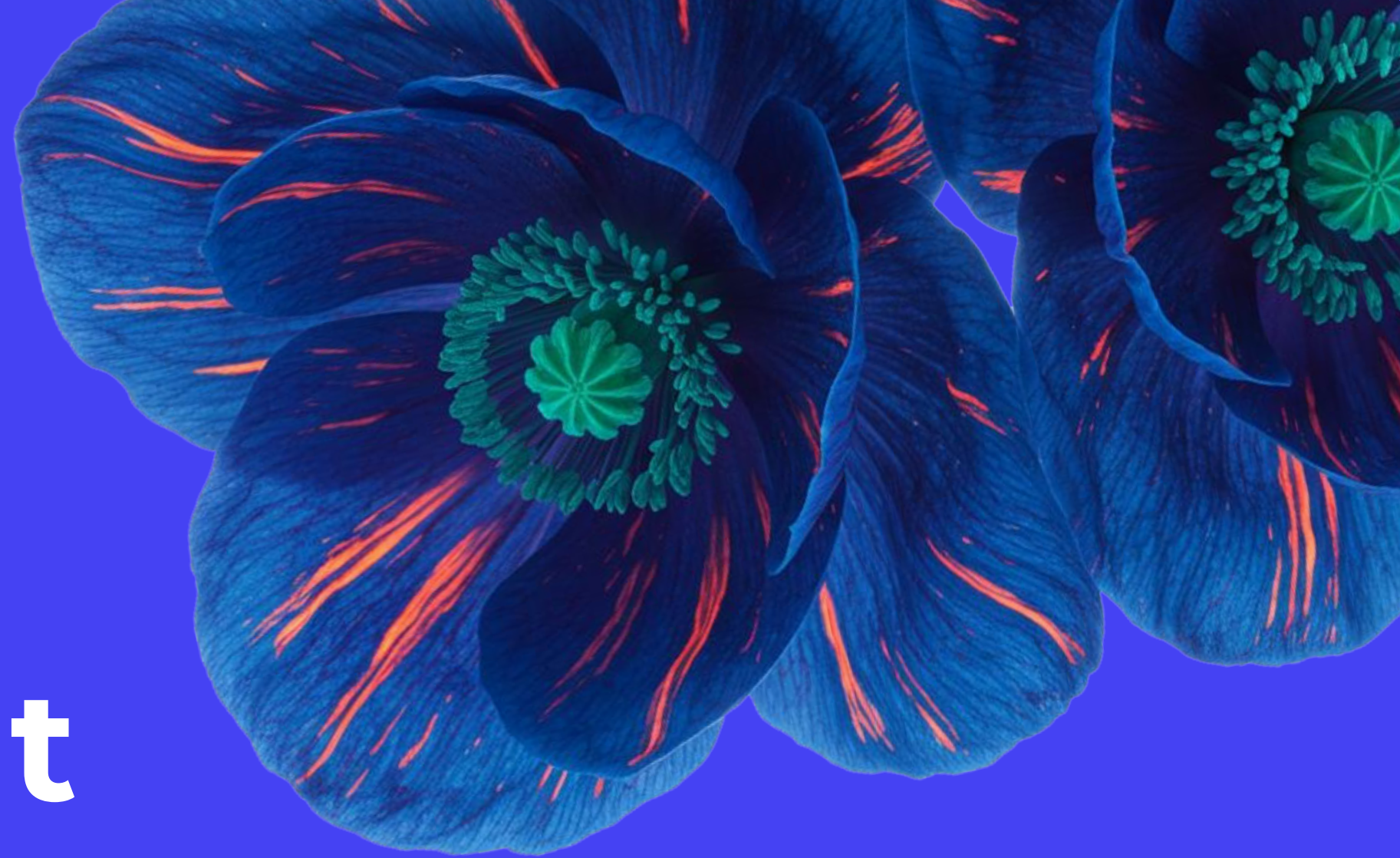




# **Kill It at Black Hat**

## The Cyber Startup's Conference Playbook

June 2026





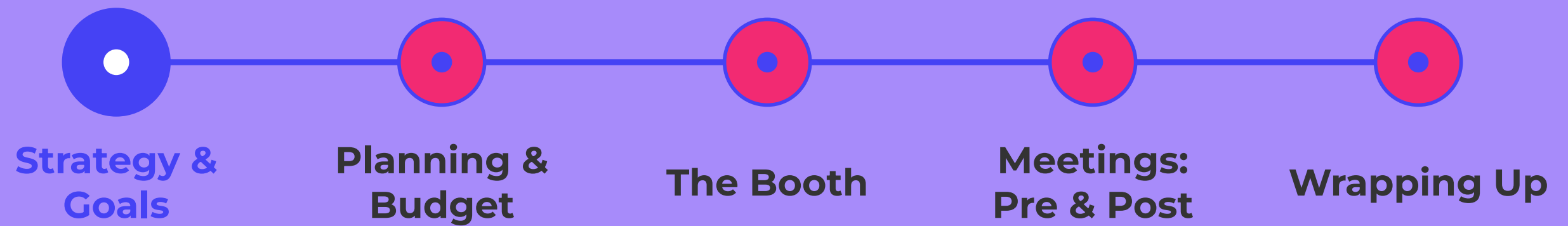
## Our Goals for today

1. *“All Killer no filler”*
2. Learn at least three new things
3. Walk out thinking this was one of the best webinars you've ever attended.

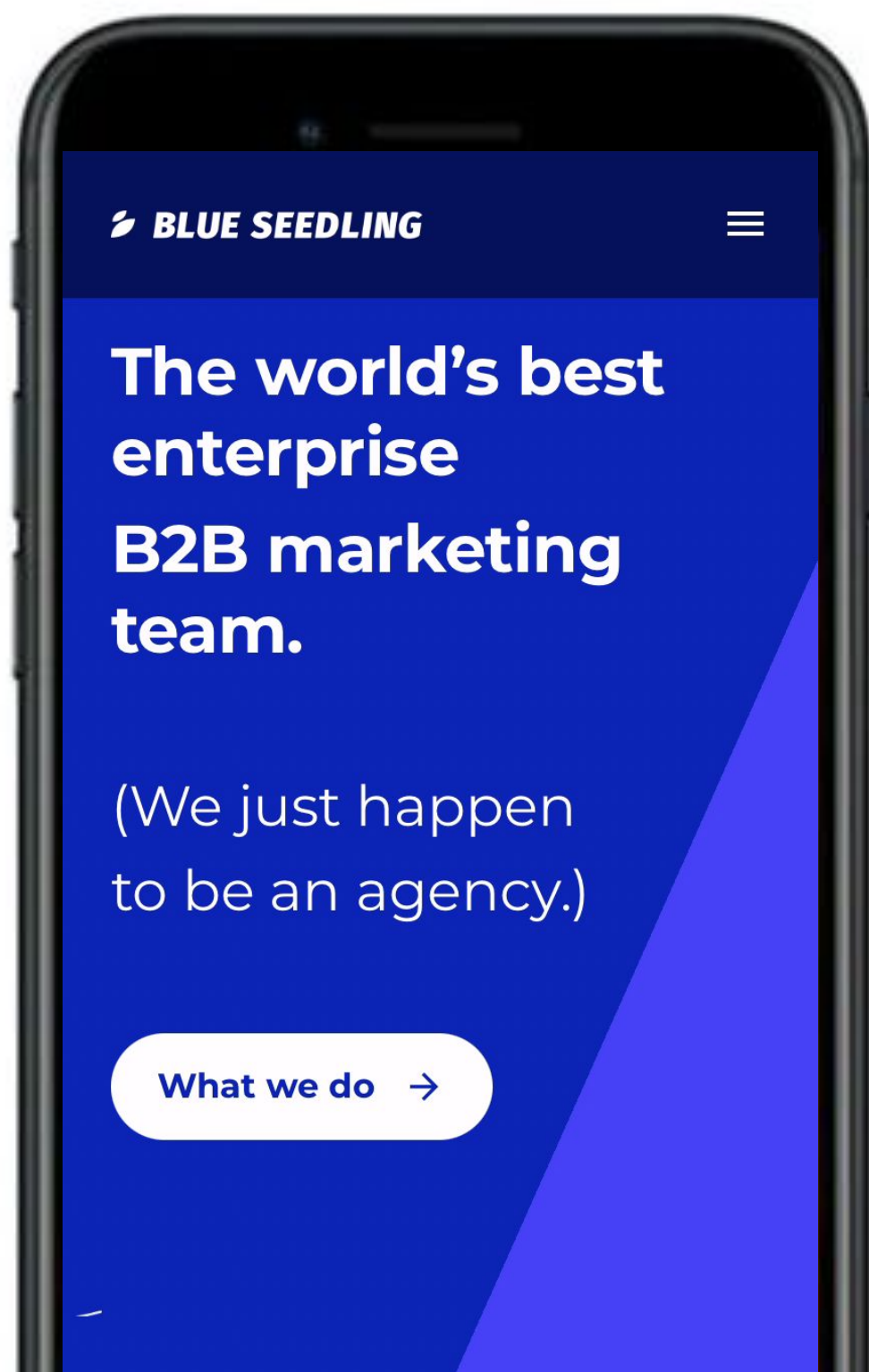
(Yes, we will send you the deck & recording)



# Today's roadmap



# Meet Blue Seedling



## What we do

Boutique marketing agency working with high-growth enterprise B2B startups and scaleups for over 10 years.

## Who we work with

Cyber Security, AIOps, DevOps, FinTech, Retail Tech, MarTech, and other verticals. Our clients include Wiz, Cloudinary, Run.ai, Apiiro, Dig Security, and many others.

## What we believe

Learning and teaching are core Blue Seedling values. We share advice, tools, and case studies on our [blog](#) and [content hub](#).



Proud to work with...



# Meet Us

A combined experience of 561 CISO dinners



**Netta Kivilis**

Founder and CEO



**Tim Jung**

Marketing Director



**Minal Mehta**

Managing Director



**Erez Dafnai**

Managing Director



# Why are you going to Black Hat?

(not a trick question)

---

**My investors  
told me**



DEFINING SUCCESS

# The 3 Black Hat Goals

(Typically in this order)

1.

**PIPELINE  
GENERATION**

2.

**ECOSYSTEM  
RELATIONSHIPS**

3.

**BRAND & CATEGORY  
LEADERSHIP**



# The 3 Black Hat Goals

(Typically in this order)

1.

## PIPELINE GENERATION

### HOW WE MEASURE IT

1. Meetings booked
2. Qualified leads generated
3. New pipeline created

2.

## ECOSYSTEM RELATIONSHIPS

### HOW WE MEASURE IT

1. Social reach
2. Press mentions
3. Analyst interactions
4. Booth scans

3.

## BRAND & CATEGORY LEADERSHIP

### HOW WE MEASURE IT

1. Meetings booked per audience segment

# Black Hat USA 2026 Goals

Real (anonymized)  
example

1. **Strengthen relationships with customers and partners**
2. **Reinforce category leadership and build brand awareness**  
with analysts, press, and other ecosystem players
3. **Create and accelerate sales pipeline** by pre-scheduling meetings with net-new prospects and active pipeline

# KPIs: How will we measure success

Real (anonymized)  
example

| Team             | Goal          | Target                                                   |
|------------------|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Sales            | Pipeline      | 10 meetings with net new prospects                       |
|                  | Pipeline      | 10 meetings with active opportunities                    |
| Marketing        | Brand         | 5 briefings with analysts                                |
|                  | Brand         | 3 media interviews                                       |
| Partner          | Relationships | 5 joint prospect meetings with <i>[Top tech partner]</i> |
|                  | Relationships | 5 Intro meetings with channel / consulting AEs           |
| Customer Success | Relationships | 75% of meetings with customers attending Black Hat       |



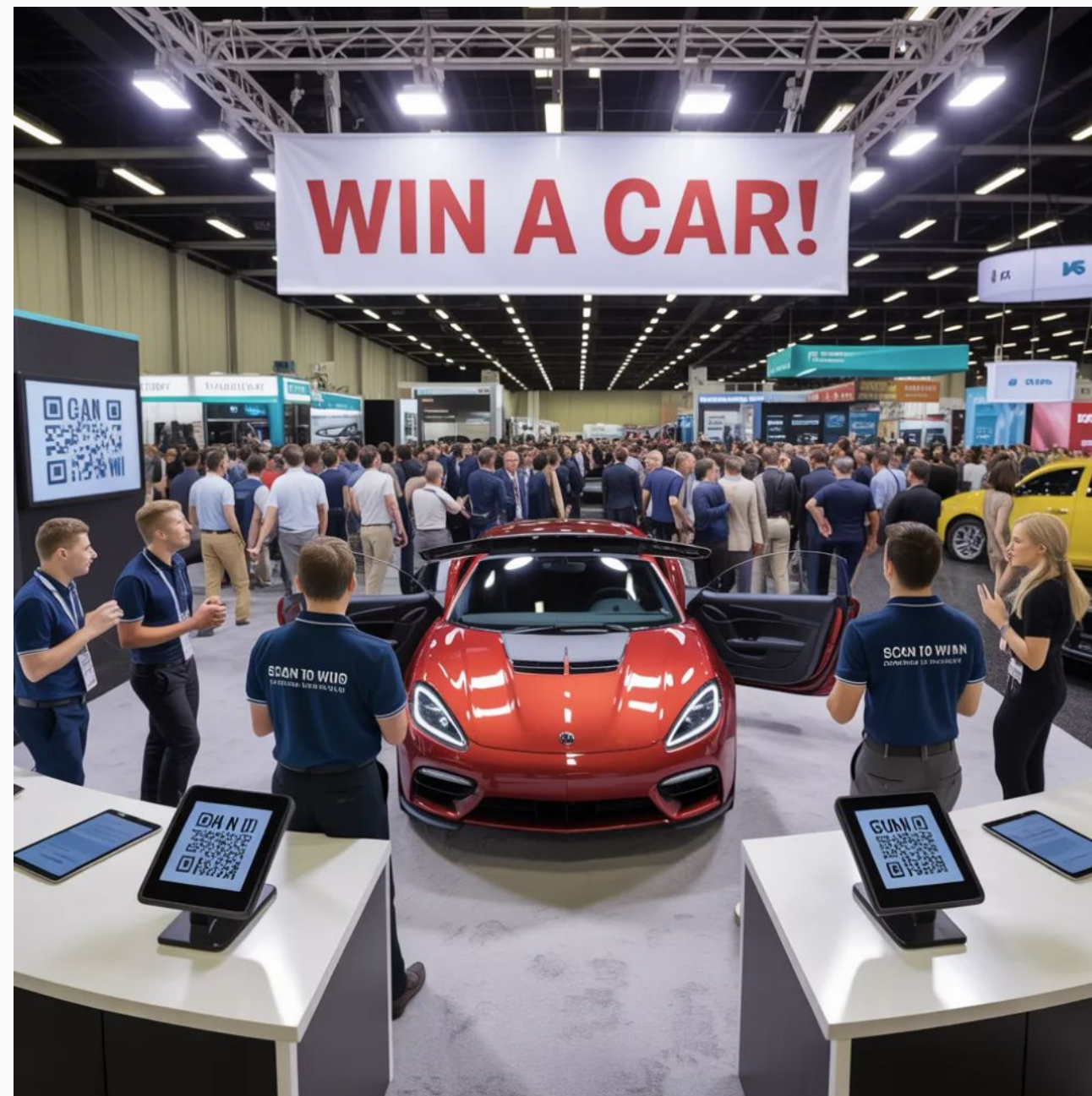
Define in advance and socialize with CEO, CFO, CRO and relevant teams



# THE GOAL GAME<sup>8</sup>

Same Conference. Same budget. Completely different plan.

Is the top goal demand gen, ecosystem, or brand?



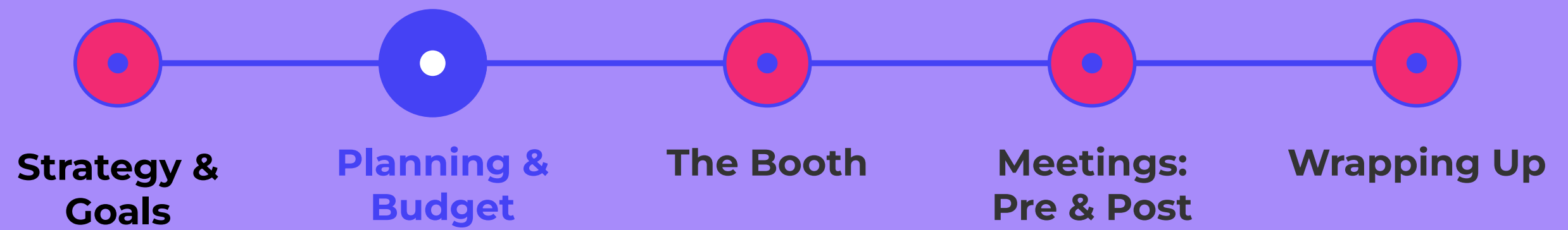
# THE GOAL GAME<sup>8</sup>

Same Conference. Same budget. Completely different plan.

Is the top goal demand gen, ecosystem, or brand?







# Planning

The 5 Key Decisions That Make or Break ***Your*** Conference



**Booth Size**



**Sponsorship  
Level**



**(Paid) Media  
Coverage**



**Meeting Spaces**



**Your Team**



# Planning: Real Examples

Your correct answers will vary depending on your goals



## Small (Seed Stage)

- Small, DIY booth
- Core team only
- Premium meeting space (shared)
- 2 co-sponsored parties



## Medium (Series A)

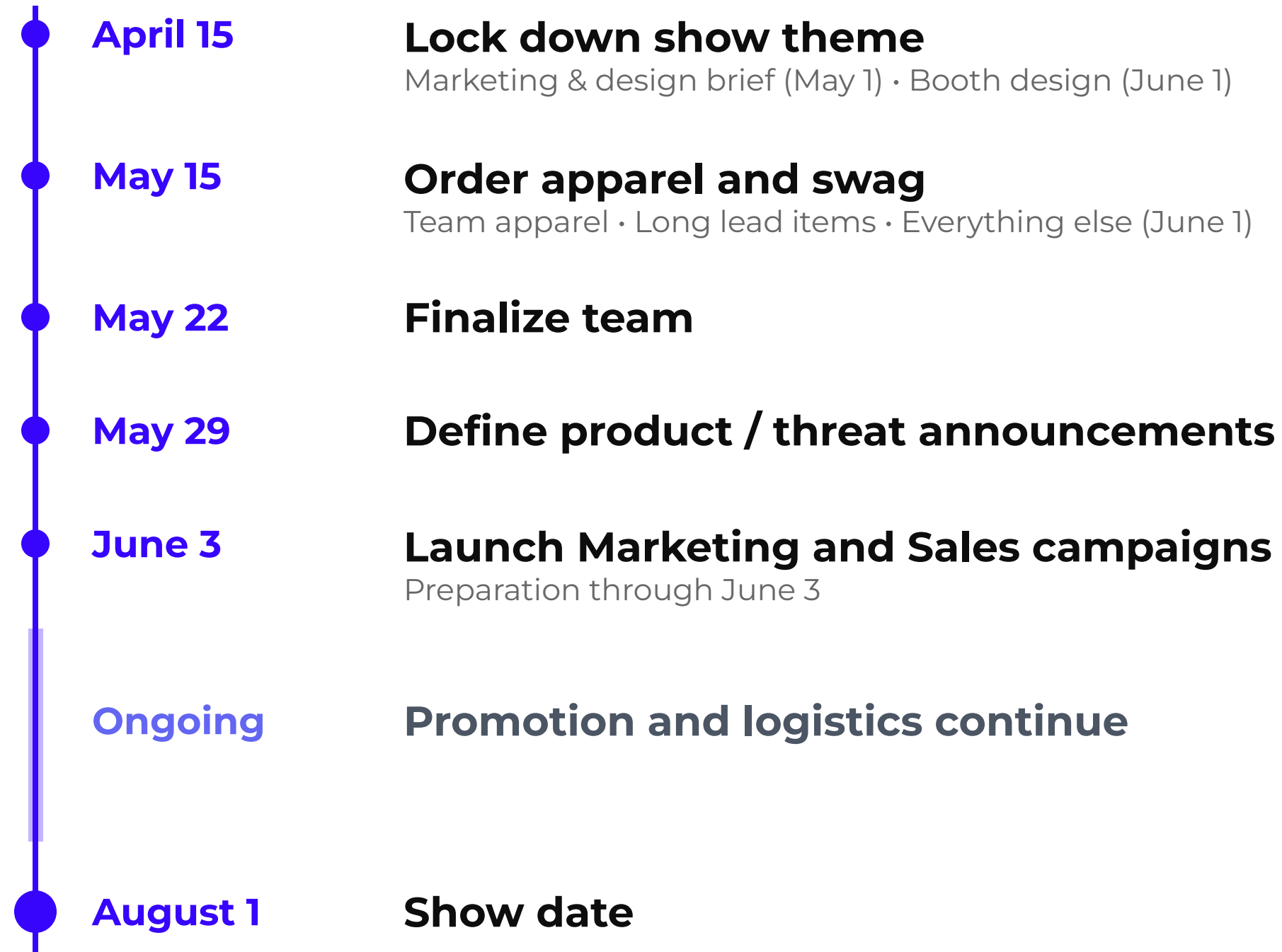
- Small, custom booth
- 10 person team
- Shared meeting space
- 2 co-sponsored parties



## Large (Late Stage)

- Medium / large size booth
- 18 person team
- Private suite at 5-star hotel
- Self-hosted and partner-hosted events

# Conference Timeline (Black Hat)



# The Budget Reality

Our top tips for avoiding a CFO meltdown and still having an amazing show

## 1. Plan *everything* ahead

Late additions can be costly

## 2. Leave room for surprises

Expect surprise fees, issues that need resolving, late-breaking ideas

## 3. Looking “BIG” costs big

If you're a first year start up, aim to look as big as a third year success story, not an industry giant

## 4. Do we need expensive swag?

Sure, this \$75 crystal whiskey glass is awesome, but will this move the needle?

## 5. “Should they be here?”

Include only team members that can contribute to the event's success

## 6. Detail is king

Your budget sheet should be comprehensive, detailed, and consistently up to date



# Sample Budget Sheet

| Category                              | Item                            | Description                                                       | Est. unit price | No. units | Est. total   | Forecast     | Actual              |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Sponsorship                           | Gold Sponsorship                | 20x20 booth + misc.                                               | \$150,000.00    | 1         | \$150,000.00 | \$150,000.00 | \$150,000.00        |
|                                       | Meeting Suite                   | Suite at Mandalay Bay                                             | \$25,000.00     | 1         | \$25,000.00  | \$25,000.00  | \$23,000.00         |
| Booth                                 | Booth design and build          | Design agency                                                     | \$80,000.00     | 1         | \$80,000.00  | \$90,000.00  |                     |
|                                       | Show services                   | Drayage, power, cleaning                                          | \$25,000.00     | 1         | \$25,000.00  | \$25,000.00  |                     |
|                                       | Booth photographer              | Professional photographer for team and booth shots                | \$1,000.00      | 3         | \$3,000.00   | \$1,000.00   |                     |
|                                       | Team wellness                   | Water, snacks                                                     | \$500.00        | 1         | \$500.00     |              |                     |
| Meeting Suite                         | Decorations                     | Flowers, signage, pillows, etc                                    | \$7,500.00      | 1         | \$7,500.00   |              |                     |
|                                       | Catering                        | Drinks, pastries (refreshed daily), snacks, branded water bottles | \$750.00        | 4         | \$3,000.00   |              |                     |
| Side activities                       | Co-sponsored party              | Happy hour, Thursday                                              | \$10,000.00     | 1         | \$10,000.00  |              |                     |
|                                       | Private suite at sporting event | Alegiant Stadium                                                  | \$8,500.00      | 1         | \$8,500.00   |              |                     |
|                                       | Private suite - transportation  | Private shuttle (4 hours)                                         | \$1,000.00      | 1         | \$1,000.00   |              |                     |
|                                       | Private suite - catering        | Additional catering for our guests at the suite                   | \$750.00        | 1         | \$750.00     |              |                     |
| Media and Advertising                 | Paid interview                  | With industry leader                                              | \$10,000.00     | 1         | \$10,000.00  |              |                     |
|                                       | Content syndication             | Top industry website                                              | \$8,000.00      | 1         | \$8,000.00   |              |                     |
|                                       | Podcast                         |                                                                   | \$4,000.00      | 1         | \$4,000.00   |              |                     |
|                                       | Outdoor campaign                | billboards, digital shelters, bus, signage trucks                 | \$80,000.00     | 1         | \$80,000.00  |              |                     |
|                                       | Press Release                   | Media placement                                                   | \$5,000.00      | 1         | \$5,000.00   |              |                     |
|                                       | Awards                          | Participation fees                                                | \$2,500.00      | 1         | \$2,500.00   |              |                     |
|                                       | Guerilla campaign               |                                                                   | \$10,000.00     | 1         | \$10,000.00  |              |                     |
| Max. Budget                           |                                 |                                                                   |                 |           |              |              | \$620,000.00        |
| Total (forecast)                      |                                 |                                                                   |                 |           |              |              | \$412,200.00        |
| Total (estimated)                     |                                 |                                                                   |                 |           |              |              | \$472,900.00        |
| Total (actual)                        |                                 |                                                                   |                 |           |              |              | \$203,500.00        |
| Budget utilization (forecast)         |                                 |                                                                   |                 |           |              |              | 66.48%              |
| Category Forecasts                    |                                 |                                                                   |                 |           |              |              |                     |
| Max Budget                            |                                 |                                                                   |                 |           |              |              | \$600,000.00        |
| Sponsorship                           |                                 |                                                                   |                 |           |              |              | \$175,000.00 28.23% |
| Booth                                 |                                 |                                                                   |                 |           |              |              | \$117,000.00 18.87% |
| Meeting Suite Setup                   |                                 |                                                                   |                 |           |              |              | \$11,000.00 1.77%   |
| Side Activities                       |                                 |                                                                   |                 |           |              |              | \$20,750.00 3.35%   |
| Media                                 |                                 |                                                                   |                 |           |              |              | \$27,600.00 4.45%   |
| Advertising (outdoor + guerrilla)     |                                 |                                                                   |                 |           |              |              | \$15,000.00 2.42%   |
| Swag, collateral, apparel, experience |                                 |                                                                   |                 |           |              |              | \$45,850.00 7.40%   |
| Total Budget Utilization              |                                 |                                                                   |                 |           |              |              | \$412,200.00 66.48% |

# Budget Line Item Hacks

There are hacks for every line item. Name some of your favorites.

[YOUR IDEAS HERE]



What's your best "Black Hat" budget hack?



# There are hacks for every budget line item



Affordable media: video interviews, digital features



Inexpensive awards with trophy photo opps



DIY booth, internet, lead scanners, etc.



Investors/partners' office space, invites, intros



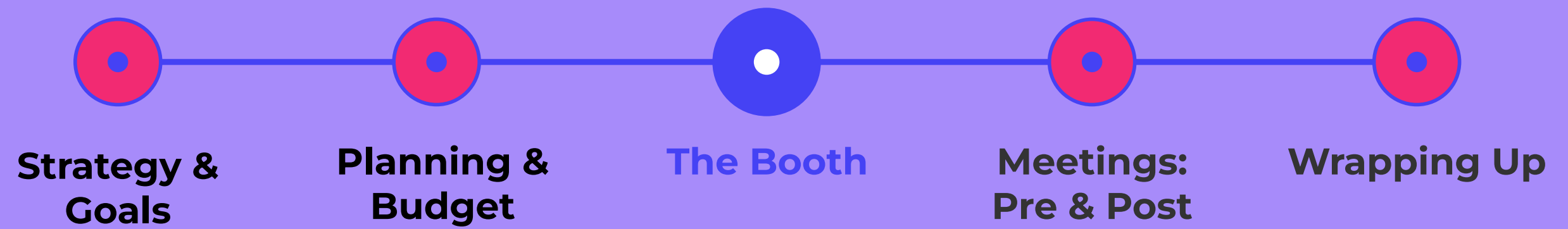
Mirko Zorz, Director of Content, Help Net Security  
March 27, 2026

### Top product launches at RSAC 2026

RSAC 2026 showcased a wave of innovation, with vendors unveiling technologies poised to redefine cybersecurity. From AI-powered defense to breakthroughs in identity protection, this year's conference delivered a glimpse into the future. Here are the most interesting products that caught our attention, and could shape what's next.

Guerrilla marketing







# You Have 5 Seconds

How to **design, build, and staff a booth** that does the selling for you



# Your Booth Is Your Story

Answer this first

**What do you want people to say about  
your company after they leave your booth  
— in their own words?**



# Your Booth Is Your Story

Answer this first

**What do you want people to say about your company after they leave your booth — in their own words?**

The “Before You Spend A Dollar” Checklist:

- ☐ A one-sentence company description
- ☐ A written perception statement
- ☐ A messaging hierarchy
- ☐ A 10-word booth headline

**Be Specific. Be Clear.**

# Small Booth. Big Presence.

## RunReveal at RSAC 2026

### The hook

A chess grandmaster played 100+ blitz games against booth visitors over four days.

### Logistics & Theme

Pre-signup via Luma. Live waitlists throughout the show.

**Chess board structure, socks, "RunReveal Chess Club" shirts and pins.**

### The line & result

*"Check your threats before they check you."*

First year at RSAC. Showed up like they'd been doing it for a decade.





## Case Study: Dropzone AI at RSAC 2026

# When the Metaphor Does **All the Work.**

### The concept

A fully immersive "AI Diner" that turns high-tech automation into a relatable, tactile experience.

### The execution

Checkered floors, diner stools, and "automated" menus that simplify complex AI workflows.

### The takeaway

*Immersion beats explanation every time.*





## Case Study: Novee at RSAC 2026

# Sharp Brand. Zero Ambiguity.

### The brand & headline

"The Leader in AI Penetration Testing." No jargon. Clarity in 3 seconds.

### The category & execution

AI Pentesting — stated clearly on the back wall. No guessing required.

### The takeaway

*You don't need a gimmick when the brand is sharp and the message is obvious, you can shine even in a small booth.*





## Case Study: Torq at RSAC 2026

# You Don't Need a Metaphor **When You Have a 55-Foot Skeleton**

### **The anchor**

Skelly — a 55-foot inflatable skeleton visible from every aisle.

### **The swag**

A tattoo booth for real and temporary Torq tattoos. Daily lines.

### **A key result**

**1,000+ new LinkedIn followers.**



# The Story Checklist

Ask of every item: does this reinforce the impression we defined?

## Booth

- Headline readable from 5 feet?
- Demo leads with the problem, not the product?

**Remove your logo. Is it still obviously your booth?**

## Swag & Collateral

- Swag tied to the story — not just a logo on a chotsky?
- Clear next step on collateral?

**Would someone understand your swag without a rep explaining it?**

## Staff

- Pitch leads with the problem, not the company?
- "Send me more info" — Does every staffer have the same answer?

**Ask 5 people to write down what the company does. Do the answers match?**



# You Don't Need a Designer to See the Vision

## Gloom Security | 20x20 Booth Concept

Initial concept hand-drawn to define spatial layout and key elements.

## Speed & Tech

The prompt took 2 minutes to write.

**Built with AI in under 10 minutes.**

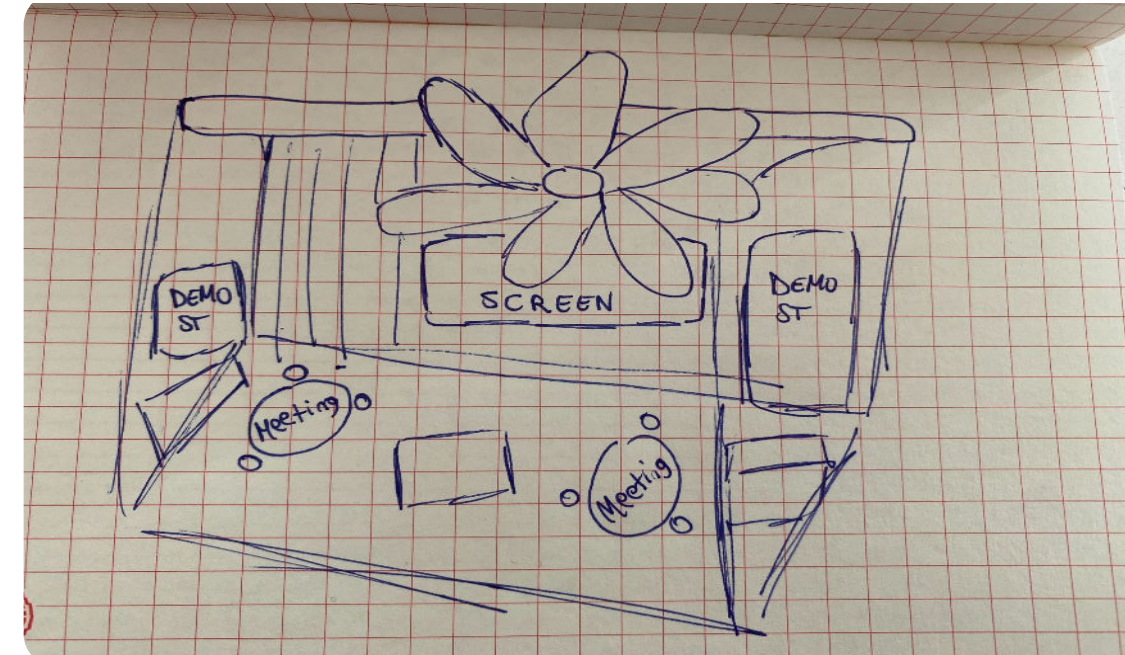
High-fidelity concepts delivered instantly.

## The takeaway

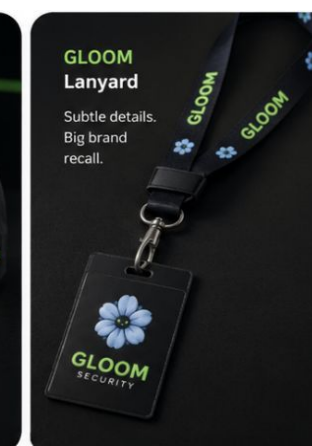
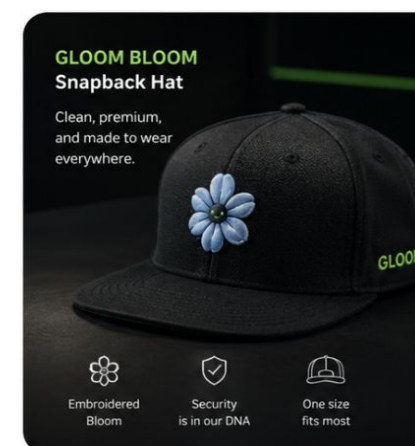
*Renders give the team something to react to before a single dollar is spent on fabrication.*

Move from sketch to strategy without the production bottleneck.

## The Sketch



## AI-generated booth & swag concepts

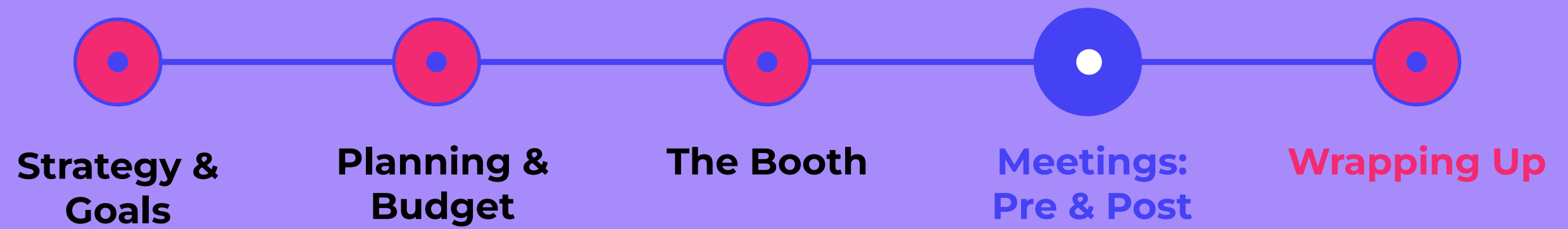




**Where should you focus most of your energy at Black Hat?**

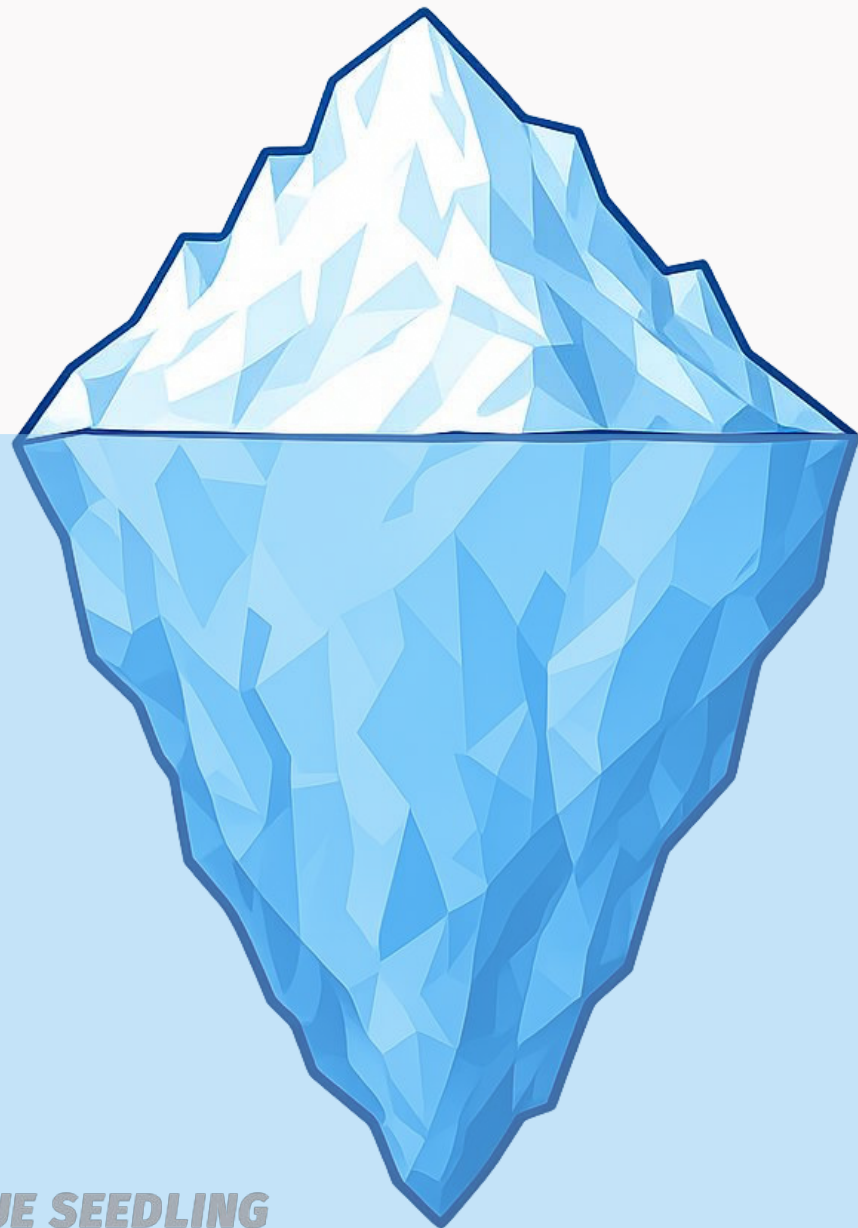






# Pre-booked meetings

80% of your ROI comes from what your prospects never see



Creating the perfect booth

Writing event recaps and social posts

Planning for next year

Conducting outreach to:

- » Net new prospects
- » Customers
- » Existing pipeline
- » Partners



# A Beginners Guide to Outreach

## 01 Build Your List

There's no accurate way to get a list of attendees before the show, but there are some tactics you can use:

- Speaker & sponsor lists
- LinkedIn posts
- Anyone and everyone relevant

### RECOMMENDED TOOLS



ZoomInfo



Upwork



Attendee list scams are common during the lead up to Black Hat

## 02 Conduct Outreach

Using only one channel won't cut it. Use both email and LinkedIn (even calling if possible).

### RECOMMENDED TOOLS



HubSpot



Outreach



Dripify



Manual sends are still the best method for outreach, especially for high-priority targets

## 03 Schedule

Send in waves, not all at once. Protect your deliverability and stay under the limits that outreach channels require.

### GUIDELINES



~100/week



~25/day



Founder email and LinkedIn outreach consistently performs better than Sales

# Common mistakes

The pre-conference outreach playbook

- 01** Starting 2 weeks before the conference
- 02** Not / only reaching out to existing pipeline and customers
- 03** Not leveraging partners and lead generation vendors
- 04** Only incentivizing your Sales team
- 05** Not having a unified Black Hat calendar link / making the process to book a meeting overly complicated



# Examples

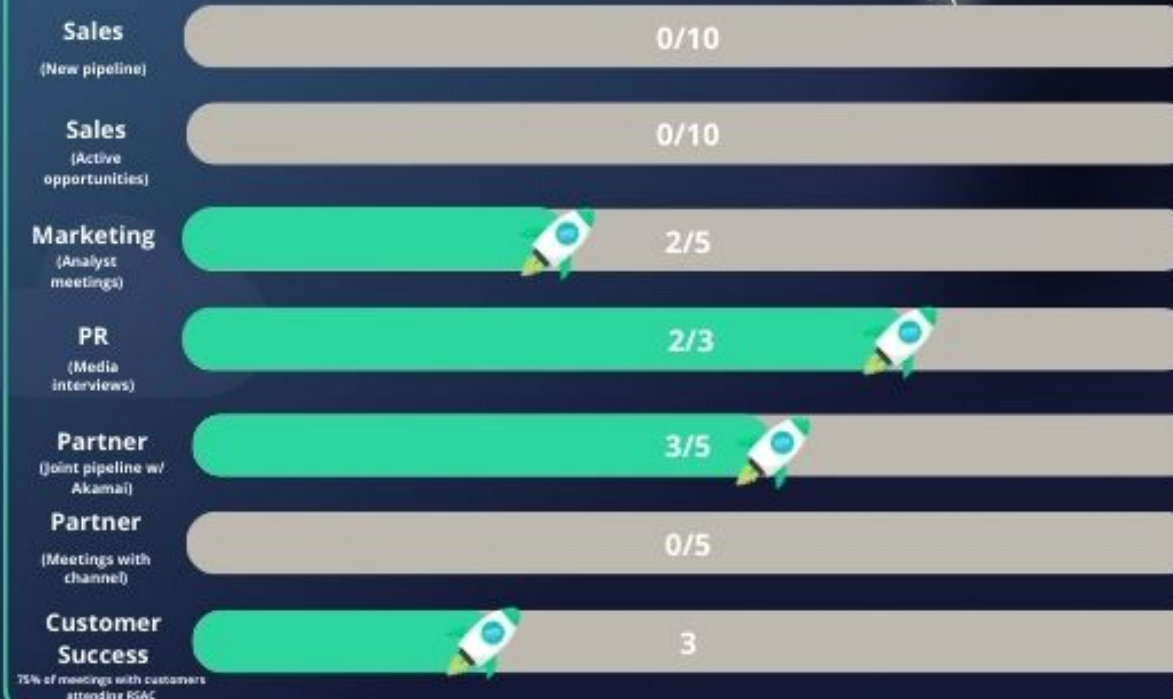
## Set the most meetings at Black Hat...

Win a dinner for two at a Michelin-star restaurant of your choosing  
(up to \$400, any team member is eligible)



apiro

## Executive Summary



# What does good look like?

Pre-conference outreach benchmarks

## FOUNDER-LED

### Target:

10–15 pre-booked meetings

### SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE:

A full calendar of events and meetings with existing pipeline, warm intros, and design partners.

## EARLY STAGE

### Target:

20–30 pre-booked meetings

### SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE:

A full calendar across all 3 days of meetings for founder(s), including some net new prospects

## MATURE SALES & CS

### Target:

» 5-10 meetings per rep  
» Meetings with all customers attending Black Hat

### SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE:

Full calendar of meetings for non-booth staff



# Post-show

Your job isn't done after you put your leads in Salesforce



## POST-CONFERENCE STRATEGY

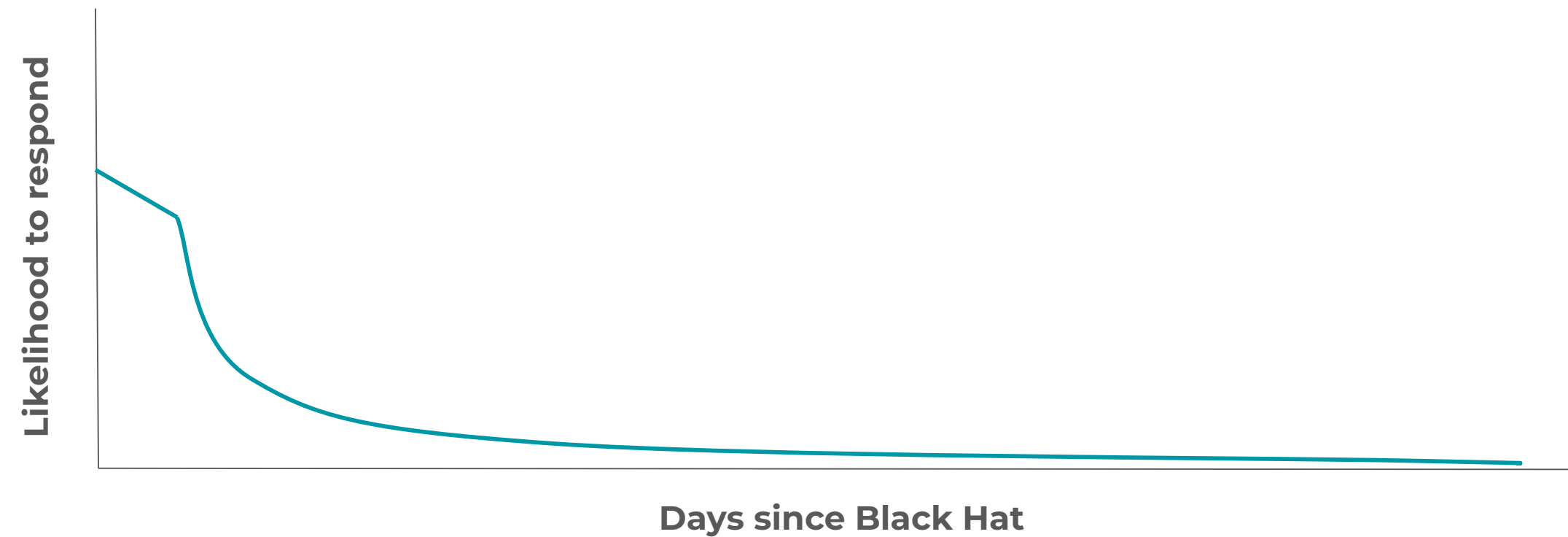
# Post-show: A Marketer's Guide

Your job isn't done after you put your leads in Salesforce

### Setting expectations

Your booth scan follow ups might  
convert to new pipeline immediately.

*Most will not.*





# Post-show: A Marketer's Guide

Your job isn't done after you put your leads in Salesforce

## Setting expectations

Your booth scan follow ups might convert to new pipeline immediately.

*Most will not.*

## It's OK to double text

Build your marketing nurture emails before the event and send them to everyone, including those that Sales will reach out to.



**Marketing**  
**Black Hat follow up**

10:24 AM

Hi there, thanks again for meeting with us at Black Hat. I wanted to follow up on our...



**Sales**  
Sent you a message  
Hi there, it was great connecting at Black Hat. I wanted to share...

10:28 AM

Reply



## POST-CONFERENCE STRATEGY

# Post-show: A Marketer's Guide

Your job isn't done after you put your leads in Salesforce

### Setting expectations

Your booth scan follow ups might convert to new pipeline immediately.

*Most will not.*

### It's OK to double text

Build your marketing nurture emails before the event and send them to everyone, including those that Sales will reach out to.

### Skip the Black Hat recap blog

The team just had hundreds of conversations with your ICP. Sync with them to influence your content strategy

“We deployed an AI meeting assistant six months ago. It has OAuth access to every exec's calendar and inbox. Nobody reviewed it before IT approved it.”



Blog Post

“We had a breach through an MFA-authenticated account. The malware grabbed the session token after auth. MFA didn't matter.”



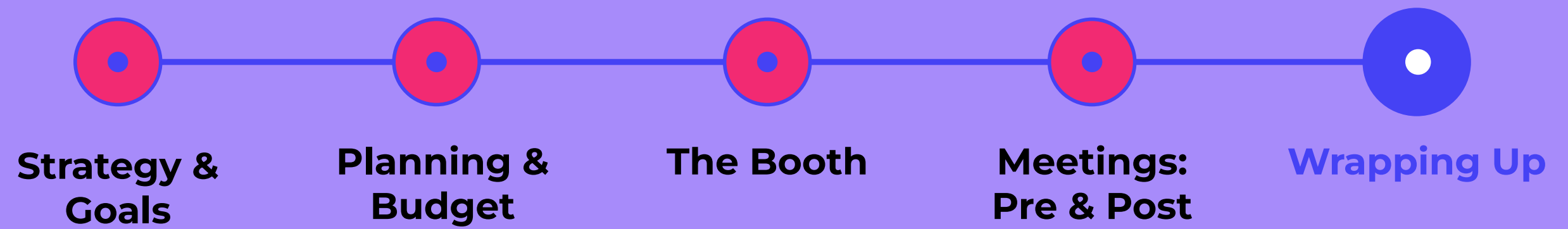
LinkedIn Post

“We're going out to RFP in Q3. I already know what we want but I have to run the process.”



RFP Template





# Black Hat 2026 can be a big boost or a grand failure.

Fortunately, you don't have to go at it alone.





# Conference Offerings

Three ways to work with Blue Seedling to nail Black Hat 2026



## Webinar

60 mins | Group zoom

High level overview + tips.  
You'll get the recording and links to additional resources.

## Coaching Sessions

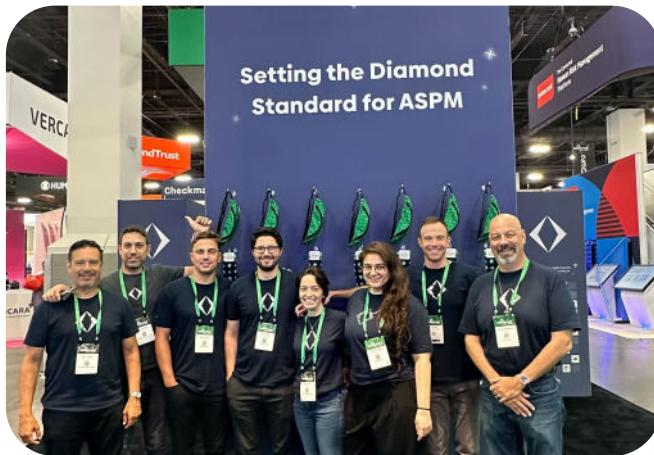
1-on-1 | 60-90 min each

Tailored call for each portfolio company. Audit your specific situation, get a customized conference plan and access to our conference resources (budget, timeline, vendors).

## Field Marketing Execution

**Embedded support**

Blue Seedling runs your conference marketing end-to-end: pre-show through post-show follow-up.



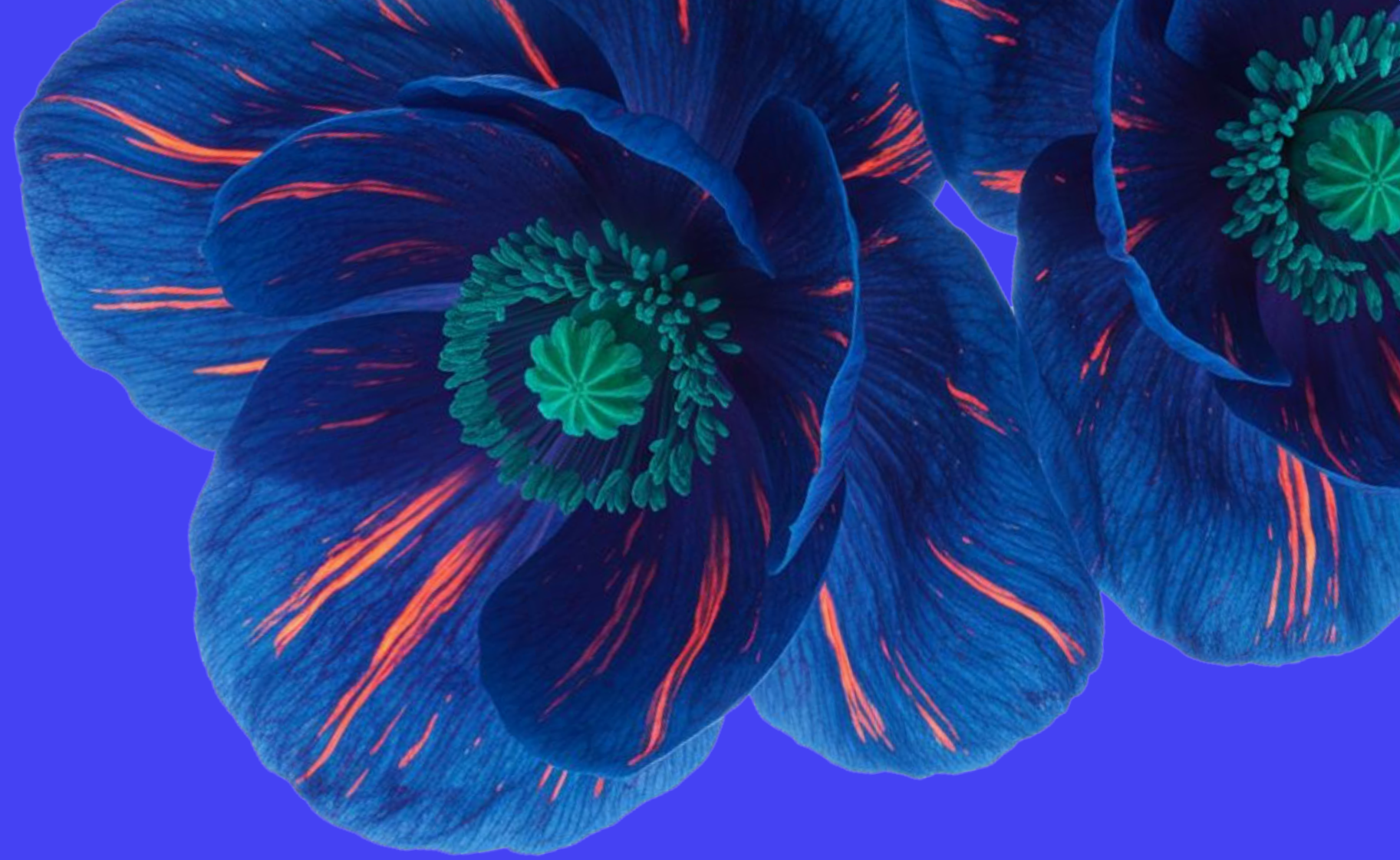




DISCUSSION

# Q&A

Ask us anything.



# Thank you.

## See you in Vegas.

**Netta Kivilis** | Founder and CEO | [netta@blueseedling.com](mailto:netta@blueseedling.com)

**Tim Jung** | Marketing Director | [tim@blueseedling.com](mailto:tim@blueseedling.com)

**Minal Mehta** | Managing Director | [minal@blueseedling.com](mailto:minal@blueseedling.com)

**Erez Dafnai** | Managing Director | [erez@blueseedling.com](mailto:erez@blueseedling.com)