

**CASE STUDY**

# Profitable Virtual Events

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Increase your small business customers in 90 days —  
the business case for hosting your own virtual conference.



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# Powerhouse Marketing: Host a Virtual Conference to Attract Small Business Owners

## Events are a powerful force.

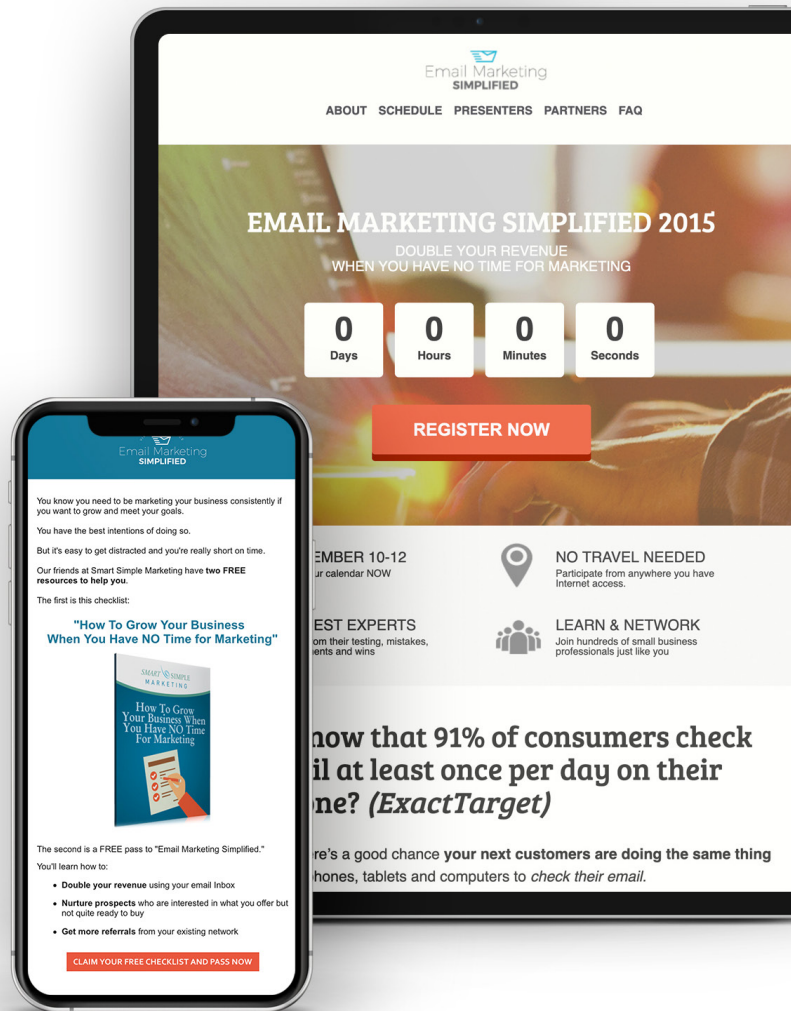
Hosting, sponsoring, or exhibiting at an in-person event or a virtual conference enables your brand to establish credibility, build trust, deliver significant value, and leave a meaningful impression on small business owners. This credibility, in turn, creates the opportunity to convert a busy entrepreneur into your next customer.

One study reports that **44% of marketers** say they experience a 3:1 return on investment from event-based marketing. Another survey shows companies host customer-focused live events to attract prospective, existing, or past small business customers for reasons that include:

- ▶ Lead generation (83%)
- ▶ Customer engagement and brand awareness (72%)
- ▶ Product education and training (57%)
- ▶ Driving demand (46%)
- ▶ Customer upsell opportunities (32%)

Live events gather like-minded people to discuss a common area of interest. They open the door for businesses to expand brand awareness, interact with attendees, create memorable experiences, and build new relationships with qualified leads that, when nurtured, drive sales and increase revenue.

Tracey Lee Davis, Owner and Principal Marketing Consultant at ZingPop Social Media, is the perfect example. When Tracey Lee attended QuickBooks Connect for the first time, she didn't have the budget to spring for new accounting software, and she wasn't sure the software was right for her. She saw QuickBooks as a big, well-known company with a solution she might be interested in and expected an event that was just as big and, presumably impersonal.



At the event, Tracey learned how QuickBooks supports entrepreneurs and spoke directly to vendor partners about her unique business challenges. She gained a wealth of information and inspiration, had a fantastic event experience, and, overall, was blown away.

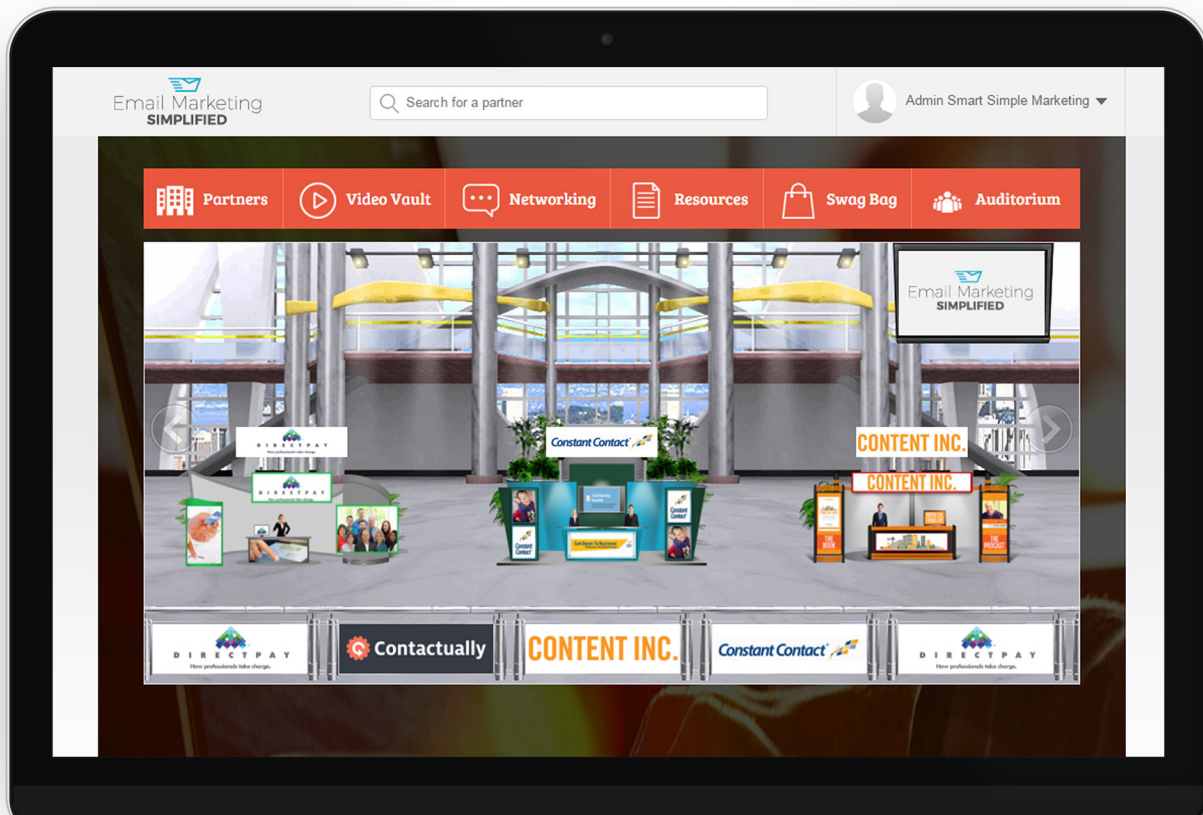
*Although Tracey Lee sat near the top of the buying funnel, **the event was an opportunity to deepen her understanding of Quickbooks' products, and by the end of the event, her perspective had changed.***

That great experience continued through QuickBooks' email nurture campaigns. Long after the conference, Tracey felt the company kept her top-of-mind by sending her interesting and informative content that helped her grow her business. When it was time for Tracey to take the next step with her accounting needs, you can guess which company was her top choice.

The second year Tracey Lee attended QuickBooks Connect, she was 95% sold on the idea of purchasing QuickBooks—even before she walked into the venue and put on her name tag. Ultimately, she did purchase the software during the event.

**As you can see, her buying decision wasn't made overnight.**

*The sales cycle was at least 12 months in the making.*



## CHALLENGES OF IN-PERSON LIVE EVENTS

The benefits of live events are undeniable, but unfortunately, there are considerable barriers to entry, with the largest being cost. **45% of corporate event planners** say that the budget was their biggest obstacle when planning an event.

There are several cost factors that go into planning a successful in-person event, such as:

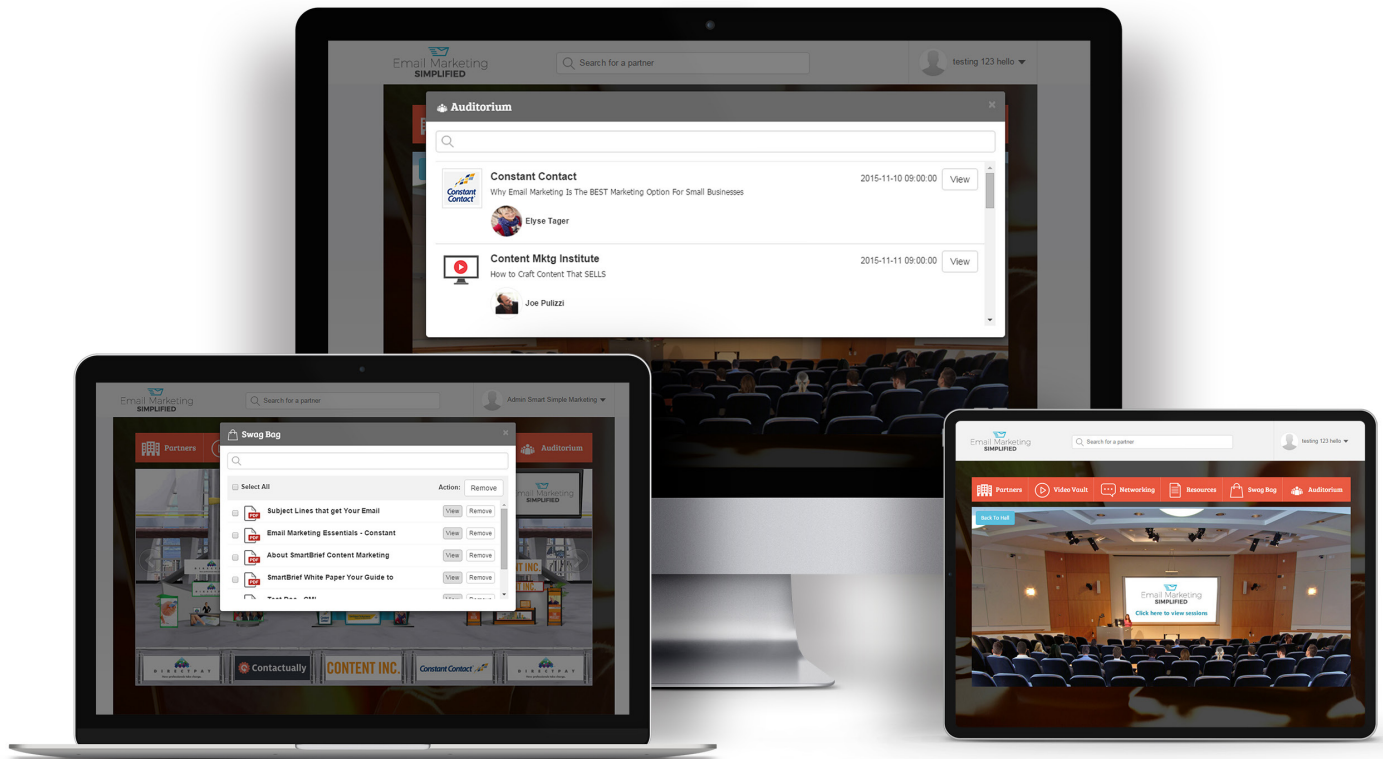
- ▶ Venue rental
- ▶ Speaker or paid guest fees
- ▶ Printing costs for handouts, programs, and signage
- ▶ Equipment rentals for things like audio/video, WiFi, and staging
- ▶ Furniture and decorations
- ▶ Event marketing and promotion
- ▶ Catering

*Cost is also a critical concern for attendees who must justify the expense of event registration, travel, hotel stay, food, and other expenses.*

Like Tracey Lee, most small business owners have limited resources to spend on investing in and traveling to live events. Furthermore, they often find it challenging to step away from their personal and professional responsibilities to attend in-person events. These obstacles can directly affect the success of an event as lower attendance means fewer leads, lower engagement, and a reduction in revenue both during and after the event.

**Fortunately, virtual conferences and online events offer another solution.**





## VIRTUAL EVENTS DELIVER PROFITABLE RESULTS

Rapidly advancing technology continues to open doors and remove barriers that once made event planning a costly and risky undertaking. Thanks to tools like interactive webinars and 3D web conferencing, customer-focused events can be hosted in a completely virtual environment. Not only does this dramatically cut the budget needed to host the event, but it also makes it easier and more affordable for small business owners to attend.

Additionally, by working with an established digital marketing agency like Smart Simple Marketing, event planners gain access to an audience that is significantly larger than their existing databases, which improves the chances of a robust and positive turnout.

"I've seen many virtual events before, but creating a **virtual 'room' and conference atmosphere where registrants could visit an online exhibit hall** was a fun and interesting way to highlight sponsors," commented one sponsor. "I would love to see more people creating this kind of experience."



## EMAIL MARKETING SIMPLIFIED

Smart Simple Marketing hosted a virtual event called Email Marketing Simplified (EMS). The event offered an excellent opportunity for sponsors and exhibitors to reach decision-makers in a cost-effective way. Additionally, this virtual event provided direct engagement and brand exposure to the international \$2.8 trillion market of small business owners and entrepreneurs.

### Attendees of the three-day virtual conference and sponsor expo simulated an in-person trade-show feel by:

- ✓ Attending keynotes and featured speaker sessions with hand-selected leading industry experts in the “Main Auditorium”
- ✓ Chatting in real-time with sponsors and exhibitors, requesting product information, and viewing video demonstrations in the virtual “Exhibit Hall”
- ✓ Obtaining and downloading valuable gifts from sponsors, including best practice content, presentations-to-go, and other time-saving tools
- ✓ Connecting with colleagues and building new relationships in the conference’s virtual “Networking Lounge”
- ✓ Interacting with other participants through instant messaging, event chatrooms, and business card exchange opportunities
- ✓ Participating in LIVE Q&A sessions with speakers and sponsors

By leveraging cutting-edge technology, Smart Simple Marketing created a unique environment where sponsors were able to attend the virtual event and host and staff their booths just as they would at an in-person trade-show. At their booths, sponsors conducted live webinars and showcased their services and offerings. Sponsors also enjoyed wide brand visibility via social media marketing, email marketing, and public relations campaigns.



## HOST A VIRTUAL CONFERENCE TO INCREASE REVENUE

The Email Marketing Simplified virtual event demonstrates how successful Smart Simple Marketing has been with organizing and hosting virtual conferences, events, and trade shows.

The immersive virtual conference experience for more than 1,000 small business owners included an exhibit hall, a networking lounge, goodie bags, contests, and more. Eight high-profile sponsors were also secured to both invest in the event and contribute pragmatic content.

**Feedback from sponsors, exhibitors, and speakers was overwhelmingly positive, and attendees realized valuable benefits as a direct result of their participation, saying:**

*“There was so much valuable information presented in an organized way, and attendance and engagement were high.”*

*“We made some excellent connections with qualified leads and also generated several new partnership opportunities.”*

*“Virtual events are something every business can benefit from—whether they are a start-up or an established company.”*

*“The topics and speakers involved were all compelling and relevant.”*

*“The topic was timely and addressed a concern that I think a lot of our community has.”*

*“This was fantastic visibility for our brand. It allowed us to connect and engage in a tangible way. We’re excited about all of the trial accounts generated and to have signed up so many new customers and generated so many high-quality leads.”*



“We offered a Strategy Session and had **72 sign-ups**—as well as received full contact details for all event attendees. As a direct result, we ended up **signing two new accounts** on the spot. In fact, I’m confident that had we had a stronger, more compelling offer and more powerful sales conversations, we would have converted a lot more.”

Shea Kane, Marketing Director at DirectPay

A virtual conference allows you to host a larger event with more sponsors and attendees without the budget constraints and resource challenges that come with in-person events. Virtual events also have a greater reach, the ability to make a more significant impact, and an increased opportunity to achieve the desired revenue results.

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## PLAN SMARTER FOR YOUR NEXT VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

The results demonstrated here can be duplicated for any organization, including yours. Virtual events are gaining traction among businesses and attendees alike. The virtual conference market is projected to grow from \$14 billion in 2018 to \$18 billion in 2023. Furthermore, according to Meeting Professionals International (MPI), virtual attendance is expected to increase at a higher rate (3.1%) than live attendance (2.4%).

If you’ve considered hosting, sponsoring, or exhibiting at a small business focused virtual event, the time to take action is now, and Smart Simple Marketing can help you plan, market, and execute your event.



Smart Simple Marketing’s strategy experts can help you create a engaging, successful, and cost-effective virtual event that will allow you to reach more qualified leads, achieve greater brand recognition, and increase revenue. Schedule your complimentary sounding board session today, and together, we can develop a customized approach that will help you take action and get results.