



How early bird strategies can boost sign ups

If your event promotions are thorough, consistent and engaging, the majority of your target audience should be aware it is happening. But acknowledgement is different to participation. Your business can't rely solely on the public's proactivity or initiative for a good event turnout, you need to implement your own methods of persuasion to create a deal that is too good for them to miss out on.

Early bird strategies generate buzz and accelerate sales in the earliest stages of the event by giving your audience an incentive to get involved before the rest. It's about encouraging them to commit sooner rather than later and offering rewards in exchange for their early registration.

Usually accompanied by strict deadlines and limited availability, this marketing method sparks urgency by operating on a first come first serve basis. So, what are the key points to consider about early bird strategies and how can you apply them to your campaign effectively?

There are proven psychological and strategic reasons as to why early bird tactics work:

- **FOMO (fear of missing out):** Customers move with a matter of intent and speed when there is a limited time window to secure the early bird package. Fear of a price increase or losing out on exclusive benefits forces people to act quickly.
- **Builds anticipation:** Shouting about the upcoming discounts, offers and other benefits will capture your audience's attention and keep your campaign fresh in their minds.
- **Drums up attendance:** Those who were hesitant to participate in the event or make a purchase for whatever reason, are much more likely to hedge their bets with an early bird deal. More people tend to adopt the "may as well" mindset when bargains are available, which pushes attendance and cashflow.
- **Creates a sense of exclusivity:** People love feeling like they're getting something special, that VIP experience. Not everyone can claim early bird access, which makes customers think they're receiving exclusive treatment or a premium service when they do secure it.
- **Improves event planning:** Accessing early registration numbers allows organisers to streamline attendance forecasting and make more accurate predictions about the size and scope of event.

If you are a pet shop or pet store, or even a garden centre, agricultural or country store selling pet products, and are participating in National Pet Shop Day, here is how to ensure you get the biggest crowd possible through early bird implementation.

- **Event teasers:** Invest time in previewing the celebrations well in advance. Using posters in-store and targeted posts online to drip-feed small but exciting glimpses of what people can expect will build suspense. Reference special discounts, free samples, pet activities or any other attractions, with emotive language to support the message. Captions like, "Psst...We've got BIG plans for National Pet Shop Day! Be the first in the know by registering now ••" are strong attention grabbers.

- **Exclusive early offers to reward customer loyalty:** Nothing keeps customers coming back like loyalty perks. Ahead of National Pet Shop Day, you could provide exclusive discounts, limited edition products and invites for your most dedicated customers to snatch early on. For example, rewarding the first 20 sign-ups with a free goody bag upon arrival.
- **Counting down to the day:** Use key dates in the lead up to the event to encourage a countdown that customers can get on board with – “One week to go!”, “It’s tomorrow...”. You can share sneak peeks, countdown story stickers, behind the scenes prep, competitions and more through social media and email marketing.
- **Event day benefits:** Turn one day of engagement into an extended benefit by offering exclusive discounts to customers who signed up ahead of time. Offers like “Pre-register for National Pet Shop Day and receive an extra 10% off EVERYTHING in-store on the day” will increase early participation rates and prompt people to make an in-person visit on the day.
- **Social media competitions and giveaways:** A hugely popular and effective tool for championing early commitment, social media competitions and giveaways are big builders of excitement and attendance. The beauty of these is that they can be set up in a number of ways to suit your specific objectives. How to run a social media competition and giveaway effectively is a recent addition to our PR Toolkit, if you would like some support hosting one.
- **Group incentives:** Stretch the advantages of early bird participation to family and friends, rather than just individuals. Existing customers already attending the event will be motivated to make referrals for a reward or group discount in return – “Bring a friend and both receive a FREE sample pack for your furry friends!”. Whilst the primary purpose is to sell and grow the event, this technique is a subtle way of welcoming in new potential customers.

As a business, early bird strategies stand as a reliable method of promotion by maximising attention and sign-ups. What’s more, your attendees also take away major benefits from a timely registration. By snagging a good deal, participants are thought to believe they have beat the system through money saving tactics – and everyone is a winner!

Providing you follow the advice above, you’ll be well on your way to creating excitement and running an event that is bustling with activity.

