

EVENT PLAYBOOK

The Stand Playbook

How to turn a sponsor stand into pipeline. The playbook we brief every stand team on.

BEFORE

ON THE FLOOR

AFTER

WHY THIS MATTERS

The stand is only as good as the people on it

Whether a sponsorship pays back is mostly decided away from the stand: in the weeks before the doors open and the 48 hours after they close.

\$15k—\$40k

BEFORE ANYONE SAYS HELLO

What a sponsor stand at an APJ conference typically costs, before travel, furniture, AV and prizes.

2–3 hrs

OF REAL TRAFFIC PER DAY

Delegates only reach the stand in the breaks. **Every break needs a job.**

48 hrs

TO FOLLOW UP

After that, conversations go cold and the leads become a spreadsheet nobody owns.

THE RULE WE BRIEF EVERY TEAM ON

If a conversation isn't scanned or noted, it didn't happen. Many organisers share no attendee list.

BEFORE · 4 WEEKS OUT

Set the number, then split it by break

"Get as many leads as possible" is not a target. Agree three numbers with sales, then work out where the scans actually come from.

8–10

PRE-BOOKED MEETINGS AT THE STAND
15 minutes each, during the breaks.

60–80 a day

BADGE SCANS
Every visitor gets scanned. Most come from the activation.

5

FOLLOW-UP MEETINGS WITHIN 2 WEEKS
The number that turns into pipeline.

WORKED EXAMPLE: 30 SCANS A DAY AT A 3-DAY EXHIBITION

Morning tea	5
Sessions (the people either side of you)	6
Lunch and the catering queue	8
Afternoon tea	5
Networking drinks	6
Per day	30

Registration is usually quiet. Treat anything there as a bonus.

BEFORE · 3 WEEKS OUT

Pre-book the meetings that matter

Walk-ups are a bonus. The pipeline comes from meetings you booked and people you already know by sight.

40–60

TARGET ACCOUNTS



8–10

15-MINUTE STAND MEETINGS

LINKEDIN NOTE, UNDER 300 CHARACTERS

"Saw you're speaking on the payments panel. Looking forward to it. We're on stand 11, right by the coffee. Would 10:40 on Wednesday work for a quick chat?"

Offer a time and place, not "let me know if you're around". Cold contact? Save the meeting ask for your second message.

Use your client passes as the hook

A free pass to a senior event is a good reason to reply. Offer them to target accounts first.

Know five faces

Pick your five most important targets. Keep a one-page cheat sheet on your phone with **names, photos, titles and one opener**, so you're looking for specific people in the crowd.

Give the event team your wishlist

You've paid for the sponsorship. If it's lunch and you haven't met two of your key people, **ask the organiser's team to find them** and bring them over.

BEFORE · 2 WEEKS OUT

Do the homework the other sponsors skip

01 Assign the agenda, with a reason

Give each session an owner and a reason to be there: it backs up your positioning, a target account is speaking, or a competitor is on the panel. At a single-track event, the keynote becomes your shared opener.

02 Sort the other sponsors into three lists

Partner, competitor, or worth a conversation. Tell your partners before the doors open: "If anyone asks about us today, send them over." Walk past your competitors so you know their hook first.

03 Know what you can't say

Before a regulated or government event, confirm which client names are approved, which certifications you can claim and where your data lives. A confident wrong answer does more damage than "let me get the right person".

04 Agree the follow-up before the day

Who owns hot leads, who owns the rest, the post-event hook, and the follow-up email, **written now**. If nobody knows the plan the morning after, leads go cold within days.

ALSO BEFORE THE DAY

Connect with the speakers on LinkedIn. Lead with their talk, not your pitch.

Practice the questions you'll actually get

Every stand gets some version of these. Practice short, sharp, customer-focused answers out loud, as a team, before the day.

QUESTIONS

"I see AI on your stand. What do you actually do?"

"Are you a product company or a services company?"

"Who are your clients in my industry, and what have you done with them?"

"Are you based in this region?"

"How is this different to what I have already?"

OBJECTIONS

"We already have a company helping with AI."

"We already have a platform for that."

"Our vendors handle that for us."

"I'm not involved in that area."

"I thought you were [old perception]."

Build it to start conversations

A stand works in three moments: a hook that stops people, proof that earns their interest, and a scan that captures it.

Hook

One question, readable from 5 metres

Someone standing in the catering queue should get it. Skip the feature list.

"Your next customer is asking AI. Does it recommend you?"

Proof

Show value before asking for details

Give the visitor something personal first.

How their own brand appears in AI answers. A 3-minute demo on silent headsets. A live match on screen.

Scan

Badge at the end, not the start

Same three qualifying questions every time, rated hot, warm or cold.

Prize draw at afternoon tea, not at close, brings a second wave back.

Host

Invites passers-by in, manages the queue.

Demo lead

Runs the demo or activation.

Closer

Scans, qualifies and books the meeting.

Take the chairs away

Laptops closed. A seated team looks closed.

ON THE FLOOR

Lead with the person, not the product

Delegates know you're there to sell, and your branded shirt has already done the pitch. **A personal connection in the first 30 seconds** buys you the next ten minutes.

OPEN WITH THE MOMENT YOU'RE BOTH IN

"What did you make of the keynote?"

"Which team did you draw?"

"What are you hoping to get out of today?"

Try two different openers through the day and keep the one that works.

THEN QUALIFY IN THREE QUESTIONS

- Are you using **[what you solve]** today?
- Is it built in-house, by vendors, or both?
- Is this on your list for the next 12 months?

AND EXIT GRACEFULLY

"Great to meet you. I'd better get back to networking, but let's stay in touch."

ON THE FLOOR

Be on, every minute

01 Work the room before the doors open

Meet the partners on the floor and the organiser's event team. Your best target can turn up in the coffee queue, the corridor or the walk to the keynote.

03 Book it on the spot

With a hot lead, get both phones out and put next week's meeting in the calendar while you're still talking.

05 When a speaker joins the stand, host it

Delegates come for the speaker, not you. Ask what they took from the talk, make the introduction, and offer 15-minute follow-ups if demand is high.

02 Scan everyone, note everything

One line per person: **who spoke to them, their pain point, the next step.** A 10-second voice memo works too. Scanner down? Photograph the badge.

04 Use the sessions

Sit next to someone new every time. Watch who is nodding along and find them afterwards. Stand at the back so you're first back to the stand.

06 Post while it's happening

Stand, team, crowd and keynote shots in real time. Go to the front of the room for the photo. A blurry shot from row 20 isn't worth posting.

ONE RULE FOR THE WHOLE DAY

Never let the stand go empty. When it's quiet, one person holds the stand and the other works the floor.

AFTER

Follow up while they still remember you

Most event ROI is won or lost in the week after. Speed matters, and so does making each message personal.

Same day

Merge scanner, QR and team notes.
Remove duplicates.

24 hours

Call hot leads. Allocate every lead in the CRM.

48 hours

A personal email and LinkedIn note to every contact.

2 weeks

Report leads, meetings and cost per lead.

FOLLOWING UP FROM [EVENT]

Hi [Name],

Great to meet you at [event] yesterday. Based on what you said about [their pain point], a couple of things worth pointing you to: [two or three short, relevant points].

I've attached the [checklist / report] we were handing out on the day. Worth a 20-minute call next week?

Write it from your notes

Where you met, what they told you, two or three things relevant to them, the piece you handed out, and **one clear ask**.

AFTER

Keep the conversation going

WEEKS 1 TO 6

Ride a timeline they care about

If the activation was tied to something with its own calendar, like a tournament or a report launch, send a light update at each milestone. **Save the strongest commercial ask for the end**, after six weeks of friendly contact.

WHEN YOU HIT YOUR LIMIT

Bring in your sphere of influence

When the conversation goes past what you know, bring in the expert, the account executive or a senior leader. **Don't try to close it alone.**

AFTER 3 OR 4 FOLLOW-UPS

Gone quiet? Change who's asking

Don't send a fifth chaser. Introduce a colleague in the same thread and agree they'll follow up two days later. **A new name and a new angle** often gets the reply your sixth email wouldn't.

THE PRINCIPLE

Pipeline is built before the doors open, and won in the week after they close.

The checklist

BEFORE

- ☐ Targets agreed: meetings, scans, follow-ups
- ☐ Scans split by break
- ☐ 40 to 60 targets contacted, 8 to 10 booked
- ☐ Five faces on a phone cheat sheet
- ☐ Sessions assigned, each with a reason
- ☐ Sponsors sorted: partner, competitor, worth a chat
- ☐ Pitch and objections rehearsed out loud
- ☐ Approved claims and client names confirmed
- ☐ Follow-up owners and email written

ON THE DAY

- ☐ Partners and event staff met before doors open
- ☐ Chairs away, laptops closed
- ☐ Stand never empty
- ☐ Same three qualifying questions every time
- ☐ Every scan has a one-line note
- ☐ Hot leads booked on the spot
- ☐ Prize draw timed for afternoon tea
- ☐ Photos posted in real time

AFTER

- ☐ Leads merged and cleaned the same day
- ☐ Hot leads called within 24 hours
- ☐ Every lead allocated in the CRM
- ☐ Personal follow-ups out within 48 hours
- ☐ Colleague introduced on quiet threads
- ☐ Results reported within two weeks

WHO WROTE THIS

Stirling Marketing plans and runs sponsor activations for B2B technology brands across APJ

85+

B2B TECH CUSTOMERS

\$140m+

PIPELINE INFLUENCED IN 2025

7+

YEARS IN BUSINESS

stirlingmarketing.net