's retention or a repeat sale of the same thing.

Charley: Hugely agree on that point.

Deeper into topic targeting

I'd like to go a little bit deeper, though, because I'm sure people can notion the idea of, well, of course, let's create some lead magnets and like, test what topic really hits with the market. But personally, I'd really like to know a little bit more, and I'll give it. So let's say you got three lead magnets, I would actually like to know if the market is responding to pain or gain, because you can frame your ads around certain things.

So let's say you are in business coaching, and you help people grow their business. Well, are you marketing that, Hey, we'll help you make a million dollars next year? Or are you marketing all the problems they're experiencing by not having the million dollars, right? It's the same in essence lead magnet, but how it's positioned from a positive or negative frame can make a massive difference in the performance of ads, and also the desire to get here.

And I'll tell you right now, a really interesting one that I love to play with is, like, FOMO, Fear of Missing Out. Like if there's something exciting happening in your market, and people can be left behind by not partaking in it, it's a huge motivator, a really huge motivator.

So to go deeper than just create three lead magnets, or create three different topics that could be events, I would really encourage you to understand what drives people in this place, also. Because when it comes time to market the event, you can sit here and go, Well, I not only know the topic, I know which buttons to press on a little bit here, I know where I'm going to twist the knife, or how I'm going to dangle the carrot, whatever the motivation is to create a deeper response here, which is really, really fun in a huge way.

The technical side of the thing

James: Let's talk technically. Are you simply A/B split testing different headlines for the same lead magnet? Or are you making two separate versions of the lead magnet and running traffic to each?

Charley: That's a really good question in itself. At the bare bones, I would settle for separate ads going to a lead magnet. Because you're going to get the data from the ads on what's being responded to, and that's the real outcome. Like, we want to know how people are going to respond.

In an ideal world, though, I would absolutely encourage creating two different lead magnets, because that's going to give you the purity of the numbers and seeing what actually converts and people are responding to from there. So at a minimum, just different ads, in an ideal world, create different lead magnets.

That comes down to time and resources and what people have in budgets as well. But it's an interesting thing. And I'll sway this a little bit further. You know, there's a saying in news, if it bleeds, it leads. My overwhelming finding is in the markets we work in is 70% of the time, it's actually the negative and twisting the knife that works. But we want to know that because it isn't universally true.

James: I found that as an affiliate too. My best campaign I'd ever ran was do not buy such and such for the product that I was actually selling. And it was kind of like a before you understand these things, and it was a filtering.

To call back from your [previous episode](#), it's probably really important also to look beyond just the opt-in rates for the lead magnets to see which ones actually convert into buyers, right? Because you might end up with different quality buyers or a different volume or percentage of buyers, that might be misleading from the opt-in rate. So people might be keen to opt-in but not buy or maybe less opt-ins but more people buy if they're more qualified.

Charley: This is why it's all a part of this de-risking process. So if you can be certain in that, then to run an event and put bigger budgets into it, you can be more confident. Because the danger in events is if there's a lot of risk you're taking then you can go very far off track here. Where if you can de-risk as much of it as possible, like if your ad agency knows what ads work, you already know what topic is hot, right? You know a lot more about who buys your things. The chances of you being successful and running a really strong event goes through the roof.

And again, I'm probably emphasizing how much of like, work goes into the pre-work here. But it's so essentially important. And I'll share an example here. In September-ish last year, I ran an online event with a budget of \$500,000 to spend in two weeks. So big money, we're talking about putting on the line here. But prior to that, months earlier, I was actually in there testing these things because we can see that like, with how much money we're spending, it makes a lot of sense to know this stuff beforehand.

Now, I had my inclinations. And like, I consider myself a pretty strong copywriter, of which hooks and topics would do the best, but I was wrong. And I was very wrong. And if we'd just run off my gut instinct, rather than doing this test, the success of that challenge, which was astronomical, by the way, like it was a huge event with over 3000 people that ended up being involved with it, just crazy. But when we look at that now, the testing is really what enabled it to be successful in such a huge way.

James: I can see that. I can share a negative example. I had a client who took on a media buyer, the media buyer was incentivized per leads, they got a lot of leads registering for an online event, plenty of people didn't show up. So already, they started failing at the gate. And then of the people who did show up, hardly anyone purchased. Almost nobody bought, and it was just a complete mismatch of the people who had opted in versus the type of person that's going to buy, because the incentives were wrong, the research was missing, there were broken steps along the way.

It's so funny that it comes back to absolutely everything, whether it's making a video with a hook in it, writing a sales letter, running an event, doing an ad. If you don't do that upfront work, then it's really just hopium, isn't it? It's just a guess. And the massive risk is that you're swinging for the fences and miss absolutely everything.

Charley: They do. And I'll just share one little mistake people make here as well. Sometimes, when I audit accounts, I see something that's worth mentioning of just like, an avoid. Like, at the end of the day, I think for anyone running events, remember this, it's six packs, not situps. In a lot of cases, when people market an event, they talk about the event a lot, and not the benefits that come from the event.



Like, no one actually wants an event, they want the things that come from an event. And that's the stuff you want to tap into when it comes to marketing it. Like, I think it's a really hugely impactful thing.

Diving into ad strategy

Now I know I've sort of spoken a lot about the kind of the pre-work here and just some of the conditions, James, but should we share a little bit of like, the ad strategy now?

James: I do want to do that. I want to say something I gleaned from Dean Jackson is, separate the marketing from the logistics. If all your offer is about the logistics, you're probably missing the point. And even if people like going to events, because they like meeting people, then that's the thing they want out of going to the events.

So I just wanted to really put a solid highlight on that point that you just made, because people miss that. Same with selling. A lot of people are always focusing on the logistics, and missing the result that the customers are after in the first place. So let's talk about, where does the event sit in the scheme of things, ala ad strategy?

Charley: All right, so let's say you've done all this pre-work, you've got a lead magnet you know is working, all the things we've said here. I think the important thing to look at next is what platform you're going to run on. And depending on who your market is, it's very likely that it might be YouTube, or it might be Meta, or you know, a variety of things, it could be LinkedIn.

But we'll skip this bit of knowing it because we're going to assume people have got a niche and know their market. But if you don't, you should definitely check with your media buyers on what is appropriate for your market there. But the two acquisition funnels that I see working incredibly well.

So I want to cover, the obvious one, is directly marketing your event. This is where you're going to create a campaign. Three weeks out is my favorite type of runway here, I need three weeks to market an event where you are going to run ads very much tailored to what we just specified around, you know, the six pack, not the situps, right, you're going to very much focused on your frame that worked in the lead magnet, and you're going to send people direct to a registration page. Like, it's a very direct funnel, or what I would call a direct funnel in my world.

Now, that in itself could be your whole strategy if you've got your topic right. It really, really could. But a little twist I like to put on this, if you've gone to the effort to create a lead magnet that you know is working in a market, well, now you've got something where you can actually create a two-step registration, where you can actually run that lead magnet as an ad. And for people that opt-in on the thank you page is where you can actually go, Hey, well, if you're interested in this, we've got an event coming up on this topic, it's likely you would be interested in attending, right?

I've seen that work incredibly well also. And I've also seen that be a fantastic, like, email list builder. And I'll express why. If you do direct-to-event registrations, and I've got some numbers on this, but let's say you might pay anywhere between \$15 to \$30 per registration, depending on your niche, right? On the opt-in itself, right, or on the lead magnet, it's not unusual to get emails for less than five bucks.

So if one in three people register, well, now you've got same relative value to get someone to register for your event. But you're also collecting a much bigger database to market things to in the future, which I think can be incredibly powerful. So the one-two combo I really like at the moment, direct registration funnel, really powerful, working really strongly on our accounts. But then that two-step funnel, also a really great way to do it.

What kind of events are we talking?

James: And are we talking about live events, in-person events, virtual events, or on-demand events, or VSLs? I mean, there's even VSLs that simulate an event, for better or worse, right? So there's different categories of events here.

Charley: Yes. So I'm going to remove VSLs from this altogether. So if there's anything that's like, evergreen, or people can consume anytime they want, that's a little bit of a different game.

James: And is that the same as an on-demand event? Like a recorded event on demand? We're just putting that to the side for now?

Charley: Anything you can view instantly, I would put into a different camp. Now they can work, but I would actually market them differently, because I think they're their own thing. We're talking about things that have a huge time restriction here where someone has to show up at a specific thing.

James: So it's generally live, either in-person or virtual.

Charley: Yeah, this will apply to both. Yeah.

James: Good, good, good.

Charley: I will throw in some numbers here to make it more interesting, though. So for in-person events, I would expect to pay between \$15 and \$30 Australian, AUD. So for running events in Australia, 15 to 30 per registration is like a good target band. And in the US, just being it's such a bigger country, and there's so many more people, we actually see that at between 10 and 25. So it's a little bit cheaper to run event registration ads in the US, just due to market demand.

James: And you're talking Aussie dollars?

Charley: Yup, that's all in Australian dollars, just that's the currency I'm wired to, obviously converted across if you're from the US from there.

James: And it's about two thirds of that, if it's US.

Charley: Yeah, now that's based on in person. If you're doing a virtual event, we actually expect the registrations to be 25% cheaper, right, in general. And the reason for that is it's a lower barrier to entry, where when you're doing an in-person thing, you know, they might not be able to make it to the venue or the time, where, in general, people will register for a webinar much more easily than they will an event.

James: Well also, people, once they commit to airfares, accommodation, etc., there's a lot more reasons why they're stuck in that, like sunk cost.

Charley: Hugely so. But what's interesting on the other side of things here, which we look at show-up rates is that show-up rates for in-person events, actually higher than online events, because there's a general feel that people can always catch a replay. They feel less inclined to do it in that way. So I got some numbers on that as well.

But I'll throw some more things in is like the businesses I work with who are doing events really well, right, they're shooting for a 30% to 35% show-up rate. Like, that's a band they're hitting pretty consistently for in-person events. For online, what a lot of them are shooting for is around 20%. So if you're playing in that ratio of like, you're acquiring someone for let's say, 15 to 30 for in-person, and your show-up rate is around 30%, that is something you can kind of forecast off of like, we're in the gold standard, we know this is what other people are doing.

Now, there's certainly times when I've witnessed more recently, higher show-up rates particularly, or even lower event cost registration, but I want to give people a healthy band of like, how they could forecast their numbers reasonably to know if their event is going to be profitable or what to think about from there.

Free, or paid?

James: There's a key piece of information missing. Are we talking about free or paid events?

Charley: Oh, so happy you asked. That's what was next. How did you know?

James: No. Well, I'm literally just thinking this because I'm translating like, if I have a paid event, \$1,000, I know my show-up rate in real life, it's going to be like 95%. It'd be very high. It's literally only people who get bounced by customs on the way into the airport. Or in one case, and I've run like events for over a decade, one case, someone actually passed away before the event, which sucked. But it's a very, very high show rate if there's more financial commitment. And the free events, I suspect the numbers you're talking about would translate more to a free or very low-cost event.

Charley: Yeah, so the numbers I'm referencing here are all based on free events.

James: Good. Good to know.

Charley: Now, I think that's a really important point, because I'll dive into the other ones here, because I think it's there. Paid events are going to be a much higher cost of acquisition. But your show-up rate is going to be universally higher in a really, really big way.

James: Is it because you need to go through more people to filter down the people who can actually pay and come to these dates and so forth?

Charley: It's a really good question. Sometimes we just have to look towards what is and not necessarily understand the why. My suspicion is because it's so circumstantial on what the event is, right, and who's running it. So for example, if Elon Musk ran an event in Melbourne, and he just wanted to charge \$1,000 a ticket, he probably could. He's got the brand and the power to do so.

Is there many other people that could do the same? Probably not. So I think trust of the person is a really big factor that comes into this. James, when you used to run your events, like, they were renowned, right? So people would buy them almost unquestionably before knowing the speaker lineup or anything like that, because they had trust and faith in you.

James: Yeah, we'd sell 100 tickets within the first - one email, the next day, I'd log in, we'd have 100 tickets sold at \$790 or \$800. So it was definitely a strong product. And it goes back to what I was saying before, make sure that you deliver a good product every time, then half the people in the event will have come to one before, it's phenomenal.

Charley: Strongly agree. My general view and opinion here is if your goal and objective is to acquire customers on something on the back end, so the event isn't your product, right? So if you just run an event, and the event is the product, and there's nothing to sell on the back end...

James: But my lesson was that even if you think that's the case, it probably isn't.

Doing a free event with a VIP

Charley: I would question that as a business model. I'm not actually encouraging that as the business model to be the event. But I would say, with what I'm seeing right now, I think the power is in doing what I would say is a free event with a VIP. I really like this as a strategy. And I look at it and go, if - because this opens the funnel up into its widest format, which is from what I've experienced what most business owners or people who run events are actually looking for, they want to get the volume. And I think this attains it.

So where the real, I suppose, exciting part of this is, if you do this right, you should be able to do a free event with a VIP. And the VIP should actually help you liquidate the costs of some of your ads. So if you're able to do that, now your cost of getting someone to this event goes down. And then we know firsthand that for the people who buy the VIP, the show-up rates are like, way over 50%. So this is something where if you nail it...

Now, in that is running it as a strategy, though, you've got to actually create something that's VIP-worthy, right? There's got to be something a little extra on that someone would want the VIP of this for. And I'll just give one little hint away.

The tendency is people want to give away a bit of their program or some sort of course. The danger of that is if that's what you're selling at the event, those people won't buy that product because they already got something in that way. So I would think creatively on what you can include that isn't the actual end product, because you may still want to sell that at your event if that's what you do. So considerations to be made there.

James: More like a private session with the speaker, or a front row seat, or yeah, some other thing. So by VIP, you're just saying that there's a paid option for people who want something extra.

Charley: I'll give you examples I really like. You mentioned a couple of there, but it's also like, they get to have lunch with the host. Or there's an extra Q&A session for these people or like an extra day of content I've seen do really well also, like those types of things particularly applicable here.

James: You know I used to do the SilverCircle day before my two-day event, so the VIPs were basically getting a mastermind the day before, the speakers from the event would be in that mastermind, it was a super special experience on top of the event. So I feel like the VIP is a great way to kind of have your cake and eat it too. You can have a free or paid pathway.

And it will really segment your audience into the who's who of the most likely income. And you might get to a stage where you're only running paid events, which is where I ended up, because I just like, I'm just on the VIP and then the VIP-VIP section, it did turn out for me, my very best return on investment was just only focusing on buyers. But I totally get it. Some of the markets you're in having a lot of volume, and monetizing that event at the event is going to be the game.

Not an isolated event...

Charley: The other thing I like in this setup is that because you're, again, let's just assume that it's like you get 35% of people show up, or 33 to make it simple, is if you're creating this list and getting people that have shown interest in events, you can then market future events to these people, you've already paid for them in this process.

So your next event, if you were to run a second one or one later, you've actually got an asset to leverage where you're not reutilizing trying to reach the same people for this. So the power is in like, what you can do if you think bigger than this is just an isolated event. If you're thinking of this, I'm not just acquiring people that are going to work and be at this event, but my future things, well, now the value of doing this right becomes much more important.

James: And there are also the other creative strategies I've seen people use, like they will sell sponsorships or trade shows at live events. The more people there, the more they can charge for that. And also, if there are more people at the event, then they might get some sort of user-generated sharing if they do extra, bring a friend or whatever, or share in social groups.

I've actually seen someone fill a room by giving away student seats for free, and that just destroyed the fiber of the event. It had a really low-quality audience in the room, so it wasn't as attractive for the speakers. In some cases, the speakers will pay to be on stage, a lot of people don't realize that. But you can pay to be on stage at some events. And if the audience is full of non-qualified people, that's not very exciting for the speaker. So I guess you've got to decide, what barriers do you want, even for your free tickets? And I imagine that's all come out in the lead magnet, the very first research phase.

The best time to run ads

Charley: Completely. And that's why that is so powerful in itself. I do want to mention a few things here as well, though, just for getting the event structure here. I mentioned earlier, like three weeks is the time to run ads. So that's when we expect to like, see the bulk of the registrations. If you can start running ads from four weeks out and putting feelers out there, like warming up campaigns before you go harder at it, I highly encourage it.

And something you mentioned before is that if you've got a database or a list, like doing promo four weeks out, so you can start to get a feel of like, the numbers from assets you may already know, also really powerful. In general, what I see is that the closer it gets to the event is a spike in registration volume as well, which can, unlike setting the experience here is like, I don't want anyone to think, if I run ads for four weeks, you know, I'm going to get 25% of my registrations, week one 25%, week two, 25%, week three.

It's like, the closer you get to the event, the hotter it goes, which can also be like, quite challenging on our psychology, right? It's the notion of, it tends to be the last-minute registrations which are actually higher. The days before are the highest, which is just crazy. But I guess last-minute plans for people can be a thing.

James: I've actually had people buy a ticket to my event on the first day of the event, I've had people in the room call up someone say, You have to be at this event, see if you can buy a ticket, and they have bought a ticket. I've seen that. Of course, on the other end, like if you're doing a Maldives thing in the mastermind, it gets very, very hard to sell a ticket towards the event because the airfare prices go up, they've already blocked their calendar with other things.

The easiest time to sell an event for that is at the previous one, a year prior. I'll sell most, like 80% of the tickets will be sold at the end of the first one because I'll say, Do you want to do this again? They say yes. Send them a link, put them on a six-payment plan, and they're already paid within six months of the event. So there are exceptions.

But granted, I have seen where registrations will happen really close to the event, especially as the pressure builds on your marketing campaign and the peer group and the excitement, especially if you can tie it into any kind of community. Because that FOMO you mentioned before, whenever I say, Are you coming to the event, are you going to be - you see that with the annual Traffic and Conversion event. There's usually Facebook chatter - who's going? You know, and then it starts to build up the excitement. And then you get a few last-minute rushes.

The rules that change for different events

Charley: Just quickly on that one, though. I almost want to like, define them differently. If you're doing an international event like your Maldives one, right, I would almost say the best thing you can do is have a cutoff where people can't buy even if the event is later, like create a deadline way prior for your points. If you're filling rooms with like, let's say you want 50 to 200 people in a room, then what I've mentioned is way more appropriate in like, expectations.

James: Yeah, I think that's really the point I'm making, you make it much better than I am, that there are different types of events. And so, the rules of thumb are going to change depending on the parameters for the type of events you're talking about. I can see how they'd be last minute. Also, you mentioned a stat for 20% show-ups for virtuals. I have a feeling like, I don't know, five, six, seven, eight years ago, it might have been 40%. Is it just getting harder and harder to have people show up?

Charley: Maybe. I will say when webinars first came out, it wasn't unusual to see that 40%, I was in that era. Definitely so.

James: Yeah, yeah, it used to be.

Charley: What I suspect has happened is that over time, the notion of being able to see a replay has kind of changed the dynamics of the market in a big way where people tend to register, knowing they're not going to attend, that they'll get a replay.

James: I would.

Charley: They want the replay.

James: For sure. Yeah, I agree.

Charley: Yeah. So there's a whole game to be played there.

James: It's why I don't record my weekly group calls, because I know people wouldn't come, and then they'd start banking recordings, which they won't watch, and then I can't help them. So it's fascinating how, yeah, we are in a replay culture. So knowing that a fifth of the people we've paid to become a lead will show up, what can we do to help them come?

Charley: Yeah. So this is where the game, I think, becomes really fun. I like doing this stuff. This is like in marketing world, like some of the things we look at. One of the strategies we do a lot of these days is actually running ads towards people that have registered for an event. So I think the rub initially for a lot of people is like, why would I spend money on ads, marketing towards people who have already registered? They're going to get our emails, they're going to get other things, like we'll SMS them potentially as well.

I look at that and go, it is so critically important that they keep seeing your face and reminders of this event in the lead-up. If someone registers three weeks out, in that three weeks to when the event is, I want them getting more excited for the event and having more FOMO towards being at the event so that if anything else comes up is they go, Oh, I couldn't cancel that, I need to go to this. Like, if anything, it's an opportunity to build more desire towards this.

So for anyone running ads to an event, I really encourage they create an audience of people who registered, and actually run ads towards them to make sure that you remain top of mind, that it's something they see continually and mixed in with your potential email campaigns or SMS campaigns.

Another thing I've seen work really well here, and this was a test one of our clients did a while ago, noting that you may need to call in some help to execute this one, is for every person that actually registered, they called them to confirm the registration. And I couldn't actually believe this. But this got a bump in attendance of nearly 10% on the event compared to their averages in the past.

So to get a nearly 10% increase in show-up rate, the mechanics and viability of this event changed in a huge way, changed in a massive way, where that's just going to become the standard of what they do. So if you can make a call and have that actual conversation where someone commits to the event, the likelihood of them showing up is substantially improved.

James: Thanks to Cialdini's observation of commitment and consistency.

Charley: Definitely.

James: I do know someone who sends a confirmation. And if people don't confirm, they get called. And that just tipped things right over the edge for them.

Is it really viable?

Charley: Massive. I'll throw one more thing in here, though, because I think this is a really good, a really powerful idea is like, if you look at everything I've kind of laid out here, I just encourage people, really, put the time and effort into like, making sure it's viable for them. So if you were going to run an event, and you could run it on these numbers, make sure the viability and acquisition costs work for your business. Because if you were to go through all this effort and hit all these things, but it didn't make sense for your business to actually acquire customers this way, there's a real danger in that. So pricing model really plays a factor here as well.

James: I know people listening to this might think, well, I'd like to ask Charley if it's worth it for me. Could they ask you? I mean, are you only for the big players? Or do you actually talk to other people as well?

Charley: I'm really exclusive, I'm only Louis Vuitton. [laughs]

James: [laughs] No I ask that because you've thrown out some big numbers there. Someone might be thinking, I don't have 500,000 to spend on an ad so I can't afford Charley's agency. Is that wrong thinking?

Charley: That's a really good point. So I will make that point of like, we've run some huge events for credibility. I mean, that's a big part of it, it's like for someone to trust us with that volume of money, I feel very, well, special in all honesty, like, it's a huge thing for clients to trust us in that way. But we certainly run events at a much smaller scale as well.

So I would think that if someone just wants to put five people in a room, probably not the right fit. But if you're someone that's like, going, Hey, I'd love to put like between 30 and 300 in a room and work on budgets that are more appropriate to that, then we could be an excellent fit. And if someone's already running events, particularly, or was running them pre-COVID, I'd say they're even, it would be an opportune time to reach out to an agency like mine is because there's immense opportunity right now.

James: Look, if someone's listening to this, and they're a member of my community, I'll help them with an [event checklist](#) and all of my experience in terms of it - but I won't be able to help them run the ads, even though one of the presentations we did one year was from a guy who ran my ads, and we showed the actual campaign in the videos. And it was really effective. And I had the combination of great videos, and great ads. I know the power of ads and videos, and you're the most current up-to-date person doing this for people. So how do we get in touch?

Charley: Yeah so, [ValherMedia.com/review](https://valhermedia.com/review). If someone wants to find out if an event could work for you, or potentially how you could do your events better, it's worth checking in. We're doing some fun stuff at the moment.

James: Yeah. And be sure to mention the podcast, podcast 1064. If you do, I think Charley will be encouraged to come back and share more secrets, especially things like what do you do after the event. Because I imagine this is just one piece of the overall puzzle of all the things that you're doing for your clients, everything from the podcast, to the shows, to the advertising campaigns, across, probably help people with all sorts of things. So I think we've got more discussions in the tank.

Charley: Absolutely, James, I look forward to another podcast sometime.

James: Thank you. Take care, Charley.



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