

# Mapping the Attendee Journey

How to map the customer journey for your event participants and key stakeholders so that your event design achieves your desired outcomes

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# What is the attendee journey?

Events have the power to educate, connect, invigorate, and create change. That's why Encore enables meeting and event organizers to create transformative experiences. When an experience is transformative, it changes the perceptions and behaviors of its participants. The path a participant travels from the moment they first hear about your event to the post-event survey is called the attendee journey. Mapping this journey is an essential design tool.

**Here are the steps you should take:**



## Step 1 Define your core customer segments

Gather your event team and key stakeholders to discuss each customer segment. Who does your event serve? Which audiences are the most important ones your event serves? Examples might include employees, ticket-buyers, sponsors, exhibitors, educators, host committee, board of directors, and so on.

**With your event team and key stakeholders, take turns exploring customer insights and discussing each group:**

- > What do they want?
- > What are their pain points?
- > What would make their lives easier?
- > Why would they come to your event?
- > What are some of the reasons they would not come?
- > Do you have any qualitative or quantitative data on these segments?
- > What about data or feedback on their reactions to your previous events?

Decide on the top three customer segments you want to zero in on and create an avatar for each customer, encapsulating who this person is and what they expect, need and want from your event as well as the challenges you might face attracting them or keeping them engaged.

## Step 2

### Identify your event goals for each customer segment

#### What are you trying to achieve within each customer segment?

##### For example:

- > Do you have a sales number you need to hit with sponsorship?
- > Do you need to create training for employees that integrates essential job skills?
- > Do you want the host committee to invite your group back?
- > Write down these overarching goals/reactions to your previous events?

Now break them into S.M.A.R.T. objectives that are smart, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based. Do this for each customer segment so you can create a system of measuring success.

##### For example:

“Improve year over year employee retention by 5%,” “Generate \$1M in exhibit booth sales for the Q4 2023 event;” or “Increase educational satisfaction scores from an average of 3.9 in 2021 to an average of 4.1 in 2022” are all S.M.A.R.T. objectives that tie into a specific customer segment.

## Step 3

### Describe each customer’s entrance behavior

#### Who is your target audience?

Select one avatar to represent each segment. Now talk about who this person is and what their pain points are.

- > When this person shows up for your event, what are they thinking about your event?
- > Do they know anything about it?
- > Are they concerned about something else?
- > Are there challenges you’ll face getting and keeping their attention?
- > Are they superfans, disgruntled, or somewhere in-between?

See if you can define who this person is, what they’re feeling, saying and doing when they arrive. The more specific you can get about their needs, wants and hopes, the more helpful it will be to your mapping and design process.

## Step 4

### Describe each customer’s exit behavior

Just as you defined each customer’s entrance behavior, take some time to talk about what you hope this person will feel, say and do at the close of your event.

- > Are there specific actions you want them to take?
- > Do you hope they tell their peers or boss something specific? When they think about your event, how do you want them to feel?

Record what you want each customer will feel, say and do post-event.

# Step 5

## Map out the attendee journey to the goals and behaviors

Now, consider the different entrance and exit behaviors for each customer segment.

### How can you get them from point A to point B?

#### Example 1

Customer Kay needs to generate leads and will have to prove to her boss that she did so post-event. She's arriving with a bad attitude because of past experiences with other events. She's not that interested in attending educational events unless they speak to her sales role. She's more interested in networking activities. You want her to leave with 50 viable leads and to tell everyone that your event is worth the investment.

- > How would you develop a program to suit their needs?
- > Are there other ways you can maximize their potential to network during breaks or transition points during the event?
- > Are there technology tools that could help facilitate the exchange of information and lead capture?
- > What else could you do to reduce the friction they might have experienced in the past?

#### Example 2

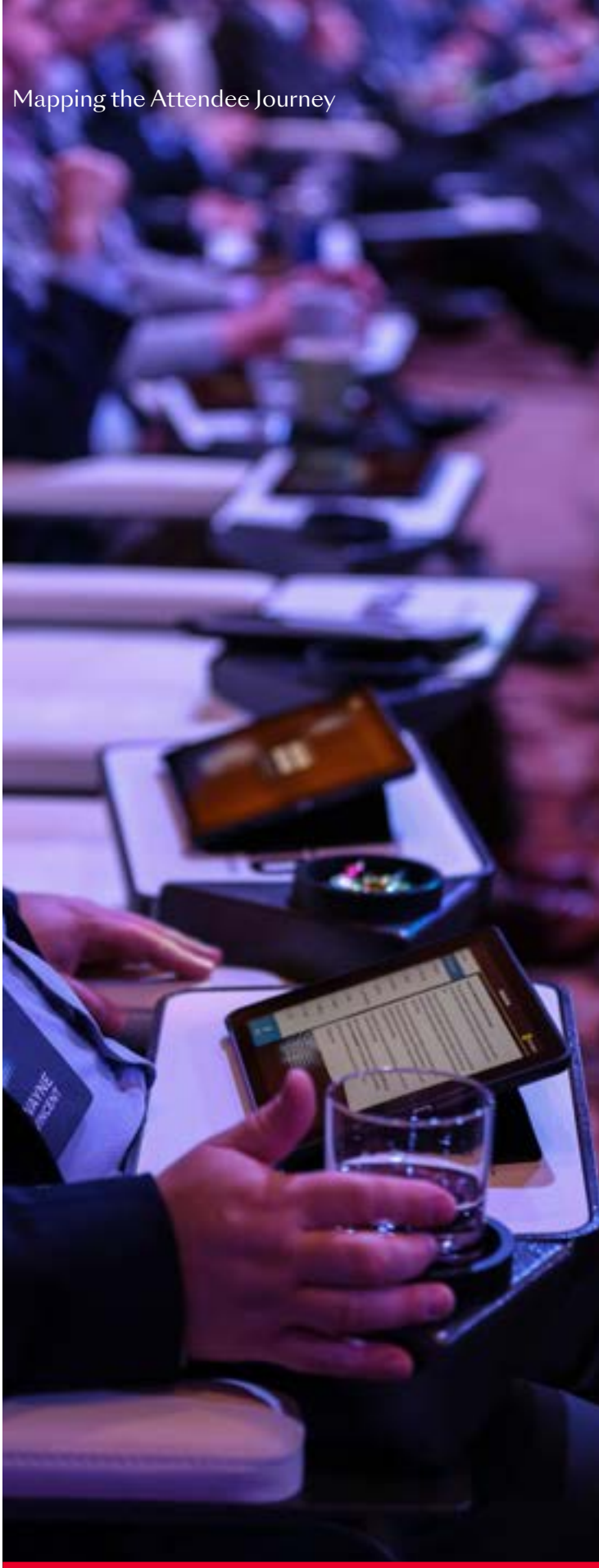
Customer Tyson is interested in career advancement. He's been stuck in middle management for longer than he wants. He is hoping to learn new things at the conference that will make him more attractive for a promotion at his current job or equip him to get a better job somewhere else. He's not sure what to expect or what to do to achieve his goals. You want him to leave feeling like he's learned valuable job skills. You also want him to have gained the confidence and connections to take that next career step.

- > How can you help him find the education he needs?
- > How will you prep the speakers to provide relevant, engaging material?
- > Are there technology tools that could help Leon retain and capture the information he's learning onsite?
- > What additional programs or activities might help him achieve his goals? For example: mentorships, speed-meetings, career hubs, etc.

#### Example 3

Customer Lex must attend a mandatory event, but they're doing so virtually. They won't have the in-person perks of their co-workers, and they may be distracted by workday tasks/emails during the event. They've been to the event before, but they've never engaged before. You want them to lean in, be part of the conversation and feel connected to what's going on. You want them to say they're looking forward to the next event.

- > How will you engage them before the event to get them excited about coming?
- > How will you make them feel like they have a voice during the event?
- > What are some things you can do to encourage them to interact with the content and event community?
- > How can you leverage technology to keep them off their phone/email during the event?



## The benefits of attendee journey mapping

Attendee journey mapping is important to do before line items are finalized because it creates a heatmap that will help your event evolve to fit your customer's shifting needs.

By doing this exercise with each customer segment, you'll learn what the most important event elements are for each audience you serve. You'll also learn very quickly if there are areas you're spending time and money on that aren't serving your customers well. Or if there are elements you lack and need to develop.

The attendee journey map will also help you select the event technology you need to achieve your goals. When you investigate tools like [event platforms](#), you'll be able to better identify which features — polls, surveys, Q&A upvoting, data dashboards, etc. — are most important. And if you don't have time for that investigation, it provides a clear roadmap for conversations with your [event technology provider](#) so they understand exactly what you need.

In this way, mapping the attendee journey helps you identify the most important event elements you need to invest in. It will also help you recognize areas and items that might be a waste of time, money and resources.



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