



James Schramko here, welcome to SuperFastBusiness.com. Today's episode is how to run your own live customer experience event.

Why would an online marketing business be talking about running a live event? Well, it's an integral part of running an online business. You don't have to look too far to see that many companies are doing this. [Ontraport](#) have their Ontrapalooza, Wistia have their Wistiafest, Infusionsoft have Infusioncon. So you'll see that with any good online service you're going to have an offline element, and the more that you can strengthen that, the better your brand in the marketplace.

So a live event is an opportunity to earn money and promote products for sure, however your event really should be a place where people can converse and exchange ideas, and it should have actionable information that they can go and plug into their business. It also should be a high-caliber event where people can learn things that they will not find about in other places or for quite some time.

In this episode, find out what goes into holding a great live event for your customers and the many benefits that you can gain from having one.

### **The benefits of running an event**

Why run a live event? Well, it's a chance for you and your people to meet up and socialize, and it helps retain people in your community. It generates a profit before, during and after, if you run it properly, and we'll talk about how to do that in just a moment.

You can actually get an output from the event. In the case of my SuperFastBusiness live events, I actually record the sessions. You can actually offer that and sell them either as individual packages, DVDs, or the way that I prefer people to get their education, which is to put it inside a membership, where I can actually support and coach and nurture them, with checklists and frameworks.

It also attracts new people to your brand, because it is an event-based marketing activity. Now you'll know from my previous podcasts that I'm a big fan of the subscription model, and not such a big fan of launch event marketing if that is your only model. But in this case a live event is just plugged on to the top of a subscription business and it feeds a subscription business. You'll actually introduce new customers to your business; a good portion of them will actually take on a subscription so that they can be coached after the event.

And at the event, if you're so inclined, you could actually make recommendations. You could sell something, you could offer affiliate promotions, you could have stalls or sponsorships where you can either get paid upfront or you can take a split on anything sold. Or, in combination with all that or just one or two elements of that, you could sell the idea that people should stick around in your community and come to next year's event.

### **Who are they for?**

So who are these events for? Typically, someone will come to an event if they want to learn what you know. So putting out podcasts and good content is a great way to help people understand what it is that you do. It's also for people who want to replicate your success. It makes sense if they want to be able to do what you're doing that they could come and learn it directly from you. So if you're the expert in your field, and you run a live customer experience, then they're going to get a concentrated, accelerated pathway to the results you're getting.

It's also for people who aren't getting the success they want, and they want to invest in themselves and get a solution to speed that up. And it's for people who want to spend

money on a course that gets them somewhere. In fact, some companies even have a training budget and the employees are encouraged to go out and educate themselves at the top level in their field. So you might want to be marketing to associations and to industry bodies so that you can actually get known as being the benchmark course or event to attend in your industry.

### **Who you want there**

So who should you attract to these events? I think it's worth considering who you really want at your events, because the way that your market's really going to dictate who you're going to get. I like the following types of people, because they already have things in play. I like intermediate marketers, I like advanced marketers and I like hyper-advanced marketers.

The event that I run is best suited to someone with an intermediate to advanced level. And that's deliberate, and that's the kind of person that I get. The benefit, of course, is that I'm getting hundreds of people in a room who are already doing something. Now, it's OK for startups to come, however a lot of the things we talk about are going to be pretty heavy concepts for them.

But there's plenty of groups catering for brand-new startups, and if that's your market, fine. I just find that that stuff's a little bit tedious to talk about; very, very basic stuff, when I'd rather just get on with the business. So I cater for people in the intermediate to advanced segment.

The other thing is, if you are targeting absolute new people, then it's going to open up the types of methods you might market. I've seen some people actually put on what they think might be a competitor event to mine, but then they advertise it in Groupon, and they're attracting price buyers who probably are very unsophisticated, have no clue what's going on and literally bought a ticket just because it was cheap. That's bad targeting in my book.

## The type of event

What type of event should you be running? Well, some people run events as a full on event company, and that's great, and there's always those people in the marketplace. But I'm not an event company; I'm an online business with [coaching](#), [websites](#), and [search engine traffic services](#).

Now the industry-run events are often very boring and stuffy with a very commercial approach. You can really dull down the feel of an event. Some examples are they're going to be really nitpicking over their venue overheads. They're going to have it down to a fine art and a hardcore spreadsheet. They probably won't offer catering and in many cases, not even tea or coffee. And they'll be pumping sponsorships, they'll be really trying to cram the halls with sponsors and selling packages and selling tables of 10.

So they'll actually fill the room up with clutter. People are paying to be there who aren't necessarily the type of person you want to rub shoulders with. In fact, they're probably going to sell you something.

So think about the approach that you want. Your event does not have to be solely about the commerciality of running that particular event. It should be about the customer experience. Think about it as more of a long-term play. You should be able to give a good experience to the marketplace, and it shouldn't cost you any money. In fact, you'll probably make a profit if you do it right.

Running a lifestyle event like [SuperFastBusiness Live](#) each year is giving people a chance to have a little bit of fun. They get to eat meals which we provide, they surf, they get to cruise around in a summer atmosphere and enjoy a very relaxed schedule. For example, we start a little bit later, we finish a little bit earlier, and we have nice long breaks, and that is on purpose, it's by design. It's so that the couple of hundred people who are at an intermediate to advanced level can talk to each other and get the real power of the connection and the community when they do that.

## **The part where you plan**

Let's talk about planning your event. Take it one day at a time. It can be overwhelming if you want to run your own event, but I am pleased to say that I'm able to run my own event for several hundred people with minimal support just by using a checklist, and I'm about to go through that with you.

You will need to book your venue for your event. Set the date, and work on having the content that you want. When your booking is confirmed, you'll probably be asked to make a deposit and sign contracts. So just read through that and make sure you're comfortable with that risk. Then you can start selling tickets, and immediately get your venue costs back. Make sure you sell enough tickets to cover your costs. You need to know what your break-even point is. When you sell X number of tickets, your event is paid for.

Now in terms of scale, you could literally run an event for 2 or 3 people in a very small room at a hotel, which might cost you hundreds of dollars or a thousand dollars. It's not a huge overhead. When you start running events in ballrooms with meals, then you're going to be starting to talk tens of thousands, or hundreds of thousands if you're running an event for 1,500 people or 2,000 people. So pick your scale that is comfortable for your business.

## **Before the event**

Here are a few things to do before the event: Come up with a theme for the event. What's the message? What do you want to focus on? Work out what that is, because everything you do must be consistent with that. Anyone following along the SuperFastBusiness Live theme will get a feel that it is for intermediate and advanced, that it is about lifestyle, that it is a great way to combine a holiday with a business trip, that the power of the connections and the quality of the experts is really what makes the event.

So set your date, figure out the talent you want. Who are going to be your experts? Now in the past, I've run events where it's just me, I've had events where there's just 3 or 4 people contributing to balance out my content, and I've also had ones where there's 15 other people and I'm barely doing a session. So somewhere in between that is a good mix. I like these days to do two or three sessions and have 10 or so other experts spreading out content in short modules.

### **How long?**

Decide on the duration of the event. It might be a half day, it might be a night preview, it might be a full day, it might be 2 days, it might be 3. My favorite format is two days. It's just about right, people can get there the night before, they can stay the night of the event, and then they can leave if they want to early or stay on for holiday.

After three or four days, an event can really drag on and get pretty overwhelming, and the rest of your life is starting to get chaotic by the time you get home.

Come up with a talent brief to make sure that your experts match the theme and deliver. I mean, I'm ruthless about this. I want the slides a certain size, I want a particular minimum size font, I want my message to be conveyed so clearly that someone can get actionable information, and I preview all the presentations before they get delivered to the audience. I want to make sure I deliver on content, and you should be that strict. You've got to curate your event and make sure it delivers.

Come up with a schedule. Work out who's going to speak in what spot, and make sure that it makes sense, like you get to sequence the event. Sequence it in a way that delivers the exact topics at the exact right times. So you might go broad in the beginning of the event, and then narrow it down to specific tacticals. You might cover themes, say business strategies, and then you might zoom in to specific tactics.

So there's a few different ways you can do it, and I always like to finish the event on a light note with a competition and a bit of fun and laughing and a great feeling. And then

we actually top that off by going for a surf. Think about how you want to open and close the event. The sequencing should make sense.

### **The importance of staging**

Now once you've got the venue, you've gone through the contract, you're going to find other little things crop up, like staging. Staging is a very simple word, but it's an expensive one. This is curtains, lights, sounds. The stage, the platform that people actually stand on, podiums, those sort of things. This can make or break the professional feel of an event.

If you've ever been to an event where there's really no stage, you can't see the speaker and you're not really able to hear them, then they didn't really pay attention to the staging. But because I'm recording my events, I want beautiful velvet backdrops, I want a nice elevated stage, I want clear lighting, and I want impeccable sound, because it's got to come out well in the video, and it's going to be fantastic for people sitting in the audience.

Also, you're going to have to talk about screens and projectors and which way you want to lay out the room, whether you want tables, whether you don't, whether you want theatre, whether you want the round tables, or desk-type classroom setup, so there's all these different options. Think about that. Think about events you've been to and which ones you liked and why, and how you should set up the room.

Now take care about catering, it can be very expensive. You might put your event somewhere near lots of food services. Just keep in mind, if you don't provide food, it's much cheaper. However, people will disappear for a food run and may not come back in time for sessions.

So I like to provide tea, coffee, and lunches, because it keeps people near the event, it's very convenient, they can start talking to someone while they're loading their plate, and they don't have to leave the facility and then they can come back to the session on time. It makes for a really good experience.

Get a professional video crew and a really good photographer. If you're trying to record your event with a little handcam or a tripod halfway down the aisle, then the output's not going to be that great. Spend the money and get a pro crew, and they're going to deliver to you on an MP4 stick after the event a high-quality rendition of your event which you can leverage. You can use those modules for your blog posts, you can use them to sell as information products.

### **Promoting the event**

Then you need to prepare your sales page to promote for the event, set up your shopping cart to collect the money, get your autoresponder in play to be able to converse with people who buy a ticket, and you'll be communicating with them before the event, getting them ready, telling them what they need to bring, where they need to be, what time. Make sure you have clear support details. And if your hotel requires room blocking, then make it easier for people to book rooms in the hotel.

Then you'll need a marketing plan to promote the sales page, so you're going to be actually mentioning this. If you want to know my marketing plan for SuperFastBusiness Live 10, which had quite a lot of people, nearly 200 people, we actually gave the case study at the event. Jake Hower presented the tech know-how, how he automated it. Ryan Spanger presented the video, how he actually prepared the case studies, and we also had Kyle Graham talk about how to automate the whole sales funnel using a special funnel software. There were three full modules on how we did it, how we sold the tickets, and how easy it was, and I suggest you can access that inside [SuperFastBusiness membership](#). So go and check that out.

Now you might want to consider indemnity insurance for cover of any accidents. If you're running an event, there's a pretty good chance you should have an insurance policy just in case.

Now you might consider some merchandise. There could be hoodies, or pens, workbooks. These things with your brand on it are the sort of things people take home



and keep. I know that I'm seeing all the time on Facebook people popping up with a SuperFastBusiness hoodie. And why wouldn't they, because they're so awesome.

Get a crew who can look after the participants. I'm fortunate to have a few helpers who have helped me out for most of my events. They'll do it on a voluntary basis, in exchange for not having to buy a ticket, and because they like being a part of the crew, and maybe they get a special T-shirt or preferential seating.

But you'll need people to sign up registrations when they arrive, hand out some name tags and lanyards, and perhaps sign a filming disclosure, and then to manage the flow into the room, like hold the doors and then let people in when you're set up, and then grab people back from lunch when it's time to start. You might have a little bell or something that you ring when it's time to start, like at the opera.

You'll also need a registration desk. So that's where you can just induct people as they arrive, make it really obvious with good signage. And if you want to get some sponsors, maybe they can have their own desks in the hallways there as well. And quite often, you can either get paid upfront from a sponsor or do a split on anything they sell.

Get some pre-event surveys and post-event follow ups in play. So you want to find out before people come, what are they looking forward to? What would be deemed a success for them from this event? And in terms of after the event, what did they like the most, what did they like the least? That will help you tune your event. And I do believe it's why SuperFastBusiness Live 10 was the best event that I've ever run so far because of the tuning of the content in previous years through surveys and follow ups. Know your audience, understand them, and deliver what you need to deliver.

Now if you happen to be selling things at your event, you're going to have to look at complexity like credit card machines, contracts and you'll have people manning tables. These days, I don't worry too much about that because it's pretty easy to make offers to people in the shopping cart, when they buy or after they buy, and you can follow them up.

## **Recording the event for high quality output**

Here are some important things to consider when recording the event for high quality output:

Got to have good backdrop; nice curtains, excellent lighting, quality sound. Try and get the sound feeding through the PA and into the video at the same time rather than recording separately. I've had numerous issues with recording quality in the first few events I ran where they were trying to run it separately. No one wants to be walking around the stage with two microphones on them.

It's much easier to integrate everything, and that's where staging helps. You'll want to do some sound checks, have spare batteries on hand, check all the microphones are set up, and get your speakers to get up on stage, get comfortable with the room and to do a sound check before they go live. The other thing is if you are taking questions from the audience, you'll want to put a microphone in a fixed position where the camera can easily access it, and you'll want to direct people to go to those microphones if they want to ask questions because unfortunately if they shout out a question and a speaker answers it without repeating the question, then it's not going to come up on the video and people don't know what they're answering.

With your video setup, try and get a two-camera setup because you can then have the zoomed in shot and then the faraway shot. It gives you choices. And a good camera crew is going to edit on the fly two cameras so that they've always got the camera position in the right shot, and they can switch between slides, and zoom up, and then a wide shot, and it looks great. You only have to look at a few of my videos to see the quality of the recordings.

## **The team you need for the event**

In terms of your team, you're going to have videographers and in-house contractors for staging. They'll take care of the sound, the projector, the screens, the computers, the resolution. You want to get into the room nice and early and have that working well

before you start. I know I've kicked off one event where we were just down to the wire with this and it's very stressful. So you want to remove the stress from that. Make sure you can see the person up on the stage. I've been to several events, we just can't see the person up there and it's pretty frustrating.

### **Putting in entertainment at the event**

Putting in entertainment at the event is always a wise idea. In past events, I've had boxing to break up the day and to re-energize the room. We've had yoga. We've always got comedians. We do prizes, we have competitions, we do surfing, we've had magic, juggling and a few other things. So see what you can do to break the boredom and to make it fun and energetic.

### **Designing a low-impact event**

Now if you want a low-impact event, here's a few tips that I've learned over the last 10:

Try and book things in advance. I usually book one year early. Prepare your checklist so you can just tick it off as you go. Get your marketing automation in play as I mentioned before, watch the case study with Jake Hower. You can go into my system and preload it with all the things I need to automate the entire campaign. Video should be taken care of. Do a little video about the event. Do some videos around the event. Get some videos from people who came to the event. And I'm not talking about, "Oh, I just came to this event and I'm so excited, I'm going to be rich." I mean that's not much of a testimonial. What you really want are case studies of people who went to the event, did something, got a result, and then they're talking about how that's been life changing. That's why I want you to [watch the Ryan Spanger video](#) about this.

Get your email sending out through autopilot. Do your usual marketing. I put a P.S. to my event live ticket thing for most of the year on my blog. And that's pretty much enough to sell the tickets. And a little bit of Facebook advertising with some remarketing happening. And check out abandonment sequences. I did do a podcast

about the important sequences you want in your email system. And the checkout abandonment is pretty much the Pareto Principle winner.

### **Some challenges of running an event**

These things happened to me, I hope they don't happen to you. Losing audio. That's a bad one. So you might want to have a backup recorder in the background.

The video is not working. Give yourself time to setup the video and work with a professional crew who know what they're doing.

Wrong resolutions. Often on hand are slides by a speaker, which are the wrong aspect or the wrong platform. We run Keynote in 16:9. I brief the experts on that but sure enough, someone will try and hand me in a 4:3 PowerPoint, with tiny little font or a billion words on a page. I just redo them. I've redone people's entire slidedecks before the event because it's very annoying for a person in the back row to not be able to read it or to be trying to read an entire encyclopedia on one slide, or you've got everyone else with beautiful-looking slides and then one ugly stand out. You don't want to draw that sort of attention.

I've even had one speaker pull out of the event just a few days prior and that was disappointing but I turned that into a win by putting a better speaker that was more aligned to the topic. And because I wasn't panicked about trying to run everything because it was all checklisted and working smoothly, I had plenty of energy to make the right decision, even just a day prior.

I've also had customers held at the airport because they didn't disclose their criminal history properly or they didn't have the right visa or passport. So make sure you put clear instructions for people travelling from overseas. I've even had a customer come on the wrong day. Like completely missed the event because they came a couple of days too late. That's just crazy stuff that you cannot be too clear with the instructions.

And I've also had photographers and videographers who I didn't get professionals once, and you get an amateur to come, quite often, they're not going to deliver you the

work. In some cases, I think one guy has taken 2 years, so far I haven't seen diddly squat from the footage taken. So it's disappointing when that happens. You're better to pay a professional and get a professional job.

### **Innovating for your next event**

So, how do you innovate for your next event? The main secret is to just listen to your customers because they'll tell you what they like, or what they don't like, or what they missed, or what they hoped there was more of. And be prepared for some weird feedback. You'll get 10 people say, "I love the food. It was amazing," and then 10 people will say, "I didn't like the food. There wasn't enough choice. It was too spicy. I'm a vegan," or whatever. You're never going to please everyone. Just accept that upfront.

Secondly, once you do ask for feedback, pay more attention to your super users, your hyper users, the ones who actually have better perspective, and pay less attention to the one that's the outlier that doesn't really fit your business model.

I actually segment my users by interest and by relevance. And I actually give clients a lead score. The more product someone buys, the more score they get in my email system, and I'll pay more attention to their comments than the ones who aren't buying stuff. The people who really mean something are the ones that I listen to the most. When someone gives you feedback, they're often just reflecting themselves.

In fact, some people are even jealous that you're able to run a great event and they'll be looking for something to cause conflict. There are actually a percentage of people out there in the world who go about trying to find what's wrong with everything. They're called mismatches. You will bump into 1 or 2. If you have 100 people at an event, you could pretty much guarantee that one will try something crazy. Even if you have the best event in the world, one person won't be happy.

So you can decide how much of that feedback you want to take on board. And that's how you innovate. Have a look at what they really love, what they respond to the most,

where are the best comments, what did they constantly mention to you after the event. Pay attention. Tune in. That is what's going to get you some innovation.

And of course when you go to other people's events, work out what you do like and what you don't like, and come up with your own style.

### **Getting the most out of audience surveys**

Now a little word on the surveys. Surveys help people get prepared on what they can expect. You can ask people to dial in the presentation to the right level. If you know what your audience are looking for, you should tell your experts so that they can deliver exactly that. And post-surveys are going to tell you what people liked and what they didn't like. I think it's quite fun to say, "Which speaker were you most looking forward to? And then after the event, I'll say, "Which speaker delivered the best value for you?" And it's really instructive.

### **What's a long-term approach?**

So let's talk about the long term approach for a minute because this is sadly missed in the industry. Think about how you can serve a person for the next decade. See what they want and what they're likely to need over the next 10 years of their business consumption. And if you can deliver that, if you can give people what you ask for and nurture your relationship over the long term, it will keep delivering.

When I go back to my first few events, and it was like laptops, and buy a domain, and pick a niche, write sales copy, publish a website live. Now, we have a completely different experience. Now it's strategic overview. It's tactical insights. I'm not asking them to build a website live. In fact, I don't think they should build their own website anymore. So every decade, you're going to change what you teach. Grow up with your customers and keep serving them.

Remember, if you're trying to do a live event just to pitch stuff, be really stylish about it because if you don't, it can come off terribly wrong. Be very, very careful about delivering veneered presentations, which are just pure sales letters with a massive

hook asking for a huge investment. That's a great way to destroy your longevity. So make an annual get-together of your best customers your first event, and preview people about what they'd like to have happened at that event, make it happen, and then deliver the best event you can, and I think you'll be really surprised.

### **Tips & Action Steps**

So here are some action steps:

If you think you'd like to do an event, go for it. Don't be afraid to do it. The reality is it's not that hard. Just book a venue, put up a sales offer, sell a few tickets to cover your cost.

I'd say go small on your first one if you really want to get into the groove. Sell the event before you commit to running it because if you don't sell it, then you can actually not run it. So you could put up your sales offer and sell tickets and then book the venue out of the profit. Just get paid first and then run the event.

So here's what I suggest you do: If you found this podcast useful and you'd like more business-related training, [join my community at SuperFastBusiness.com/membership](http://SuperFastBusiness.com/membership). Inside, you'll gain access to all the recorded presentations from my past live events, so you can see exactly what we produced. You'll also get the three video trainings detailing how SuperFastBusiness Live 10 came together. You can replicate this for your own event. And if you'd like to attend my next event, details will be at [SuperFastBusiness.com/live](http://SuperFastBusiness.com/live) as soon as we've got our sales page ready.

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