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Conference Recap: ExactTarget Connections '09

Posted by [Scott Willoughby](#) on October 20th, 2009 at 8:59 pm [Events and Conferences](#)

We don't talk about email marketing on the blog much, but any of you working in the internet marketing space (and that's likely *all* of you) probably know that it's still one of the most effective marketing channels out there.

We've been fortunate enough over the years to partner with [ExactTarget](#) for our email marketing services and as they've grown and improved their offerings they constantly make me feel terrible. Don't get me wrong, they're awesome, in fact they're too awesome. The stuff their system is capable of and the one-to-one, closed-loop strategies they evangelize are amazing and I feel terrible that I haven't been able to implement every concept they've thrown my way. Nonetheless, I'm a huge fan, so mozPal, all-around great guy, and ExactTarget VP of Marketing, [Jeff Rohrs](#), invited me to attend [Connections '09](#), ET's annual user conference in their hometown of Indianapolis last week.

Don't run away just yet. While Connections is theoretically designed as a user conference, I went in specifically with the outlook of a platform-agnostic email marketer in order to evaluate the content and value of the conference for you, dear reader. Yes, there was a fair amount of ExactTarget rah-rah, but bottom line: if you're interested in email marketing, there were great lessons to be learned (and awesome parties to attend) regardless of whether you actually use ET or not. Since interesting and actionable takeaways are what we all want to get out of conferences, let me take you through a rundown of the sessions I attended, as well as some of the things that garnered large, scribbled asterisks or frantic underlines in my notes (yeah, I'm an analog kid, I take notes with a pen and paper, do I lose my membership in the club?).

DAY 1

The first day was all about keynote presentations. I have to take a second to call out the production values of this seminar. The main ballroom where all of the keynotes were held was incredible. Giant screens everywhere, slick lighting and signage, multiple cameras to re-broadcast the speakers onto screens, lighted backdrops, the whole nine. I've been to a good handful of conferences from the tiny to the huge, and this was by far the slickest, most smoothly run, and most impressively produced I've ever seen (apparently coordinated by Seattle-area event firm [HB Stubbs](#)). All other search industry shows (SEOMoz included) should strive to meet the quality and attention to detail ET puts into Connections...seriously.