

TRADE SHOW TIPS FOR ISLAND EXHIBITORS



Skyline®

Table of Contents

Overview of Trade Show Marketing

16 Reliable Exhibiting Tips for Before, During and After Your Trade Shows.....	Judy Fairbanks....3
10 Main Players In The Trade Show Ecosystem.....	Mike Thimmesch....5
6 Advanced Trade Show Strategies And Tactics.....	Mike Thimmesch....7
19 Signs You're Addicted To Trade Shows.....	Mike Thimmesch....9
10 Ways To Significantly Boost Your Trade Show Results.....	Mike Thimmesch....10
How To Stop Trade Show Zombies And Bring Them Back To Life.....	Mike Thimmesch....13

Marketing

What Is Marketing? How 10 Experts Define It.....	Mike Thimmesch....14
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Value of Trade Shows

Face-To-Face Marketing: Why It Matters Now More Than Ever!.....	John Backstrom....16
16 Powerful Stats On The Value of Trade Shows.....	Mike Thimmesch....17

Setting Objectives

Awareness, Leads & Meetings: Climbing The Ladder Of Trade Show Objectives....	Mike Thimmesch....19
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Logistics

8 Logistics Tips To Reduce Fees, Stress, And Other Trade Show Side Effects.....	Megan Fischer Betancourt....21
Exhibit Damaged While Shipping? A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words.....	Laurie Young....22

Promotions & Social Media

How To Build A Great Pre-Show Promotions List.....	Mike Thimmesch....24
12 Tips About Social Media for Trade Shows.....	Mike Thimmesch....26

Exhibit Design

10 Top Tips For Trade Show Exhibit Design.....	Mike Thimmesch....29
Size Matters: 9 Ways Island Trade Show Exhibits Are Different.....	Mike Thimmesch....30
Design Your Trade Show Exhibit For The 4th Dimension.....	Mike Thimmesch....32
Skyline Design Planning Worksheet.....	Marc Goldberg....34
How Flexible Is Your Island Trade Show Exhibit.....	Mike Thimmesch....38
5 Reasons Modular Trade Show Exhibits Are Better Than Custom Exhibits.....	Ken Buckman....40
What Transforms A Trade Show Exhibit Into An Experience?.....	Michael Flavin....41

Booth Staffing

10 Booth Staffing Secrets To Double Your Trade Show Lead Count ... Guaranteed!.....	John Hamari....43
The Surprising Value of Introverted Trade Show Booth Staffers.....	Mike Thimmesch....46

Lead Management

8 Ways To Get Higher Quality Trade Show Leads.....	Mike Thimmesch....47
Are These 12 Roadblocks Stopping Your Valuable Trade Show Leads?.....	Mike Thimmesch....49

Measurement

7 Key Trade Show Metrics To Measure.....	Mike Thimmesch....50
6 Things You Can Test To Improve Your Trade Show Marketing.....	Mike Thimmesch....51
Reporting Your Results To Management.....	Marc Goldberg....53

International

Global Exhibiting Checklist.....	Marc Goldberg....55
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Introduction

Welcome to The Big Time.

When you exhibit in an island trade show booth, you are making a major marketing commitment. The costs are larger, the expectations are higher, and the risks are greater. But so is the potential.

As an island exhibitor you need to bring your A-game to fully realize your marketing investment. You've got a bigger booth to fill with an exhibit potentially as large as a house. You have a team of booth staffers to select and train that rivals a professional sports team. You have a budget large enough to catch the eye of your CFO. All eyes are on you, both at the show and in your company.

Therefore, this book contains our most advanced insights and proven methods for all the key aspects of trade show marketing. We go deeper on areas such as booth staffing, exhibit design, measurement, lead management, and logistics. There are even articles written especially for the unique challenges faced by island exhibitors like you.

This book contains 26 articles previously published on the Skyline Trade Show Tips blog, and three worksheets from Marc Goldberg of Marketech. This book is one of three books in a series for exhibitors at different levels of trade show marketing skills. The three books are **Trade Show Tips for New Exhibitors**, **Trade Show Tips for Inline Exhibitors**, and **Trade Show Tips for Island Exhibitors**. If you want to get the other two, contact Skyline.

And for up-to-the-minute trade show tips, go to www.skylinetradeshowtips.com for more ideas, insights, and inspiration for your trade show program -- and career.

Your Local Skyline Exhibiting Consultant

The logo for Skyline, featuring the word "Skyline" in a bold, blue, italicized sans-serif font. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the end of the word.

Overview of Trade Show Marketing

16 Reliable Exhibiting Tips for Before, During and After Your Trade Shows

Judy Fairbanks

Here are 16 tips based on what I've learned as a veteran trade show manager who knows (and loves) working on both the client and vendor sides of the fence.

Before the Trade Show: Plan, Plan, Plan

1. **Budget methodically:** Create a budget allocation worksheet for every show. Use it as a task-management checklist. If you don't have a template, get one from your exhibit house.
2. **Set objectives:** One sure-fire approach is to align trade show goals with existing corporate goals. Make sure your objectives are SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely). Limit the number of goals to narrow your focus and improve chances for success.
3. **Streamline logistics:** Add hours to your day with logistics and inventory management software (check out www.ExhibitForce.com). Some exhibit companies provide this tool to customers for free.
4. **Facilitate selling:** Work closely with the sales team to find out what's needed for in-booth appointments. A private meeting area? A photocopier? A laptop with appointment-scheduling software? Ship any necessary documents (e.g. contracts) and carry a thumb drive as backup.
5. **Design simply:** Your exhibit should boldly and clearly communicate who you are, what you sell and why prospects should buy from you. The keys to attracting traffic and creating a lasting impression are to use eye-catching images and short, compelling messages.
6. **Use lightweight materials:** Everyone knows large, heavy items are costly to ship. This is also true for your trade show exhibit. If you're still shipping a heavy dinosaur of an exhibit, calculate annual drayage, shipping and storage costs. These costs are slashed by switching to lighter, modular materials and fabrics that pack into fewer, lighter crates. Apply savings to additional shows or directly to the bottom line.
7. **Go modular:** Custom modular booths create a multifunctional pool of inventory that can be reconfigured into multiple shapes and sizes. One booth can service many industries, divisions, product lines and footprints.
8. **Leverage social media:** Social media websites like Twitter, WordPress, Facebook and LinkedIn offer unbelievable potential to drive qualified booth attendance. Start small – but start.



9. **Design a standard lead form:** A short, simple survey is all you need to prequalify leads. The trick is to apply the same survey across the board. Standard questions enable the ability to merge and sort data, analyze statistics and draw conclusions.
10. **Manage lead distribution:** Determine where the “leads list” will be stored, how and to whom leads will be distributed, and how they will be actioned. With only 21 percent of trade show inquiries actually pursued (www.ceir.org), chances are your competitors are NOT following up – which is your golden opportunity.

At the Trade Show: Execute Well

11. **Self-reflect:** What are you doing right and wrong at trade shows? Write down the top five things you do well and the five things you most need to improve. Think back to the moments of frustration and insight you had during the course of the year and turn those insights into a plan.
12. **Huddle every morning:** An hour before the show, quarterback the pre-show staff meeting. Be highly detailed; set realistic goals for the day. Review key messages and talking points. Institute a competition to

reward staffers for the most leads collected (qualified leads, that is). Collect cell phones and store them safely.

13. **Huddle every afternoon:** After the show, spend 10 minutes debriefing. Distribute hot leads. See what worked well (or poorly) during the day. Announce the lead collection winner. Identify necessary adjustments for the next day.
14. **Ensure timely follow-up:** If you collect e-mail addresses, use Web-based tools like Constant Contact or Exact Target to send thank you notes right from the show floor. While personal contact by a salesperson is mandatory, be a brand ambassador and close the loop quickly.

After the Trade Show: Measure and React

15. **Post-show report:** Create a standard format. Be diligent about completing a report for every show. One client told us, “We write a show report after every event including photos, costs, attending staff, lead quantity, competitors, etc. The report serves as next year’s plan and provides metrics for comparison.”
16. **Measure performance:** Many metrics can be measured: Media coverage, brand awareness, competitive activity. What’s paramount, however, is filling the sales pipeline with qualified leads, of which a percentage will convert into revenue. Obsess over results. Adjust where you can. If you don’t have a written trade show plan, develop one now (get help if necessary). Lead management doesn’t have to be complicated or costly, and the rewards can be monumental.

While I certainly hope these tips enhance your company’s success, I also hope they improve your own quality of life at work, at home and on the road.



10 Main Players In The Trade Show Ecosystem

Mike Thimmesch

The trade show world is a large and complex ecosystem, so it took me far too many years to understand the many players involved in putting together a single show. Just when I thought I'd figured it out, someone would peel the next layer of the onion and reveal another big player. Why should you wait? Here are the top 10:

1. **Attendees** Over 80 million attendees a year visit US trade shows, with tens of millions more in Europe, Asia and Latin America, too. Attendees come to trade shows to see and touch new products, network and build relationships with their industry peers, get training, keep up-to-date with changing industry trends, and evaluate multiple suppliers at one time. And perhaps to even have some fun, too.

2. **Exhibitors** There are anywhere from 300,000 to 1.7 million companies who exhibit at roughly 13,000 US trade shows. Exhibitors invest thousands of dollars to get access to trade show attendees so they can generate sales leads, deepen relationships, and build their brand. About half the shows host business-to-business exhibitors, with the rest split between business-to-consumer exhibitors and hybrid shows. On the B2B side, they spend almost 30% of business-to-business marketing dollars to reach those millions of attendees. Most exhibitors are manufacturers who exhibit to show the stuff they make. On average there are about 400 exhibitors at a trade show. About two-thirds take the minimal 10 x 10 space. Only about 20% of exhibitors get an island exhibit, although at major trade shows with highly competitive exhibitors, that ratio can increase. Exhibitors spend anywhere from \$5 to \$50 a square foot, but



usually about \$20. Some exhibitors also spend a hefty sum on sponsorships, too.

3. **Show Producers** is an industry term for the show owner. About 40 years ago the vast majority of trade shows were produced by associations, which depended on their annual trade show to bring in most of their revenue. For-profit media companies figured out how much money they could make owning shows, and now they own almost half of them. While most associations have just one show, media companies often own multiple shows, and also own a magazine, website, e-newsletter, and database for the same industry as the show. Recently these media companies (some multi-billion dollar companies) have seen their biggest chunk of revenues shift to come from their trade shows instead of their magazines. Many exhibitors don't know that their favorite show is actually owned by another company they've never heard of, and that it owns other shows. Some shows are produced as a partnership between an association and a for-profit media company. The best show producers are constantly trying to top their previous show and are evolving their events in response to the changes in their industry.

4. **Show Contractors and Labor** It can come as a surprise to find out that the show owner doesn't actually have their own employees do all the work of setting up their trade show. The show producer hires a show contractor to

perform and manage the labor. Freeman is the #1 show contractor, GES is #2, and then it's a long way to 3rd place. The general contractor controls much of the show labor as the official contractor. There are also Exhibitor Appointed Contractors, who are labor providers that are not the official contractor picked by the show, who can also provide installation and dismantle and other show labor. In some show cities (Las Vegas) the show labor is unionized, and in others (Atlanta) are in a Right To Work State, which means show labor is not required to be unionized. The show contractor controls material



handling, also known as drayage, also known as Pain #1 for trade show exhibitors.

5. Visitors and Convention Bureaus They work hard to woo show producers to pick their city for their exhibition, and then help the show producer plan a successful event with their deep understanding of locations and attractions in their city. Visitors and Convention Bureaus can be at the country, state, county, or city level. (You think it's hard to brand a company? Try branding a country.) Their name is often abbreviated to VCB, and is also called Destination Marketing, and Tourism boards. The VCBs' goal is to entice large groups of visitors who will spend wads of money in their towns, boosting the local economy and paying taxes on hotel rooms. They often struggle to explain to their local tax-paying citizens that their budget is not an expense, but an investment. The VCBs from Las Vegas, Chicago, and Orlando have the most to crow

about: Half the largest shows in the country take place in just those 3 cities.

6. Convention Centers These are the enormous show halls with acres and acres of bare concrete that regularly blossom into thriving trade shows. These temples of temporary commerce are all over the country, built by communities to bring in outside convention and tourist money. The biggest convention centers in the USA are McCormick Place in Chicago, The Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, and The Las Vegas Convention Center in Las Vegas. In Europe and especially Germany, the city is the show producer, convention center owner, VCB, and even the general contractor all rolled up into one, which takes out the middlemen and reduces costs. There are 7 convention centers in Europe bigger than McCormick Place.

7. Hotels Almost all shows select an official hotel, with a room block set aside for attendees and exhibitors at a discount rate (although lately with internet search sites, attendees can get lower priced rooms than available from the official show room block). Lucky is the anchor hotel that is tied to a popular convention center. Hotels are trade show venues in their own right, with their own meeting spaces that host hundreds, if not thousands of smaller shows a year. An exceptional example is Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas, a huge hotel with 3300 rooms, AND its own nearly million-square foot exhibit hall. Hotels are usually described as part of the Hospitality Industry.

8. Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations Agencies Not all ad agencies want to make TV ads for Frosted Flakes that run during the Super Bowl. There are many agencies more than happy to serve B2B companies. Some can become experts in their own right for an industry, even a specific show. As trade shows are such a major marketing expense for B2B exhibitors,

getting their agencies involved is essential for truly integrated marketing. Exhibitors can ask for as little help as providing an image file for a banner stand, or become so involved as to help determine exhibiting strategy, pre- and at-show promotions, and exhibit design.

9. **Suppliers** These are the vendors that provide all the other services exhibitors and attendees need. Exhibit houses like Skyline not only provide trade show displays, they also act as their outsource trade show marketing department, providing turnkey exhibit management, design and more. The best ones act as an agency for their clients. There are also suppliers for shipping, carpet, electric, lighting, furniture, audiovisual, airlines, cleaning, photography, promotional products, training, lead management, and more.

10. **Speakers** If Content is King on the Internet, then speakers are the kings (and queens) of content at trade shows. Good speakers pull in droves of attendees who want to increase their skills, learn the latest industry trends, and see (and touch) a celebrity in person they would never glimpse otherwise. Educational speakers are usually pulled from the ranks of successful (and brave) show attendees, exhibitors, and industry experts. Then there are the speakers who recently graced the front pages of the newspapers, and are happily transforming their celebrity into wealth, one speech at a time. Beyond them are those extroverts of extroverts, the professional speakers, who roam from convention to convention to provide motivation, humor, entertainment and sheer star power.

So now you know the 10 main players in the trade show ecosystem. I hope it helps you see things from a new perspective. Let me know your take on your own part of the trade show world in the comments box below. Or if you think I missed another layer of the onion, go ahead and peel it away — I promise not to cry.

6 Advanced Trade Show Strategies And Tactics

Mike Thimmesch

Congrats — you're no longer the trade show rookie.

You've trained your booth staffers to work the aisles. You've asked for (and received) a trade show display with bold images and clear messaging. And you know how to put together a trade show promotion that gets more people to your booth.

Been there, done that. Now, you're ready for something more.

So here are 6 advanced trade show strategies and tactics you can use that will stretch – and grow – your trade show program:

1. Select Vertical Market Shows

All too often exhibitors can get caught up with doing their best in front of their competitors. So they invest substantial time and capital in a large trade show booth at their main industry show. And while plenty of potential customers can attend your big industry show, some, more savvy exhibitors have left that crowded battlefield in pursuit of only their very best prospects. You can, too. Find the



shows, which may be smaller, where your best vertical market clients gather. Once there, re-examine your whole approach. Can you focus your exhibit graphics message and promotions to appeal more directly to that vertical market

audience? Do you have employees with greater expertise in that vertical market you can bring as booth staffers? And is there more than one vertical market worth this extra effort?

2. Exhibit At International Shows

It's most likely that if you are reading this, you are an American. (If you are not, pay no attention to this – you already are much more likely to exhibit internationally). Over the last few years, there has been a surge in U.S. companies testing the waters overseas – especially since the GDP growth rate worldwide has been double the growth of the United States. Exhibiting internationally is a worthwhile way to grow your business – and it's definitely an advanced strategy. You have to deal with customs (both the laws and the culture), time zone, language and currency differences, and starting over from scratch, since your company and products are probably unknown there. If you want some help getting started, Skyline offers a free white paper called *International Exhibiting*.

3. Set Appointments For Meetings In Your Booth

Exhibitors' objectives progress through a sequence: First they exhibit to get awareness of their company, brand and products, second they exhibit to get leads, and finally, they move up to exhibiting to get lengthy face time with their clients and best prospects. Focusing on meetings requires a new way of thinking. You have to see your trade show program not as an isolated marketing touch point, but as a key component in your selling cycle. You have to work with your sales team to identify and entice known attendees to set aside considerable time to meet with you while they are at the show. You need promotional activities that will resonate with people who already know you, and you want them to really come to your booth. You need to bring higher-level employees who can advance the sale, and the people who your clients want to

take time to see. Your exhibit design changes, too, because you are more likely to add an element of hospitality. This strategy leverages the face-to-face nature of trade shows to their fullest.

4. Add Video and Interactive Technologies

Whether it's a video on a monitor, flat screen, or an iPad, you can create more visual stopping power and give your staffers presentation and demo tools with video and interactive technologies. Videos that are short, punchy, and have high production values get attention. Exhibitors with highly technical products can grow into interactive technologies to help their staffers tell a detailed, consistent story, while keeping attendees more engaged. The advent of touch screens and iPads make them even more appealing and user-friendly. Creating content and sourcing these tools require a new skill set that many exhibit managers simply don't have. That doesn't mean it can't be done, just that they have to work with either their company's ad agency, or go looking for vendor that has experience making videos especially for trade shows, and interactive technology that helps booth staffers be more convincing. One tip: design your trade show exhibit with the technology in mind from the beginning, rather than trying to bolt on the tech after the fact.

5. Tie Your Lead Gathering Closer To Your Company Database

You've gone beyond just gathering business cards from your trade show visitors – you get a scan from their show badge that adds some vital qualifying data, or even use your own lead cards to write down more information you gleaned while talking to them. Now go even further, and tie your lead gathering tighter to your company's sales and marketing CRM database. Perhaps it's getting the data file from the lead retrieval machine you rented from the show, and importing that right into your database. Or it's buying (rather than renting) your own lead retrieval

machines that you ship to every show, which has a consistent lead format you define for easier importing into your CRM. Or maybe even using laptops or iPads that, with Internet access in your booth, let staffers enter leads directly into your company database in real time. That way you can prevent mistakes from bad handwriting, get a head start on reporting results, have a better chance at tying leads to sales, start fulfilling the leads before the show ends, and most importantly, forward your A-quality leads to the appropriate sales rep for immediate follow up.

6. Measure More Of Your Trade Show Activities

Go beyond just counting leads, and even measuring the ROI of your overall trade show program, and use measurement on a more granular level to help decide how to actually improve your trade show program. Count the qualified leads each booth staffer brings per hour, so you can decide who staffs the next show, and who stays home. Measure the impact that major parts of your program give (such as promotions, presentations, interactive technology, and sponsorships) versus their costs, to better allocate your budget at future shows. And if ROI is not your objective, find a way to measure your objective anyhow, like using surveys before and after a show to measure the brand impact your show program created. Also, rather than looking at each measurement in isolation show by show, start comparing each show to one another, and at each show over the years.

Which strategy of these strategies is best for you? Meet with your team and brainstorm which ones will garner the greatest boost for your efforts. Then dive into these advanced strategies and tactics. You'll increase your results, grow your skills, make yourself more valuable – and make your job more interesting!

19 Signs You're Addicted To Trade Shows

Mike Thimmesch

For many people, managing and staffing trade shows is somewhere between an inconvenience and a hassle, what with the travel, the time away from home, the endless details, and the long hours.

But for others, the love of trade shows runs so deep that the only thing that will get it out of their blood is embalming fluid. Could that be you? Here are 19 signs that you're addicted to trade shows:

1. You go to Vegas for a bachelor party at Mandalay Bay, but rather than hit the casino, you want to go check out the show floor.
2. You don't feel right washing your hair with shampoo that doesn't come out of a one-ounce bottle.
3. You wear a show lanyard around your neck... at home.



4. When you meet someone new at your office, instead of asking for their business card, you ask them if you can scan their badge.
5. When you hear someone say, "He's a B.S. artist," you think it's a compliment about booth staffing skills.

6. You expect everyone to know what drayage means.
7. You think all client meetings should be only 10 minutes long and held standing up.
8. Your living room has a strip of red carpet 10 feet wide going through it.
9. You think Morgan Freeman lives in Dallas.
10. You named your cat "Orlando" and your dog "McCormick."
11. You don't have a problem with trade shows that start on the weekend.
12. You've tried to talk your spouse into relocating to Las Vegas.
13. You don't feel too guilty about missing your kid's birthday party for your industry's main trade show.
14. You think nothing about paying \$11.50 for a hot dog and soda.
15. You pride yourself that you can set up your trade show display in 5 minutes.
16. You can remember your exhibit house's phone number easier than the date of your anniversary.
17. If you are actually in your hometown when the local Auto or Home show takes place, you never miss them.
18. You get mad and launch into a fact-filled tirade when someone casually questions the value of trade shows.
19. When you finally redeem some of your vast stockpile of frequent flyer miles, you take a vacation in Las Vegas, Orlando, or Chicago.

I started writing this article in my head before remembering two similar (and better) blog posts that certainly inspired me: the talented Christina Stallings' "13 Telltale Signs You're an Event or Trade Show Professional" and the energetic Emilie Barta's post, "You Know You Are An Event Professional When ..."

10 Ways To Significantly Boost Your Trade Show Results

Mike Thimmesch

Trade shows are the largest single expense for B2B marketers. How can you boost your results, and ensure your trade shows are more of an investment? Here are 10 ways you can drive noticeably greater results from your trade show program:

1. Re-Examine Your Trade Show Schedule

Do you go to the same 5 restaurants for lunch that you went to 10 years ago? Probably not. They change in quality, new restaurants open, and your tastes change. So why go to the same trade shows you went to for the last 10 years? Your markets have changed, some shows have stagnated, and others have grown. Find out which shows attract your best customers, and adjust your show schedule accordingly.

2. Set Show-Specific Goals

Your trade show program may have one overall goal, such as lead generation, or brand awareness. Take it the next level in two ways.

First, by quantifying your goals (Generate 100 leads? Increase brand awareness by 5%? Meet with 25 key clients?). Here's how you can figure out your ROI, and thus how many leads you need to take at each show to be profitable: Divide your expected revenue (Estimated lead count multiplied by close rate multiplied by dollars in average sale) by your estimated exhibiting costs. Now you know what your lead count goals have to be, by show.

Second, by matching each show's marketing goals to your company's position in the market.

Are you a new arrival? Then focus on building brand and company awareness. Do lots of people know who you are? Then put more emphasis on lead generation. Do you already have good market share, even leadership market share? Then your goal should be face-to-face meetings with clients and key prospects.

3. Simplify Your Exhibit Design

The trade show floor is cluttered enough with the hundreds, if not thousands of trade show displays. Trade show attendees are overwhelmed trying to weed through all that visual stimuli. So get their attention with a clear message. Rather than put too many messages, words, and images on your display (which will be ignored by attendees), simplify your message, and make those remaining short messages and images larger, so they are immediately understood.

4. Pick Booth Staffers Based On Attitude

Too often we pick booth staffers because they are in sales, because they are chatty, or because they know the product. Even worse, booth staffers are chosen without a good reason, or because they are brand new employees who need training. But these kinds of choices lead to booth staffers who are unreceptive, unwelcoming, and uninformed. They make a very negative impression for your company to prospective trade show booth visitors. Instead, start with booth staffers who are eager to staff – and then train them how to staff the booth, and about your products, company, and industry. Happy booth staffers will be positive brand ambassadors that create stronger relationships between your company and your customers.

5. Track (Qualified) Lead Counts By Staffer

Want to know who will be an excellent booth staffer at your next show? Count how many qualified leads (see #7 below) each of your booth staffers took at your last show, divided by how

many hours they staffed. What, you don't have that number? You can, by putting a way to indicate on every lead (paper or electronic) which booth staffer took the lead. For our trade shows, we put a line at the top of the lead card that says, "Staffer: _____" that each staffer writes in their initials. You will be amazed, that the wall flower from customer service took three times as many leads as the chatty director of sales. Track this at every show, and you'll know who to bring back again and again, and who to politely decline. This alone can double your (qualified) lead counts.

6. Spend More Time Training Your Booth Staffers

Perhaps your management has given you enough time for a pre-show meeting where you can tell your booth staffers about where their hotel is in relation to the convention center, how they can't chew gum in the booth, and about the new product you are introducing at the show. Your booth staffers are worth a far greater investment in time than that – they affect how attendees remember your booth more than anything else. So train them on how to adapt their selling methods to the environment and pace of the trade show floor. Train them on what your customers care about. Train them on all the promotional activity you are doing pre- and at-show. They will perform much better, and you will get more leads. Most of all, train them on:

7. Train Your Booth Staffers To Qualify Leads In The Booth

Sales people don't want a lot of leads – they already have too many names in their sales database. They want qualified leads worth their time to follow up on. If you give your sales force the name of every lead you take at the show, they will get frustrated calling through the list to find the good ones. But if you only give them the most qualified, say, quarter of the list (while you continue to market to the rest), your sales force

will be much more likely to call every name. Especially if you tell them you're only giving them the qualified leads.

So, train your staffer to probe and discuss with every attendee enough to know which leads are A leads, which need to get to a sales person right away, and which leads are B and C leads, which can wait a while. There are lots of ways to qualify leads, here's a good one from Ardath Albee. Train with role playing, until your booth staffers feel comfortable determining and recording how qualified the lead is.

8. Choose Promotions That Appeal To Your Target Market

When you are exhibiting at a trade show, you are competing with the hundreds of other exhibitors for that most precious commodity: time. You need to give your prospects a compelling reason to stop at your booth, rather than almost every other booth in the hall. So bribe attendees with stuff they want, stuff that matters to them personally. Think about both their job and their personal demographics. What would appeal to them, based on the job they have, or the vertical market of the company they work for? And what would appeal to them, based on their age, gender, and mindset? The giveaway you offer could be completely different, depending on what your best attendees look like.

9. Upgrade Your Lead Management

Are you still gathering leads by taking business cards? That only gets you so much information. There isn't enough room on the back of a business card to write down who their current supplier is, what are the prospect's main pain points, what they liked about your proposed solution, and what follow up you promised. For that, you need at least a lead card, which is a pre-printed form that your staffers can write down all that golden info. If you already are doing lead cards, that's great – however, you can get even



more demographic info about your leads from the show's lead retrieval machines. Rent their machines, scan attendees' badges, and then attach those print outs to your paper lead cards. You can also get an exported Excel file at the end of the show that has all those lead scans, so you can import them into your computer, saving time and keystrokes. And if you have the technical savvy, enter your leads right into your database directly from the show, either via an app or an online form, so you can fulfill leads right away.

10. Get Top Management To Require Lead Follow Up

If you already have this in place in your company, congratulations, you have management support for your trade show program where it matters most. If not, ask for it. If you can't have the company president ask for it, find the highest person who has responsibility for both sales and marketing, and ask them to ask for it. If they understand the cost of your trade show program, the value of the potential leads you have generated, and the speed at which those leads go cold, they will feel the urgency and spread the word.

Most, if not all of these methods can be done for little to no cost. It's just applying proven tactics to sharpening your trade show program. Jump on as many as you can, and see the results in greater lead counts, bigger brand impact, and deeper prospect and client relationships.

How To Stop Trade Show Zombies And Bring Them Back To Life

Mike Thimmesch

Zombies are having a renaissance lately, what with the popular show **The Walking Dead** on cable, and now the romantic comedy **Warm Bodies** in theaters. But unfortunately, zombies have always been all-too popular at trade shows.

Trade show zombies are those slow-moving, nearly brain-dead attendees stumbling down the aisle. After a few hours wandering a trade show floor, their brains are on overload from the visual and sensory torrent. They've lost the mental ability to recognize why they should stop in your trade show booth and talk to you.

So how do you stop a trade show zombie from staggering right past your booth? There's no need for supernatural weapons when you use these 7 things:

1. **Bold Color:** Surprisingly, much of a trade show floor is filled with exhibits decorated in greys, blacks, and other shades of color that are more suited for corporate camouflage than creating brand distinction. Take advantage of the eye's attraction for bright colors and cover your exhibit graphics with hues that will shock a zombie out of their stupor.

2. **Motion:** To survive in the wild, man's vision became hyper-sensitive to motion, and the potential danger – and food – it implies. When you are hunting trade show zombies, use motion to get their attention. Motion can come from a demonstration, a presentation, a bold video, even from your exhibit itself.

3. **Targeted Words:** They say the pen is mightier than the sword, so fight those zombies

with words. Find the words that will break through the clutter and shock passing trade show zombies out of their apathy. Those words may be a strong benefit statement on your trade show exhibit, or a great engaging question from your trade show booth staffers.

4. **Food & Drink:** Happy trade show attendees devolve into zombies the further they trudge down the trade show aisles. It's not hard to guess why: they are hungry and thirsty. Cure the unfed undead of their zombiehood with a light snack and a cold or hot drink. At European trade shows hospitality is a common practice. Try it at your U.S. shows and watch the zombies flock in.

5. **A Gift:** Halt an otherwise passing trade show zombie by appealing even louder to their never-forgotten self-interest. Give them a gift that is colorful, useful, cool, and appropriate to their particular needs and interests. Just be sure to get them talking about what they are looking for at the show before they stash the giveaway into their bag and stagger on.

6. **A Place To Rest:** On their long journey up and down the trade show aisles, zombies slog as if on a forced death march. Lift them from their burden with a place to sit for a while. Let them recover their breath for a bit before launching into a sales pitch, or else they will still be too much the zombie to willingly listen.

7. **Friendly Enthusiasm:** Your booth staff, if chosen correctly for their positive attitude and kept fresh with plentiful breaks, can be the best antidote for trade show zombies. Your staff's genuine interest in helping attendees find the best solution to their challenges can cure even the most hardened zombie heart.

Employ these 7 methods to wake trade show zombies from their mindless wanderings and you'll not only save them from a fate worse than death, but you'll also win business that no one else will.

And good zombie hunting!

Marketing

What Is Marketing? How 10 Experts Define It

Mike Thimmesch

Once at the TS2 Show I taught a class about lessons learned as a trade show marketer. After all the other students had left, a young exhibit manager approached me and asked, “Everybody in my company thinks of me as the trade show guy. How do I make them think of me as the *marketing* guy?”

He’s certainly not alone in his quest to grow more into a marketing role. To get into marketing, it helps to understand what exactly marketing is. So here are 10 experts’ definitions of marketing, plus for good measure my reactions to the strengths and weaknesses of their definitions.

1. “Marketing is the process by which companies create customer interest in products or services. It generates the strategy that underlies sales techniques, business communication, and business development. It is an integrated process through which companies build strong customer relationships and create value for their customers and for themselves.” — *Wikipedia*

I like how this is so focused on both the strategic and functional aspects of marketing, but especially that it’s so customer-focused – the word customer is in it three times, more than any other word!

2. “Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have



value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.” — *American Marketing Association*

This definition took the AMA years of debate to create. It is a very comprehensive, yet concise definition, encompassing the product development, marketing communications, pricing, and strategic aspects of marketing.

3. “Marketing is everything.” — *Regis McKenna*

Regis McKenna’s bold statement exemplifies the school of thought that everything you do – not just your products, pricing, promotion, and distribution, but even your billing, how you answer the phone, your speed of handling problems –it all affects how your customer perceives your company, so everything is marketing.

4. “Marketing is not only much broader than selling; it is not a specialized activity at all. It encompasses the entire business. It is the whole business seen from the point of view of the final result, that is, from the customer’s point of view. Concern and responsibility for marketing must therefore permeate all areas of the enterprise.” – *Peter Drucker*

Management guru Drucker also advocates that marketing is everything, plus he provides reasons to back it up.

5. “Marketing is the social process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others.” — Philip Kotler

This is more of an old-school, college-professor definition, which while accurate, is fairly cold. I think the “social process” part diverts attention from the business side, and “individuals” sounds more clinical than “customers” which is the gold standard in many of these definitions.

6. “Marketing is the process whereby society, to supply its consumption needs, evolves distributive systems composed of participants, who, interacting under constraints – technical (economic) and ethical (social) – create the transactions or flows which resolve market separations and result in exchange and consumption.” – Bartles

This is even more a college-professor definition. The idea of society evolving distributive systems seems to take the shine off of the inventiveness and initiative of individual marketers.

7. “Marketing is any contact that your business has with anyone who isn’t a part of your business. Marketing is also the truth made fascinating. Marketing is the art of getting people to change their minds. Marketing is an opportunity for you to earn profits with your business, a chance to cooperate with other businesses in your community or your industry and a process of building lasting relationships.” — Jay Conrad Levinson

This is just part of a passionate rant by Jay Conrad Levinson of Guerilla Marketing fame, which highlights the role of persuasion in marketing.

8. “Marketing is getting someone who has a need to know, like and trust you.” — Jon Jantsch (of Duct Tape Marketing fame)

Jantsch’s definition also picks up on Levinson’s theme of persuasion, at an even more personal level than Levinson.

9. Marketing is “The management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably.” — The Chartered Institute of Marketing

I like how the CIM’s definition is so concise and yet so all-encompassing, and how marketing’s job is to take care of the customer, while making a buck, too.

10. “Marketing is the process of anticipating, managing, and satisfying the demand for products, services, and ideas.” — Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania

This too-concise definition is nearly identical to the CIM definition right before it, without the management, the profitability, and especially the customer. So I like the CIM definition better.

The underlying thread in many of these definitions that resonates most with me is that marketing’s job is to understand what the customer needs and then to provide it – and that the job of marketing goes beyond the marketing department.

So if you want to have a greater role in marketing, then focus on how the entire experience your customers have in your trade show exhibits and displays creates more impetus for them to buy from you, rather than just the logistics of shipping your exhibit properties. At that point you’ve shifted your mindset into the realm of marketing.

Value of Trade Shows

Face-To-Face Marketing: Why It Matters Now More Than Ever!

John Backstrom

Face-to-face marketing is now the number one business-to-business marketing medium—why?

The business world has been radically changed and improved by the advent of electronic communication—e-mail, websites, blogs, PDAs, and even “old” tech like cell phones allow us to very efficiently service many more customers than ever before. This trend allows fewer client support people to serve more clients—faster, too.

That’s the good news. The challenge is that *the* central premise of all sales is that people buy from people they “like” and people they “trust”—always. Like and trust can be maintained electronically, but it has been proven time and again that customers need some face-to-face contact to really get to Like and Trust. This is one of the reasons that face-to-face marketing has become the number one business-to-business marketing medium.

The other reason face-to-face marketing has become number one is the opportunity to see firsthand the offerings of various suppliers. For example, if you are looking for services or products related to CRM there is a show called the CRM Summit which is chock-full of every possible provider in that space. In just a few hours a buyer can get an up-to-the-minute

overview and detailed information for the entire industry. From a seller’s perspective, if they are at the right event, they have the opportunity to efficiently expose their offering to a very high percentage of the prospects in that segment.

So what does it take to make face-to-face marketing work?

1. The Plan—have a well-defined plan of what you want to do, what you want prospects to get from their experience, and how you will deliver. A good plan underpins everything.

2. Pick the right opportunities—the right show or event will make all the difference. Start by asking your current customers what shows or events they go to and why.

3. Have a great presence—the right trade show booth or graphics help prospects understand who you are, what you do and why they should care. A great presence also includes having the right people work the event.

4. Follow up and evaluate—manage and measure your results. A good CRM system is essential. A plan for fast follow-up on leads and inquiries is vital.

5. Have a good partner—a good plan poorly executed is no plan at all. Find a good partner that can help with all the thousand little details that face-to-face marketing presents.

In the current business climate it is more important than ever to build and maintain Like and Trust with our clients. Face-to-face marketing is one of the best ways to do that.

16 Powerful Stats On The Value of Trade Shows

Mike Thimmesch

Looking for statistical justification that trade shows are a great marketing medium? Or numerical inspiration to guide your trade show program? You've come to the right place.

At EXHIBITOR 2013, Skyline hosted a game show called "Staggering Trade Show Stats" in our trade show booth. These stats were shared with show attendees to help them justify and maximize their trade show marketing. You can use these 16 stats to help guide your program, too:

1. **B2B exhibitions were 39.2% of B2B marketing budgets** in 2011, the largest amount of any other marketing channel. That number has held fairly steady over the past several years, demonstrating the resilience of trade shows. *Source: CEIR: The Spend Decision: Analyzing How Exhibits Fit Into The Overall Marketing Budget*
2. **81% of trade show attendees have buying authority.** Which means more than 4 out of 5 people walking the aisles are potential customers for exhibitors. *Source: CEIR: The Spend Decision: Analyzing How Exhibits Fit Into The Overall Marketing Budget*
3. **78% of trade show attendees travel more than 400 miles** to attend an exhibition, which means you are getting a national audience at many trade shows. *Source: CEIR report ACRR 1153.12*
4. **99% of marketers said they found unique value from trade shows they did not get from other marketing mediums.** Their 3 most valued aspects of trade shows were: 60% of exhibitors said they value the ability to see lots of prospects and customers at the same time; 51% of exhibitors said they value face-to-face meetings with prospects and customers, and 47% said they value the ability to meet with a variety of players face to face, such as customers, suppliers, resellers, etc. *Source: CEIR: The Changing Environment of Exhibitions*
5. **The top 3 goals for exhibitors at trade shows are brand awareness, lead generation, and relationship building.** *Source: Skyline Exhibits market research*
6. **The average attendee spends 8.3 hours viewing trade show exhibits at a show** or exhibition. That gives you plenty of opportunity to connect with your target audience. *Source: Exhibit Surveys, Inc.*
7. **About 50% of the largest 200 shows in the USA take place in just 3 cities: Las Vegas, Chicago, and Orlando.** *Source: TSNN.com, The Trade Show News Network*
8. **Average drayage rates have increased 488% from 1982 to 2010.** Average drayage rates have gone from \$12.68 per hundredweight in 1982 to \$74.54 in 2010 – a 488% increase. Meanwhile, the % of Exhibit Design on the average budget has gone from 21% of the overall budget in 1982 to only 10% in 2010. The savings on drayage, (and shipping, storage, I&D, and refurbishing) from modular exhibit systems (that weight 60% less than traditional custom exhibits) and portable displays have helped keep trade shows affordable for many exhibitors. *Source: CEIR / E2MA*
9. **83% of exhibitors agreed that "Building, expanding brand awareness" is a high-priority marketing-related objective for trade shows.** The next two objectives tied at 63%: "New product promotions, launches" and "Brand awareness reinforcement." *Source: CEIR Changing Environment Study*

10. **The top 3 sales-related objectives at trade shows are related to relationship management and engagement.** Above all else, exhibitors want to meet with existing customers, key customers, and prospective customers. *Source: CEIR Changing Environment Study*
11. **67% of all attendees represent a new prospect and potential customer for exhibiting companies.** This means trade shows are always rich in new business targets for you. *Source: Exhibit Surveys, Inc.*
12. **45% of attendees visit only one exhibition per year.** So when you exhibit at a show you will find unique prospects there you can't reach at other trade shows. *Source: CEIR Report ACRR 1152.12*
13. **The #1 reason for attending (not exhibiting) trade shows is to see new products. 92% of trade show attendees say they are looking for new products.** It has been the number one reason to attend for 25 years! So trade shows are a great place to introduce or feature your newest products. *Source: CEIR: The Role and Value of Face to Face*
14. **46% of trade show attendees are in Executive or Upper Management.** That's a lot of valuable attendees with top titles

walking trade shows. They certainly have authority to make buying decisions! *Source: CEIR: The Role and Value of Face to Face*

15. **Shanghai, China is going to open a 5 million square foot show hall in 2015.** This means for exhibitors there will be even more potential large shows to exhibit at in China. *Source: News media*
16. **84% of exhibitors say "High quality of attendees" is the most important factor when deciding whether to exhibit or expand booth size.** Also, 54% say "favorable return-on-investment," is an important factor when deciding to exhibit or expand booth size, while 50% consider "Positive past performance" and important factor. *Source: CEIR: The Changing Environment of Exhibitions*

I want to thank CEIR for all their recent new research quoted in this article. CEIR has really upped their game in the past few years, providing a wealth of new insights about the value and use of trade shows. Thanks also to all the attendees who played our "Staggering Trade Show Stats" game at EXHIBITOR2013. Skyline donated \$4,925 to the charities below on behalf of game participants.

I hope these stats help you in proving and improving the value of your trade show program!



Setting Objectives

Awareness, Leads & Meetings: Climbing The Ladder of Trade Show Objectives

Mike Thimmesch

Do you always feel like you could be doing more with your trade show program? You're not alone. What may surprise you is how your exhibiting evolution may follow the exact same 3 steps as other exhibitors:

- **First**, exhibit to raise **awareness** of your company, brand, or products.
- **Second**, change your exhibiting goal to generating **leads**.
- And **third**, switch to focus on holding **meetings** in your booth, especially with clients.

This insight hit me while reviewing survey responses from exhibitors sharing what they are doing differently in their trade show programs. Most exhibitors said they were focusing on one of these three objectives. What struck me was how exhibitors repeatedly transitioned from one goal to the next, progressing more along this continuum of engagement. I'll share those quotes shortly.

Step 1: Exhibit to Increase Awareness

Here are quotes from some of the exhibitors who talked about how they exhibit at trade shows to increase awareness of their company brand:

- "We are looking at it as more of a marketing tool to make our presence known to the market."
- "Using it more to get name recognition."

- "Primary purpose is to gain name recognition." Understandably, some exhibitors that focus on branding do so because they are new companies, new to trade shows, or entering new markets:
- "Using them as a branding effort in new markets rather than sales tools."
- "We're just starting to use trade shows. It is an opportunity for us to introduce our company to market sectors adjacent to our focal markets today."
- "We did not do trade shows 2 years ago, we are looking for more exposure."

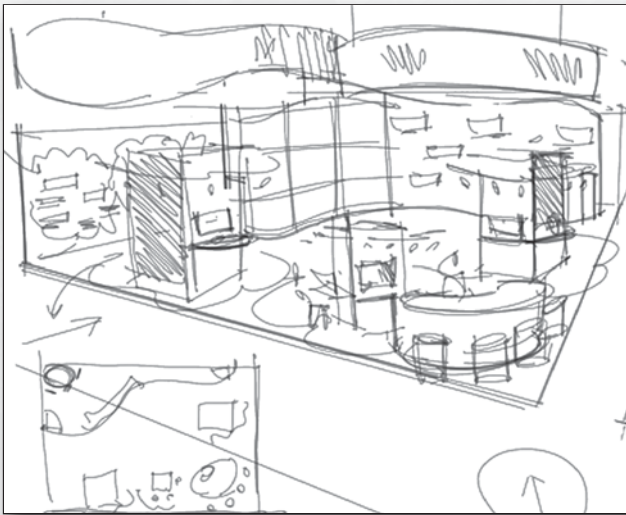
Step 2: Exhibit to Generate Leads

After exhibiting to generate awareness for a while, trade show marketers get the itch to do ... *something more*. Here are three exhibitors who spoke of that transition from awareness to leads:

- "Primary focus is on generating sales leads whereas before it was more brand awareness."
- "Using it as a true lead generator as opposed to just organizational branding."
- "Looking for qualifying leads more than generating exposure."

This transition only works in one direction — no





one said they wanted to shift from generating leads back to raising awareness! Other exhibitors also focused on lead generation:

- “Relying more and more on trade shows for lead source.”
- “Gathering more leads.”
- “Using to generate leads.”
- “Collecting and tracking leads.”

Step 3: Exhibit to Hold Meetings & Relationship Building

The next transition is from gathering leads, to holding meetings with key clients and prospects in their trade show booth:

- “More for maintaining relationships rather than bringing in new leads.”
- “We are using them more to set up meetings at the show.”
- “Trade shows/industry conferences have become greater opportunities to deepen existing client relationships and meet face-to-face for the first time in some cases, rather than primarily make new contacts.”

Many exhibitors even said they focus their trade show activity on meetings *just with clients* in their trade show displays (although over time, if you do not also gather new prospects, eventually you will run out of customers!).

- “Appearance at shows is more about reconfirming existing customers’ choice in our product, retention, meeting many customers in one setting and connecting with possible business partners, than they are about sales.”
- “We are more focused on our key customers.”
- “Account maintenance.”

Meetings in the booth seem to be a more effective use for trade shows. We asked exhibitors to share how their organizations view the effectiveness of trade shows, and those who focus on meetings rated trade shows 13% higher than those who focus on awareness, and 32% higher than those who focus on lead generation. Moreover, more exhibitors in our survey said they focus on meetings than either awareness or lead generation.

In this day and age when it’s so hard to get face-to-face with even our clients, it makes sense to focus on setting up meetings with your best clients and prospects. You want to make sure you’ve got a strong relationship with your existing clients, keep them up to date on your latest offerings, and potentially cross-sell to them your other products. And a longer meeting in the booth avoids the pitfalls of taking a quick lead on the show floor that fizzles into nothing when your sales force has a tough time getting a follow-up meeting after the show.

Not to say there weren’t other objectives that exhibitors focus on. Some highlighted networking, some mentioned generating sales, others about a greater focus on R.O.I. But these three – Awareness, Leads, Meetings – were by far the most common, and appear to be followed by exhibitors in order.

So where are you on this ladder of trade show objectives? If you’ve been thinking you can do more at trade shows, maybe it’s time to stretch your program, and reach for the next rung.

Logistics

8 Logistics Tips To Reduce Fees, Stress, And Other Trade Show Side Effects

Megan Fischer Betancourt

Planning for a trade show doesn't mean that you have to become a nervous wreck for months. Even if you're new to the industry, you can have a successful, scare-free show experience.

As a consultant for hundreds of newbie and veteran trade show exhibitors, I hear myself giving certain suggestions quite often.

Here's a short list of simple, yet very important tips that you may want to consider during your trade show planning:

1. **Be aware of show form deadlines.** Double-check deadlines just to be safe that you do not miss anything. Missing a deadline can sometimes double certain costs!
2. **Pay attention to show rules and regulations.** Make sure that you not only read the rules and regulations carefully, but that you also understand them. Is your tradeshow exhibit breaking height or self-setup regulations? Remember, these can change with the city, venue, show contractor, as well as booth size.
3. **Make sure your crates stand out.** Decorating your crates makes them easier to find if misplaced. (Yes, this can happen even when you do everything correctly!) You can paint your crates, add colored tape, or sometimes a simple piece of ribbon might save you hours of searching for a big dark crate among thousands of other big dark crates.
4. **Remember to consolidate your shipments.** With each shipment, most trade show contractors will charge minimums on drayage. With an average rate of \$78 per 100 pounds, and minimum weight per shipment at 200 pounds, that's over \$150 just to bring in one shipment! By consolidating your shipments you will minimize unnecessary drayage costs.



5. **Ship to the advance warehouse.** Shipping to the advance warehouse will give you peace of mind that your exhibit will be in your booth space the first day for set-up. Shipping direct to the show site can have you waiting during valuable set-up hours and nervous about your shipment's location. It's also a good idea to keep tabs on your shipments with tracking numbers and piece counts.
6. **Prepare backup and duplicates for all Audio Visual presentations.** When you have already spent the time and money on your electronic equipment, cases, shipping, drayage, and set up, the last thing you want to do is end up with a blank screen. That space that was strategically integrated into the exhibit layout now is empty and the well-planned reformatted sales process now must be altered at the last minute! There may be a person back at the office to send the presentation. But, if it's not a small file, uploading or overnight mailing is only going to add stress to an already hectic day. Be smart, load up an extra flash drive and relax.



7. **Bring confirmation of all show form orders should a mistake occur.** It's also smart to send your I&D team copies of show forms. Most good I&D companies will check them to make sure that all requests have been met. If something is incomplete, they will know where to go and how to get it done quickly.
8. **Do not tear down your booth early.** Not only will some shows penalize you for doing this, but you could also lose out on the opportunity to talk with prospects or other exhibitors at the show.

Exhibit Damaged While Shipping? A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words

Laurie Young



In the midst of a recent freight issue between a show decorator and one of my clients, I realized the importance of photo documentation.

Our office institutes what we call a "snapshot program." The program insures that we have photo documentation of various stages within the pre-, at-, and post-show process, allowing us to provide a clearer overall story even when items are not directly in our possession and control. While I strongly recommend hiring a service team to handle installation/dismantle and freight for your event, I understand that not all exhibitors require pre-show prep, installation & dismantle services, etc...based on exhibit size and materials as well as available budget.

When freight is damaged, lost, etc... everyone begins the blame game and the exhibitor and their exhibit house tend to end up with the short

end of the stick. Don't let this happen to you; show up to the table with a couple ACES in your hand!

Below are 5 important FREIGHT photographs that I recommend you take for every event:

Exhibitor “SnapShot” Program:

1. Prior to shipping your trade show exhibit, take a photograph of the contents of the shipping cases.

This photograph allows you to not only account for the items within the shipping case, it also will allow you to see if the cases have been handled poorly or tipped during shipping.

2. Prior to shipping your exhibit, wrap the case (especially where the lid closes) with shrink-wrap and snap a picture.

This photograph allows you to know whether the case has been opened or tampered with from the time it leaves your shipping dock to the time it arrives at your booth space.

3. Upon arrival at the exhibit space, prior to installation, photograph the entire shipment.

Photograph the cases both unopened and with the lids open to document piece count and the condition of the assets. By comparing these photos with the ones taken prior to shipping the items to the show, you will be able to see if mishandling or tampering occurred during the time you were not in possession of your assets.

4. At conclusion of dismantle and packing of exhibit items, photograph the items packed in the cases (as described in photograph 1) as well as the cases once closed, labeled, and secured with shrink-wrap (as described in photograph 2).

5. Snap a picture of the cases upon delivery to your facility after the show, both closed and open.

Freight carriers and show decorators are not used to receiving photo documentation to this degree; therefore, they are more likely to straighten up and listen to the issue you are working through. Taking control of your assets will help others begin to take responsibility!



Promotions & Social Media

How To Build A Great Pre-Show Promotions List

Mike Thimmesch

Pre-show promotions are one of your best methods to get people to visit your trade show booth. And you need that help, because the average attendee only visits about 20 booths – while the average trade show has about 400 exhibitors!

Pre-show promotions are direct marketing for trade shows. You use direct mail, email and telemarketing to invite trade show attendees. And while you have other pre-show promotional methods (ads, social media, room drops), exhibitors have told us in surveys that these three are their favorites.

It's an old saw for direct marketers that the success of your direct marketing relies first on the list, second on the offer, and third on the creative. Since list building is the most important (and probably the least discussed!) we're going to cover it in this blog post.

To build a great list for your pre-show promotions, get names from one or more of these 5 sources:

1. The Show Organizer: This is your best list source, as they know who is actually coming! Get both the list of this year's pre-registered attendees and last year's actual attendees, and merge them together. Order only the part of the list that matches your prospects, filtering the list by industry, job title, company size, and whatever other choices the show producer gives you that help you target your audience. Filtering the list is



more important if you only want to reach a small portion of the attendees. Most importantly, don't order the names of your competitors.

If the show organizer doesn't give you the ability to segment the list before you buy it, consider getting the whole list and then manually deleting at least your probable competitors. If it's for direct mail and you have an expensive mailer, take even more time to weed out the wrong recipients.

Append email to your list if the names of the attendees were given to you without emails. You may have that person's contact name already in your company database, but knowing they'll be at the show you are exhibiting at makes them even more valuable. Even take the time to visit their company website and figure out what the email pattern is for your targets – is it first.last@company.com or is it flast@company.com?

Do this especially for the very valuable list from the show organizer, but you can also do these steps after you've gathered names from all your list sources (show organizer, company marketing database, sales, and other sources).

Some show organizers will not allow you to directly receive their attendee list for your promotions, but will send your promotions for you. In that case you send them your email and they forward it to their attendees, or you send your mail piece to a mail house, and they mail it for you.

Timing on when you get the pre-registered list is tricky. Get it too early, and you won't get the names of the people who will register closer to the event (and that proportion is higher than it was a few years ago). Get it too late and you risk your mail package arriving after the attendee has left for the show. (And don't mail your pre-show promotions standard/bulk rate – send them first class so they get to attendees before the show!)

2. Your Previous Leads From That Show:

Many people attend the same show year after year. So go back to your own leads database and pull the previous leads you collected from the show over the last three years. Those same people may be further along the sales cycle and you will have more success with them because they already know you, having visited your trade show exhibit.

3. Your Marketing Database: Your marketing department may have also built a database of likely prospects, too. So ask your marketing department (if that's not you!) to get you a list of clients and prospects that live in the show's geographic region or who are in the show's vertical market.

4. Your Sales People: Your sales people probably know more about the best prospects than your marketing database reveals. So tell

your sales people you are exhibiting at the ABC show, and ask them to set up meetings with their existing clients and best prospects that will be at the show. Those can be some of the most productive meetings you'll get from the entire show!

5. Other List Sources: If you can't get lists from the show organizer and your company database is anemic, you can also buy names of potential attendees via a list broker. Ask to get names of people who fit your target market: Industry, company size, job title, and location. They'll get the names from the top industry publications, associations, and list compilers. You may even get names from the media company or association that owns the show!

Combine the lists into one file, and take out any obvious duplicates, so you don't mail them the same invitation multiple times, which is annoying and expensive. Check the list for completeness: Put the whole list into Excel and sort the list by various fields, such as state or city or email address. Find the names that are not complete, look them up on Google, and fill in the missing data. If you don't have the time and experience to merge/purge the list, work with a mail house who can.

One last point – almost certainly you have received these names from the show organizer or the list broker for one-time use, the trade show. If you are going to send multiple waves of pre-show promotions, get permission up front, and pay for that. But don't add any rental names you did not already have into your company database.

It can take some finesse to build a strong pre-show promotions list. But it's worth it! You'll have a much better chance of attendees receiving your great offer and creative promotion, and then visiting your tradeshow display.

12 Tips About Social Media for Trade Shows

Mike Thimmesch

When Skyline exhibited at EXHIBITOR2012, we gave mini-seminars in our trade show booth to attendees at the show. By far the most popular topic was “12 Tips About Social Media for Trade Shows.”

The idea was to communicate in just 10 minutes, 12 actionable tactics exhibitors could use on the most popular social media networks to get more people into their trade show displays. Not a lot of strategy; just quick, usable ideas.

I covered just the most popular networks: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and blogs. Here we go:



Twitter

1. **Tweet Reasons To Visit Your Booth:** A lot of markers are reluctant to use Twitter because they simply don't know what messages to send. But with nearly 500 million accounts and about 9% of the U.S. population on Twitter every day, it's worth using! So here's a great start: Tweet reasons to visit your booth that you are already sharing via email, direct mail, ads, and the phone. Tell attendees all the great things you will be offering in your booth, such as show specials, giveaways, contests, new products, special offers, and the like. Those are

messages attendees will want to hear, and will get them interested in visiting you in your booth. You can send a few messages a week for the month or two leading up to the show.

2. **Pre-Schedule Tweets:** Now that you've got a lot to say, you don't want to be tied to your desk or have to remember to go back to Twitter once a day or two to send out those messages. Fortunately, you don't have to remember. There are free, web-based programs such as Hootsuite.com or Tweetdeck.com that allow you to pre-schedule your tweets, even down to the five minutes you want. For our Exhibitor 2012 event, we pre-scheduled 46 tweets starting almost 2 months before the show. Just remember to adjust for the time difference between your location (where you set up the account) and the local time at the show.
3. **Learn the Hashtag (#) for Your Shows:** One of the reasons people are reluctant to use Twitter is that Twitter has its own seemingly secret code. One of the most important codes is the hashtag. That's when a person on Twitter includes a pound sign or hash symbol “#” directly in front of a word. That turns that word into a hyperlink that lets a viewer click and see all the recent messages with that same hashtag. So by including the hashtag of the event you are exhibiting at (for us it was #exhibitor2012) you are more likely to be seen by potential attendees. Find the hashtag by going to your shows' website, or by asking them directly.



Facebook

4. **Not Just Personal, Also for Business:** For many people, Facebook is their personal place for social media. They want to use it to keep in touch with high school and college friends, not to interact with businesses. However, Facebook is now so big that businesses – even B2B businesses — can no longer resist using it. Facebook has 800 million users, which would make it the 3rd largest country by population. Facebook daily traffic and activity today is equivalent to all the volume of the entire internet in 2004. So businesses are setting up pages for their businesses. For example, General Electric has nearly a quarter of a million friends for their Facebook page! You don't have to promote your company from your personal account. Just set up a business page and start engaging with your clients on a more personal level – no writing like a] press release!
5. **Post Photos and Videos from Your Trade Shows:** And what can you post on your business Facebook page? As a trade show exhibitor, you can post photos and videos from your booth. Show what new things you introduced. Share with your company's friends who couldn't go to the show the action they missed out on. It's really easy to do with a smart phone! Just test it out before the show – take a picture of your company's building to try it out. Even better: give your attendees a reason to have their picture taken in your booth, with a fun banner stand

backdrop or a celebrity, and make it easy for them to share that picture on their own Facebook account.

6. **Announce News from the Show for Friends that Couldn't Come:** Did you announce a new strategic alliance with a partner? Introduce a new product? Whatever news you shared at the show in your booth, you can also post to your friends on Facebook.



YouTube

7. **Include Company & Show Name In Video Title:** Guess what – YouTube is actually the second-most popular search engine in the world! And people don't just search on Justin Bieber and Lady Gaga, they also search on just about anything, including the name of the show they will exhibit at. So include in video title the show name, plus your company name – and maybe even your booth number.
8. **Great for Pre-Show and Post-Show Promotions:** YouTube is a great place to get your story across with all the power of video and without the cost of running an ad on a network. For pre-show promotions, load up the video with all the great reasons to visit your trade show booth (see point #1 about Twitter). You can also record and produce a video showing all the action you had in your booth – new products, demonstrations, happy client interviews – and post that to YouTube soon after the show. Then email links to people, or embed the video on your website or blog, or get found by searchers by including the show name and great keywords in the video title.

9. **YouTube Videos Less Formal:** In days gone by, almost all corporate videos required a high-end production crew and a very button-down presentation format. Now, because of the changing expectations of social media, it's much more about a human connection than a big production. So you don't need to break the bank to make a video, and you don't need everyone wearing suits, either. Just relax and speak from the heart on why attendees will benefit by visiting your booth.



Blogs

10. **Blog About Your Trade Show Program – Find Out Who Blogs or Start One:**

If you think you are not interacting with social media, you may be surprised to find out that you have been without knowing it – via blogs. About half the websites on the Internet are created with blogging software. Blogs are so much easier to set up than traditional websites, and virtually free. Find who blogs for your company, and give them info about your events – they will want to publish great content like your event news. Or start your own blog about what your company is doing at events. Your blog can serve as a home base for each show's promotional activity. It can also boost your SEO results by how you set up its blog, which keywords you use, and the links you build.

11. **Industry Bloggers = New Press, Public Relations:** If you could find a copy of your main industry trade magazine from 15 years ago, you'd be surprised by how much thicker it was back then. Magazine ads were the main way to reach your industry audience, until the Internet and Google made online marketing more effective and took revenue away from magazines. That also reduced the number of journalists magazines could afford to employ. But the Internet revolution made blogs possible at a low, low cost, so bloggers have stepped in to replace magazine writers. You can find these bloggers by going to <http://www.google.com/blogsearch> and searching on the names of the trade shows you exhibit at. These are the people you want to build relationships, much like your (remaining) industry press.

12. **Blog Post Show: Recap Trends, New Products:** Reach out to your new found blogger friends before the show, and give them the information they need so they write about you after the show. Get them an interview with your company CEO or thought leaders, to share your views about industry trends. Set up an appointment to demonstrate your new products introduced at the show, so they may include it in their recap about new products on their blog.

So there you have it – 12 tips you can use today to leverage the amazing reach of social media to drive more people to your trade show booth.



Exhibit Design

10 Top Tips For Trade Show Exhibit Design

Mike Thimmesch

Design your trade show exhibit well, and you'll build your brand, attract new leads, and help generate sales. Miss the mark, and you'll have an oversized lump that gets ignored and overlooked.

To help you get the trade show exhibit you need, here are the 10 best ideas on exhibit design that I've seen — and experienced — since the days when Ronald Reagan was still president:

1. Ensure your exhibit clearly says who you are, what you do, and why someone should buy from you.
2. Be true to your brand and create greater recognition and memorability by integrating your exhibit design with your other marketing mediums, such as web, brochures, email, print ads, and direct mail.
3. Create visual impact with a booth that has bright, bold colors (as brand appropriate), big images that matter to your audiences, and easy to read text that says the right messages.
4. Design your trade show booth space so it best fits your specific marketing objectives — spaces for brand-building graphics, lead stations, demo areas, meetings, etc. While many exhibitors find they get more leads with an open and inviting space, others find they need more mass for impact or walls for meeting areas. Just focus on your top objectives, because you don't have room for all of them!
5. Choose an exhibit that balances your need for marketing impact with your desire to save money on shipping, drayage, I&D and storage costs.
6. Put fewer words on your exhibit graphics, but make each word bigger. A single, clearly stated benefits statement is better than long list of bulleted points that gets ignored.
7. Plan your exhibit design around your trade show schedule for the next year, two, or three, to minimize your expenses for various booth sizes, marketing messages, and show locations.
8. Give yourself enough time to get new exhibits designed, and include the time it takes to get agreement within your management team on marketing direction.
9. Focus on displaying your most popular and new products, rather than trying to cram all your products into a limited booth space.
10. Decide whatever technology you will use in your exhibit, so you can design it into the exhibit from the start.

Effective trade show exhibit design shapes your intangible marketing messages into a solid presence that increases company visibility, attracts prospects, and hosts your customers. I hope these ten tips will give you usable ideas to enhance your trade show exhibit.

Size Matters: 9 Ways Island Trade Show Exhibits Are Different

Mike Thimmesch

Exhibiting at trade shows takes a combination of talent, teamwork, and effort to succeed. That goes double when you expand beyond backwall displays into island trade show booths. The investment is bigger, the attention is larger, and the stakes are higher, in oh-so-many ways:

1. Greater height

While backwalls are usually about 8 feet tall, that's rarely the height of an island trade show booth. Most islands are at least 12 feet tall, and are often 16 feet and taller, and taller still when you hang a sign from the ceiling above your booth space. That height creates a bigger impression and gets you seen from afar. And, you can use 100% of that height, unlike backwall exhibitors (in the USA) who can only go to their full 8 foot height when it doesn't

obstruct their next-door neighbors. However, be careful not to only put your name up in the rafters on a hanging sign 20 feet above your booth, so that people walking closer to your booth won't know who you are unless they (very unlikely) crane their necks to look up.

2. More aisle frontage

A 20 x 20 foot island exhibit has 80 feet of aisle space, twice the aisle space of an equivalent-sized 10 x 40 backwall. That gives you twice the opportunity to engage attendees as they walk by your booth. Just be conscious that since your exhibit doesn't back up against a pipe-and-drape backwall, it no longer has an automatic front side. Now your exhibit can be seen from 4 sides. It's up to you to decide if all sides should be treated equally from a design standpoint, or if you expect one or two sides to be visible to greater traffic, and thus be designed more as the "storefront" of your exhibit.

3. Greater variety of booth sizes

When you get an island exhibit, it's usually not one-size-fits-all. At one show you may only be

able to get a 20 x 40 foot space where you want it on the show floor – and then at your next show, have to take a 30 x 30 foot space, and still use the same exhibit components. Just as likely is the need to peel off parts of your booth for either a smaller island or a 20 foot backwall exhibit. Your island trade show exhibit needs the flexibility



to adapt to all these spaces if you are going to avoid excess spending to fit all those booth sizes.

4. Private meeting space

Whatever you do in a backwall exhibit is there for the world to see. But island exhibitors can free themselves from that restraint. With opaque walls and even double decks, island exhibitors can host private meetings that allow them and their guests to converse, negotiate, and make deals with abandon. Exhibitors can show off their latest new products (especially fashion-driven products) only to their trusted buyers, without tipping their competitors off.

5. More likely to be a rental exhibit

When you have a backwall display going to 5, 10, 15 or more shows a year, it makes perfect sense to own that display. But when you only go to one or two shows a year where you require a larger presence with an island exhibit, you become more likely to choose exhibit rental. Rental gives you the ability to change your look, booth size, and message more easily than an owned exhibit does – and at a lower cost if you only do one or two shows a year.

6. More complex design requirements

Not only do island exhibits have greater height, more aisle frontage, and multiple booth spaces to fit, there are other reasons that make their design process even more complex. Island exhibits will inspire more stakeholders to want a say in the design process. You'll have more functionality requested (presentations, product demos, conference rooms, lead stations, storage, and more). So island exhibits require more of another thing: time to get designed and built.

7. More booth staffers

You need more booth staffers to cover and work an island exhibit. That can mean getting staffers from all over the country, or from more

departments of your company — which puts even more emphasis on booth staff training. When the booth staff comes from all over, you'll either have to train them with teleconferences or video conferences, or set aside enough time at the show site before the show starts. Staffers who don't know the products or your clients well will need even more training to shore up their gaps.

8. Hired Installation and Dismantle

Skyline got its start in the 1980s by making it less expensive for exhibitors to install their own 10-foot exhibits with attractive displays that set up in minutes without tools. However, for over 20 years we have also been making island trade show exhibits that do require tools, ladders, forklifts, and most of all, hired labor. While some exhibitors are willing to set up our more modular (and less portable) inline exhibits, once you are in an island booth space, it's all about either labor from the show contractor or from an Exhibitor Appointed Contractor (EAC) that you choose.

9. Higher profile vendor selection

It's a lot more likely that your CFO will want to be more involved when you purchase an island exhibit than a banner stand. As island exhibits can cost many times more than a backwall display, the purchasing process involves more people and greater scrutiny. You will have to justify both your island exhibit's initial buying (or renting) decision and the total operating costs, compared against the opportunities at trade shows to build your brand awareness, profitably generate sales leads, and meet your other sales, marketing, and operational objectives.

While these 9 things make island exhibits different from backwall displays, no matter what size they are, your exhibits must still get attention and support your booth staff. That's something that never changes!

Design Your Trade Show Exhibit For The 4th Dimension

Mike Thimmesch

Exhibit designers make a big deal about how trade show exhibits are 3-dimensional – they have length, width, and height. That 3D perspective creates much greater visual impact than 2D marketing mediums.

Yet exhibits are actually 4-dimensional, the 4th dimension being time. We exist in three spatial dimensions and in one temporal dimension, which combine to be called spacetime.

During a trade show your static 3D exhibit can be transformed into an interactive 4D exhibit attendees experience through the activities you host in your exhibit. 4D trade show exhibits create greater impact than a 3D exhibit that looks the same during the show as during non-show hours.

Here are 7 ideas to transform your exhibit into a 4-dimensional marketing time machine:

1) Demos According to research from CEIR, demonstrations are one of the most effective at-show activities you can do to make your exhibit memorable. Demos create movement and get attendees involved with your products and services. The best demos help make explicit the advantages of your products, and give attendees irrefutable visual and experiential proof of your claims.





2) Presentations When you host a presentation in your trade show booth, it signifies to attendees that there's something special about to happen. It's a bit of the "show" aspect of trade shows, with a professional presenter, backdrop, and amplified sound. Attendees know they'll get a concise, informative, and maybe even entertaining few minutes that will allow them to get valuable info, without having to commit to declaring themselves a prospect. You can schedule presentations as often as every 10 minutes, and pull in crowds to hear what you've got to say.

3) Meetings This is the pinnacle of planned activities you can do in your booth – previously scheduled meetings with clients and key prospects. It guarantees you activity throughout the show, and creates visual interest, as nothing attracts a crowd like a crowd. Have a person on-site who is the master of the schedule, and keep track of attendees who don't show up on time, so you can call them and try to re-schedule.

4) Entertainers You can hire entertainers, such as magicians, dancers, celebrities, and more to get attendees to stop – and stay – in your booth. Entertainers create motion and intrigue to lure in attendees. The better ones know how to weave your marketing messages into their entertainment, to help convert attention into action.

5) Contests and games immerse attendees in a fun activity. Go beyond a generic putting green and make it an interactive game that reinforces your marketing message and creates an emotional connection with your brand. At one show we gave attendees the chance to win 2-foot long remote control semi-trucks, emblazoned with our marketing messages (such as lower shipping costs), by competing in time trials. We had a line all show long, and staffers were able to qualify attendees while they waited for their turn.

6) Audio/Visual Technology The use of AV has increased as the price of flat screens and high-powered projectors has decreased. Short, energetic videos help you compete for attendee's attention. They can quickly state your competitive advantage, or help prove your claims. But don't ask video to do too much – you still need to rely on your booth staffers to have real conversations!

7) Moving exhibit Your actual trade show exhibit can be the 4D element in your booth, when the exhibit itself moves! Larger island exhibits will sometimes have a rotating hanging sign above it to signal your company's location from a far. Movement catches the eye, so a rotating sign gets attention long before attendees get to your booth location.

You don't need to be a physics major to see the benefits of 4D thinking. If your exhibit looks the same during show hours as it does outside show hours, then you're not taking full advantage of the 4-dimensional nature of reality ... and trade shows!

Skyline Design Planning Worksheet

Marc Goldberg

This worksheet will help you create exhibit graphics that better communicate with your target audience and increase the effectiveness of your exhibit.

Name _____ Title _____
Company _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Email _____ Phone _____

About Your Company

Is this trade show program being developed for the entire company or a division? _____

Are you responsible for more than one division or a product line? _____

How many shows do you attend or think you will attend? _____

Number of shows: International _____ National _____ Regional _____ Dealer/Local _____

Are you as happy with your trade show performance as you would like to be? _____

Please check the appropriate column

Reasonably Satisfied

Needs Improvement

Selecting the right show	_____	_____
Selecting the proper booth (location & size)	_____	_____
Pre-show promotion	_____	_____
At-show promotion	_____	_____
Communicating corporate presence	_____	_____
Concise marketing message/show specific	_____	_____
Reinforcing customers' previous buying decision	_____	_____
Boothmanship of your salespeople	_____	_____
Generating more booth traffic	_____	_____
Getting qualified leads	_____	_____
Well-designed lead cards	_____	_____
Follow-up of the leads	_____	_____
Shipping and drayage expenses	_____	_____
Logistics of getting to the show	_____	_____
Setting up/tearing down the booth	_____	_____
Time waiting for cases to return from drayage	_____	_____

What two things would you like to do better?

1. _____
2. _____

Is there anything you dislike about your current booth? _____

What percentage (estimate) of your sales come directly or is influenced by your trade show marketing program? _____

About Competition In Your Market

1. Do you have few competitors or many? _____
2. Where do you rate in the market? _____
3. Where do you want to be in 3 to 5 years? _____
4. How are you and your top two competitors perceived by the market? (G=Good, F=Fair, P=Poor)

<i>Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses:</i>	<i>You</i>	<i>Competitor #1</i>	<i>Competitor #2</i>
Price value leader	_____	_____	_____
Innovator	_____	_____	_____
Style leader	_____	_____	_____
High tech	_____	_____	_____
Long time in business	_____	_____	_____
Division of a good company	_____	_____	_____
Good products	_____	_____	_____
Excellent service	_____	_____	_____
Strong distribution	_____	_____	_____
Great marketing	_____	_____	_____
Other: _____	_____	_____	_____

Do you want to change your image? If so, how? _____

What is your product(s) position in the marketplace? _____

What are key benefits in your product message? _____

Who are your target markets? _____

What shows do they attend? _____

Key message – what is the single focused message you want the exhibit to communicate?

Prioritize Your Show Goals

_____ Leads _____ Distribution _____ New product intros
_____ Sales _____ Market research _____ Publicity
_____ Image _____ Networking _____ Other: _____

Specific Show Goals and Objectives

List the special considerations that need to be made in exhibit design to help meet that goal.

Goal #1 _____

Goal #2 _____

Goal #3 _____

Time Schedule For Design Construction

_____ 2 months _____ 4 months _____ 6 months _____ 9 months _____ 12 months

Budget

_____ Inexpensive _____ Moderate _____ Expensive _____ Money is no object

Portability and Transportation

_____ Want to ship exhibit to the show _____ Want to carry exhibit to the show

Modularity

Plan to use the exhibit in the following space configurations:

_____ 10' linear _____ 20' linear _____ 30' linear _____ 40' linear

_____ 20' x 20' _____ 20' x 30' _____ 20' x 40' _____ 30' x 30'

_____ Other _____ _____ Other _____ _____ Other _____

Most common space _____

Products/Services Displayed

The following products or services will be displayed:

Product _____ New/improved? _____

Size/weight _____ Quantity? _____

Product _____ New/improved? _____

Size/weight _____ Quantity? _____

Installation and Dismantle

- _____ Install independent of show labor
- _____ Use show labor and contract
for supervision
- _____ Use show labor and supervise

Electrical

- _____ For lighting only
- _____ For products
- _____ Run cords behind wall
- _____ Run cords under carpet
- _____ Run cords in overhead structure

AIF

Audience Interest Factor

Vertical

Vertical shows, where the audience comes from the same industry

Horizontal

Horizontal shows, where the audience comes from multiple industries

Calculating Recommended Staff and Booth Size

Total Show Attendance

_____ - Non-Buyers = Net Attendees

X Product Interest = High-interest Attendees

.16

X AIF = Potential Audience

53% Vertical/37% Horizontal

÷ Total Show Hours = Visitors Per Hour

÷ Salesperson Capacity = **Staffers Required**

15

X 50 Square Feet = Open Space Required

50

+ Display Structure Space

+ Product Space = **Total Space Required**

How Flexible Is Your Island Trade Show Exhibit?

Mike Thimmesch

One size rarely fits all, and especially for island trade show exhibits.

As much as we like to picture getting a perfect booth design that you can use at every show, the reality is that there are factors to consider that significantly affect how agile your exhibit is. The big three factors are booth size, graphics, and budget:

What if your island trade show exhibit could adapt to multiple booth sizes?



What if your island trade show exhibit could adapt to multiple booth sizes?

Booth Size: While you may prefer to exhibit at every show with the same size booth, it doesn't really work out that way. For example, you may want to always use a 20 x 40 foot space, but find that at some shows you can only get a 30 x 30 space. Or, at a smaller show, you may only need a 20 x 20, or even a 10 x 20. So you need an

exhibit that can scale up, scale down, or adapt to a booth space with a similar square footage but in a different layout.

Your exhibit can fit multiple booth sizes more easily by designing your exhibit with smaller individual components that can be rearranged. You can also adapt to different booth sizes and shapes with custom modular exhibit systems that are (surprise!) modular – components can be separated or recombined in new combinations. You can also rent additional exhibit components needed only for your biggest shows, and own the components for your more common, smaller booth sizes.



What if you could change your exhibit graphics to target different audiences?

Exhibit Graphics:

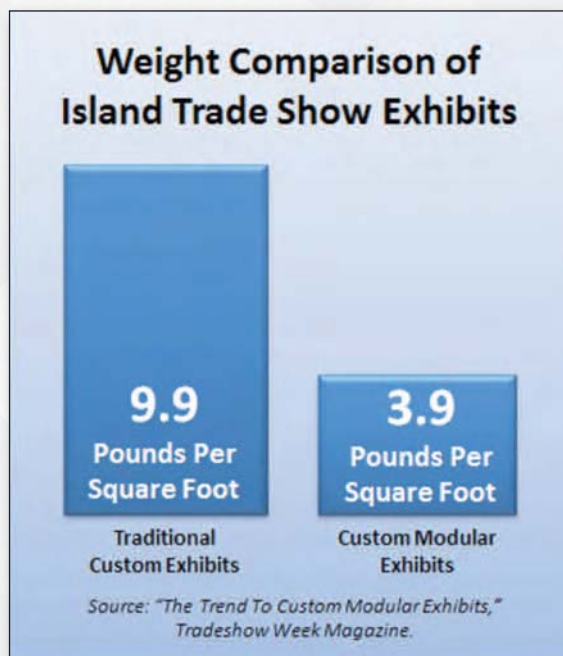
Your marketing messages are there for a reason: to create a visual attraction that communicates to your target

audience. But what if your audience changes from show to show? It can, if you exhibit at different vertical market industry shows, or if more than one company division is sharing a single exhibit property. And if you are buying an exhibit that will last for, say, five years, but you will rebrand in two, then without proper planning you may need a whole new island exhibit three years earlier than your CFO expects.



Design flexibility into your graphics from the onset. First, promote your overall company brand look and message at the highest and broadest levels. But then, dedicate a portion of your graphics – be it the eye-level detail graphics, or smaller murals – to graphics you can change as your vertical market audiences, products, or divisions change. Custom modular island exhibits make it so much easier to swap out graphics, from both a cost and a logistics standpoint. You can also use digital graphics, such as a flatscreen monitor, to tell those more specific stories, and change them whenever you need a more specific message.

Budget: When you choose your trade show exhibit, you have an idea of how much your company will invest in trade shows over the next three to five years – but no guarantees. If you commit to an exhibit that has a higher level of operating costs per show, you will not be able to exhibit at as many shows if your budget gets trimmed in later years. And if there is the opportunity to go to more shows, those higher operating costs will limit how many new shows you can expand into.



Give yourself greater flexibility in maintaining, adjusting, and even increasing your trade show schedule with a custom modular exhibit that lowers your operating costs. In a white paper report by Tradeshow Week Magazine (commissioned by Skyline Exhibits), custom modular and hybrid custom exhibits were found to weigh 61% less on average than traditional custom exhibits. That cost savings gives you more flexibility to adapt to changes in your budget.

As the philosopher Heraclites said, "Everything changes." That holds especially true for your trade show booth spaces, marketing messages, and budget. As an island trade show exhibitor, you can gain program-saving flexibility with custom modular exhibits that lower costs and keep you from being permanently locked into a single design – no matter how perfect it may seem at first.

How much could you save on your exhibit operating costs if it weighed 60% less?

5 Reasons Modular Trade Show Exhibits Are Better Than Custom Exhibits

Ken Buckman



Attending trade shows and putting in an appearance at the many industry-specific conferences and conventions held each year is a crucial part of most company's marketing plans. Companies that participate in these shows and conferences often invest a significant amount of their budget in exhibits that are designed to capture the interest of attendees and leave a lasting, positive impression. Some companies invest in custom-designed booths and display pieces while others look to a more modular exhibit. For most businesses, there are advantages to modular units that make them the best choice.

1. Flexibility And Freshness

The most obvious advantage to modular exhibits is also the most important one – flexibility. Custom-designed displays are generally static; that is, they can't be reconfigured in the "mix and match" way that modular exhibits can. With a modular display, you can move sections around and adjust the lay-out of your exhibit based on

the space available at each trade show. A custom exhibit designed for thirty feet of space can't be reconfigured for a smaller area, which can leave you in a bind if you don't have an alternative.

The flexibility of modular exhibits gives companies the opportunity to create and add new graphics or display areas without having to invest in an entirely new exhibit each year. Modular trade show displays can be reconfigured so that your display area looks fresh at each show, which can increase traffic and interest.

2. Easy Upgrades

With a custom exhibit, you're generally locked in. It can be difficult to change any of the elements of a custom designed display, which is unfortunate if a new product is launched or your company's information changes just before an important trade show. Modular trade show exhibits make it easy to replace one section or multiple sections of your display whenever needed. You'll always have the latest information and current visual appeal with a modular display.

3. Lower Company Costs

Modular displays are less expensive than custom orders, saving on drayage, I&D and storage. The result can mean more money for anything from advertising to promotional gifts. Companies that spend a significant portion of their budget on custom displays often find it a difficult challenge if they need to change the information on their exhibit but there's no money left in the budget. By contrast, switching out just one element of your modular display is a cost-effective way to update your image.

4. Ease Of Use

Modular displays are designed to be easy to assemble and easy to break down. Unwieldy custom displays are often cumbersome and difficult to assemble. With a modular system,

your trade show representatives can quickly get your booth up and running and just as quickly take it apart when the show is over.

You can easily order new graphics or an additional banner stand that will fit seamlessly with your current modular exhibit, giving you the opportunity to update your trade show booth without spending a fortune on designing custom elements.



5. Shipping

Modular exhibits are easy to break down and prepare for shipping. It's easy to box them up and have them shipped to the next show or back to the home office. Because they are so compact, the shipping costs are nominal compared to the cost of transporting a custom display, which generally won't break down into smaller units.

With today's modular units, your company can have the look and feel of a custom display without the hassles and high cost. When the next trade show rolls around, you'll appreciate the easy assembly and flexibility of your modular trade show exhibit.

What Transforms A Trade Show Exhibit Into An Experience?

Michael Flavin

Do you want attendees to remember your exhibit long after the event is over? If so, key into something educators have discovered; the more senses you engage in your booth experience the more people will remember your message. People are classified as visual, audio or kinesthetic learners and all three types will be at your trade show. Here are some ways to turn your trade show exhibits into an experience for everyone who visits:

Visual

1. **Get rid of the clutter.** Keep the area clean and inviting. Push the tables & chairs to the side or take them down altogether. Make certain you have a large enough trade show booth space to properly display your information.
2. **Graphics.** Think about billboards – use eye-catching colors with text, photos or illustrations, but don't be a laundry list of product specifications that no one will read... (that information will be listed in handouts). Strategically placed LED lighting should spotlight the boards.
3. **Consider Other Dimensions.** Strategically place lighting within your trade show booth space to highlight logos & graphics or create fading motion. Think about the type of carpet or flooring that relates to your brand colors and the sense of feeling when attendees step into your booth space.

Audio

1. **Use repeating video clips** that give an engaging and informative preview of the benefits your customer will receive from your product or service. Use engaging music in the background of the video which will appeal to a wide audience (and not drive your booth staffers crazy when they hear it all day long!).
2. **If you have a live demonstration** make certain the presenter is professional, entertaining, has a sense of humor and can actively engage the audience. You want this to be an enjoyable experience that will keep your product in the mind of the consumer long after the show has ended.

Kinesthetic

1. **Use interactive technology.** Create an interactive survey with booth staffers or a touch screen that helps to quickly qualify or disqualify attendees.
2. **Products.** Have products on hand that the customers can touch, feel and sample (kick the

tires). A demonstration of how a product solves problems will be memorable for all attendees.

3. **Rest and relax.** If you have a conference room or lounge, invite attendees to stay awhile, and while they re-charge, you'll have the opportunity to extend your conversation.

4. **Appeal to the sense of smell and taste.** The scent of fresh cookies and coffee will travel even further than the sight of your trade show banners. Let their noses lead them to your booth area.

They will be more than happy to walk around your exhibit and listen to the advantages of your products while they munch a cookie you have provided.

Pre-Show & Post-Show Marketing

1. If you don't tell anyone that you'll be at the show, how will they know you'll be there?

Consider drip marketing campaigns before the show, using multiple channels to drum up excitement & traffic leading up to the show date.

2. When the show is over, how will you continue the conversation and close the sale? Memorability decreases each day following the close of the show.

Follow up immediately each night of the show to secure your meetings & next steps with potential customers.



Booth Staffing

10 Booth Staffing Secrets To Double Your Trade Show Lead Count ... Guaranteed!

John Hamari

When you ask the average booth staffer about trade shows, their first thing that comes to mind is long hours, sore feet, some fun, and work piling up back in the office. This may be true, but needless to say we do shows for the benefits that we receive by way of lead counts and exposure in the market place. Below are some of the “secrets” that can help unlock the potential of shows for you.

1. **Exhibiting without Borders:** Staff in the aisle where the attendees are walking by. It seems like where the booth carpet meets the aisle carpet, often becomes an impenetrable “line in the sand” that staffers rarely venture past. We all want to be “out of the box” in the way we think, so consider the exhibit space as “in the box,” and the aisle as “out of the box.” This is where it gets a little uncomfortable, but if we can get out there and engage people as they come by, this will result in remarkably higher lead counts. I staffed an exhibit yesterday where an attendee was going to walk by the exhibit without stopping and I engaged him, only to find out that he has operations on 3 continents and represents about a 5 million dollar sales opportunity for our client. This guy was going to walk right by the tradeshow booth! The only reason I pulled him in was because I was in the aisle. The business is there and we need to be in the aisle to get it.

Sometimes the show may ask you don’t staff in the aisle, but go ahead and do it until they tell you otherwise.

2. **Watching gets you a Goose Egg:** Engage attendees... period. Recently I attended the nation’s largest trade show and did some stat counting on the trade show floor. With one exhibit, I watched 74 attendees walk by a 60’ section of exhibit in 10 minutes, with only 2 of



them being approached by the booth staffers. The results speak for themselves: 2.7% of attendees were being reached by the staff during the time I kept track. Why would the results be so low? Simply put, it is because they did not engage attendees. The opening line that works for anyone, in any show, is “What brings you to the show today?” That question can’t be answered with one word (yes, no, or fine) and will require the attendee to stop and think about their response. Now the door is open to qualify them and move onto the next step.

3. **Divide and Conquer:** Surround staffers around in-booth attractions to get the maximum benefit from your investment. Having a game or some type of entertainment is a tremendous

method for generating high traffic in your exhibit booth space and at your hospitality suite. The key to any attraction is to engage and qualify the attendees while they are waiting for the attraction or when the attraction is completed. Many organizations pay a tremendous amount of dollars for a great in-booth attraction, only to have attendees escape with no interaction with the booth staff. We need to surround the attendees and make sure that we get an opportunity with them. Another method to insure interaction is to tie the in-booth activity to the qualifying process. We should work with the magician, trick shot pool guy, robot, or game organizer to make sure they can work into their script a qualifying question that we can see. Not that this is any of us, but when it comes to in-booth activities, it seems that the norm in the trade show industry is to attract attendees, only to have the staff not participate in their role of interacting with the attendees.

4. Play Zone, Not Man to Man: Create zones in your exhibit space that each staffer is responsible for. Depending on the size of your space, you may have 5'x5' (or 10'x10') zones in an exhibit space that each staffer is responsible for. Often, staffers will congregate at the main approach the exhibit and then leave a portion of the exhibit unstaffed. Assign zone 1 to staffer "A" and let them know that this is their space and they are responsible for it during their time slot. You are much less likely to have a staffer slip off with some prospect to chat and abandon their post. This creates personal accountability as well, and does not allow leads to slip by the "back door," never to be engaged by a staffer. In addition, this technique naturally solves some of the problem of staffers congregating and talking to each other, rather than to attendees. Creating zones can work in the largest and smallest of exhibit spaces. It does, however, require a sufficient number of staffers in the space.

5. Pre-Set Appointments at the Show: The primary reason we attend shows is to talk to people that can influence the sale of our products and services. What better way to insure that we get the chance to talk to the right people than to set a specific time to talk to them at the show. One of the keys to making this work is to do confirmation calls the morning of show to confirm the appointment and give landmarks that make it easy for them to find you. You will need to get their cell phone number so you can catch them at the show.

6. Make Your Giveaway Part of What You Do: Try to find a way to tie your giveaway into what you do. This might be a direct tie-in; for instance if you are Apple, you would likely give away an iPad or a similar giveaway that is directly tied to what you do. Many organizations are service-oriented, and in that case you might offer a percentage off their first purchase or a free on-site assessment. If you want to give away something that is unrelated, that could work too, if the only people eligible are those who are qualified to make decisions about your products or services. This means that attendees that are just "trick or treating" for all your free giveaways only get a Jolly Rancher and in order to register for the premium drawing, you have to be qualified.

7. Trade Shows, Nightclubs and Mixers: Trade shows are strange. What I mean by that is there are very few places where you stand around trying to talk to strangers and garner enough interest from them so you can tell them what you have to offer. This process is uncomfortable and the only other places you may find yourself doing this is at a nightclub or an after-hours mixer put on by some association. It is uncomfortable and one way to ease this angst is to find a couple of hand-picked people from your staff to be designated crowd gatherers. They clearly need to be more out-going and gregarious than the rest of the staff to qualify. Make it their job to be

in the aisle staffing and to hand off the attendees to other people staffing the exhibit space (this does not exempt others from engaging or staffing in the aisle). They are not responsible to do anything, but catch the attendee, qualify them, and hand them off to the staffer who can get into the details of the possible project. After the hand off, they go back into the aisle to get some more attendees.

8. **Practice Catch and Release:** Once we engage attendees, we find out that many are not qualified. At this point we need to employ the practice used by many fishermen called “Catch and Release.” We caught them, now we have to gracefully let them go. The easiest way to do that is say “Thanks for stopping by, and I hope you have a great rest of the show.” We are now able to gracefully let them move on and you are now free to engage other attendees. In this process it is good to bear in mind that we don’t want to hand out our giveaways until we know they are qualified.

9. **Bring Only the Staffers that Want To Be There:** The best person to staff exhibit displays is the person who wants to be there. Picking staffers has to start with a basic criteria being met. The staffer should want to be there. If the staffer does not want to be there, they will not represent the organization well. This becomes especially important, knowing that 85% the results that your organization receives is directly tied to the experience that the attendees have with your booth staffers. Regardless of position, from CEO to the Janitor, we need to have someone who will represent the organization well – and that starts with the person who wants to be at the show.

10. **Have a Huddle Every Morning:** Each morning, of each day of the show, have a booth staff meeting. Before the chaos of the show begins, gather your staff and have a pre-show

meeting (roughly 1 hour prior to the start of each day). At this meeting you can give an update on the quality of leads coming in, kudos to the best performers, announce any mid-stream adjustments, timing of activities, and update everyone on how well you are doing against the goals that have been set. On an individual level, set specific target goals for each staffer so they have something to shoot for and compete against. This can be given prior to the event or can be handed out at the event. Also, this is a great opportunity to discuss the “best practices” in exhibit staffing, along with the 10 deadly sins of staffing (this may have some variation by company depending on your goals).

There is no better teacher than our experiences and observation. These top 10 secrets are derived from both sources and if we are able to learn and use these top 10 behaviors and attitudes, we will surely double our lead count at our next event.



The Surprising Value of Introverted Trade Show Booth Staffers

Mike Thimmesch

During a recent post-show meeting we asked our four top booth staffers to share what they did to succeed, and that's when something unexpected happened: They all described themselves as introverts.

Introverts? How is that possible? When you think of the best booth staffer, you probably picture a gregarious extrovert who fearlessly engages and charms attendees into entering their trade show booths. And conversely, you expect the quiet booth staffers to barely make a ripple in the waves of attendees who stream by.

That's what I used to think, too. But that changed when those top four staffers all called themselves introverts.

Why Introverts Can Make Great Booth Staffers

There are six reasons we discovered why introverts can make the best booth staffers:

1. Introverts are more process-driven than people-driven, so they are more willing to learn and adhere to the proven process of engage, relate, qualify, and close.
2. Introverts are not as scary to introverted attendees walking down the aisle, who may spook at the over-the-top overtures of extroverted booth staffers.
3. Because introverts don't need to talk all the time, they are more likely to listen to what attendees say they really need.
4. Introverts don't need constant talking too — so they can go for more than 30 seconds without needing to ask their neighbor about what's for dinner, or about the party they went to last night. Introverts can stay focused on

taking the next lead. And once they take a lead, they don't brag about each lead they took.

5. Introverts are like the turtle to the extrovert's hare, quietly gathering more leads than an extrovert will.
6. Introverts are more likely to actually write down what the attendee said on a lead card, providing more ammunition and motivation for effective lead follow-up



They also shared that even though they called themselves introverts, they loved booth staffing because they could see the substantial results their participation generated, how well received our products were, and how they gained marketing insights from talking to customers. These are confident, competent team players, not hermits.

Of course, I have seen extroverted booth staffers who succeed at trade shows, and fit the stereotype of the charming staffer. It's just a revelation that self-described introverts can succeed so well, too.

So perhaps it's worth considering that if introverts at your company really want to staff the booth, know your customers and your products, then it's more than possible that those wallflowers could blossom at trade shows.

Lead Management

8 Ways To Get Higher Quality Trade Show Leads

Mike Thimmesch

B2B marketers want more than just a big pile of leads. They also want *higher quality* leads. Leads that are more likely to convert into sales. Leads that their sales force will crow about, not complain about. Leads that will create far more revenue than it cost to generate them.

If that's what you want, too, you are not alone. In a new MarketingSherpa study, a whopping 78% of B2B marketers agreed that "generating high quality leads" was a top challenge, much higher than the 44% who said "generating a high volume of leads."

Trade show marketers share this need urgently. "I recently hosted a Lunch and Learn for my veteran exhibiting customers," said Victoria R. Conti, CTSM, from Skyline Genesis Event Marketing, "and the main topic everyone wanted to discuss was how to increase the amount of qualified leads from a show."

Sounds like Job #1. So without further ado, here are 8 ways to increase the quality of the leads you get from visitors to your trade show booth:

1. **Select Shows with Attendees Who Better Match Your Prospects.** Ask shows vying for a spot on your trade show schedule to supply detailed attendee demographics. Look at their attendees' job titles, industries, company size, location, and if they have it, average annual budget. How many of each show's attendees would make great prospects for you? And what percent of the show's attendance do they

represent? Compare show by show, and consider only the shows that bring more of your target audience, or a higher percentage. That way you can have more time interacting with qualified attendees in your booth, rather than weeding through visitors who will never buy from you.

2. **More Focused Pre-Show and At-Show Promotions.** First, to attract only the part of the show's attendees that match your target audience, offer giveaways and gifts that appeal only to them (such as a free cost-savings calculation) rather than something that appeals to everyone (such as a free iPad). Shift your giveaway budget from a lot of lower quality items for the masses, to fewer, but better gifts you only offer to big-time buyers, and only if they visit your booth. You and your sales team can also put more effort into reaching out to top prospects before the show to invite them to your booth or to a meal with top company execs during the show.

3. **Better Qualify Your Leads During Or After The Show.** Find out from your sales people before the show what information they need about each lead – and then get it! Put those key 3 to 5 questions on the lead card, and train your booth staffers to ask those questions directly, or to listen for (and write down) those answers during their conversations. Based on those questions, agree ahead of time what makes a hot lead, a good lead, or an unqualified lead, and then ensure that booth staffers rank leads accordingly (such as A, B, or C). After the show, your sales people will know which leads are hot, and be more likely to follow-up. You can also call after the show to qualify your leads before passing them on.

4. **Invest In Your Booth Staff.** The higher quality your booth staff, the higher quality your leads. So no more trade-shows-as-on-the-job-training. Victoria Conti agreed, saying, “In our Lunch and Learn, we agreed that the most effective way to get more qualified leads is to make sure your staff is trained and armed with great open-ended questions, knowledgeable in recording their answers, and comfortable with the sales process on the trade show floor. Being able to gather information quickly and efficiently is the key skill.”

5. **Be More Persuasive.** Create interactions that help attendees imagine how you can solve their problems. Invent a demonstration that gets attendees engaged and involved rather than passive and bored. Tell stories about your happy clients who faced similar problems. Create an experience that engages multiple senses. Whatever you do, take advantage of the face-to-face nature of trade shows to move prospects further along the buying cycle.

6. **Design More Specific Trade Show Display Graphics.** Say very directly how you benefit clients and what niche you fill. For example, instead of “Enterprise Software,” you say “Human Resources Software for Professional Services Companies.” You might even further define your sweet spot and say, “Human Resources Software for Engineering Companies.” That way the leads you do get are more likely to be leads you can close. Choose more specific images, too.

7. **Bring Up Objections Yourself In Your Booth.** Don’t wait for after the show to reveal your shortcomings; raise the most common objections yourself. If you are more expensive, farther away, less experienced, or less than perfect in some way, be up front about it. (But be sure to give reasons you can overcome those objections, too!) The attendees that are still with you after that will be worth giving to your field sales reps.

8. **Don’t Give Every Trade Show Lead to Sales.** If you have ranked your leads by how qualified they are, consider only giving those leads that are sales-ready. You may have leads ranked A, B, and C, but only give the A and B leads to your sales force, and put the C leads into your database for ongoing marketing until they are also ready for sales. If you do start taking this approach, be sure your sales force knows you’ve made the change.

Trade shows deliver higher quality leads than other marketing mediums. Visitors to your booth pay their own way there, demonstrating both interest and buying power. You can demo your product and competitive advantages face-to-face, moving prospects quicker along the buying cycle.

Now, by using one or more of these 8 methods, you can get even higher quality leads from the trade shows you exhibit at.



Are These 12 Roadblocks Stopping Your Valuable Trade Show Leads?

Mike Thimmesch

Most trade show exhibitors put the vast majority of their effort into creating their presence at a trade show – the trade show displays they build, the staffers they send and house, and for some, the promotions they do to create greater activity in their booth space.

Unfortunately, too many waste these valiant efforts, because they fall down on managing their trade show leads. That's because there are more hidden roadblocks than they realize, obstacles to getting the full value from their leads.

So let's bring those roadblocks out into the light. I believe the list below includes the 12 most common obstacles to effective lead management – how many of these are issues do you need to address?

1. Incomplete lead management process.
2. No single person responsible for the entire process.
3. No consultation with sales about what information needs to be gathered at the show.
4. No training of trade show booth staffers about what makes a qualified lead, how to record lead quality.
5. Qualifying information from leads is not captured with a lead card or a lead retrieval system.
6. If complete information is captured, it is not conveyed to the appropriate sales person after the show.
7. Slow, incomplete, or non-existent lead fulfillment.



8. No computer system or customer relationship management software in place to facilitate lead management.
9. Lead fulfillment packages not chosen nor prepared in advance.
10. Lead fulfillment is generic and does not respond specifically to what individual attendees asked about while visiting your trade show exhibit.
11. No one pre-assigned to data enter and fulfill the large quantity of leads.
12. No accountability for sales people to follow up on leads within a specific, short period of time after the show.

Any of these sound familiar? Fixing this will take a team effort, including your sales, marketing, and information technology teams. Get them all in a room and work to knock down these obstacles. For motivation, bring to the meeting a pile of your latest trade show leads, a spreadsheet of the costs of your show, and the highest level exec you can get that these people all report to.

Then you can work to avoid all 12 of these obstacles and create a smoother lead management process that gives your company the full potential value of your trade show leads.

Measurement

7 Key Trade Show Metrics To Measure

Mike Thimmesch

How important is it to measure and communicate the results of your trade show program? Here's how essential measurement is to your success:

- "If it can't be expressed in figures, it is not science; it is opinion." - *Robert Heinlein*
- "What gets measured gets done, what gets measured and fed back gets done well, what gets rewarded gets repeated." - *John E. Jones*
- "In God we trust, all others bring data." - *W. Edwards Deming*

So yes, measurement is important. That is why Skyline is honored to offer you an updated tool to help you measure your trade show program.

The 3rd version of the "Measurement Made Easy" Trade Show and Event Calculator CD program now gives you a place to record and calculate 20 different trade show metrics. There are 5 measurements for before the show, to help you prepare, and 15 measurements for after the show, to help you measure how you did.

But like a bike with 20 gears, you may not need to use all of them. So for this 3rd edition, we highlighted the 7 metrics we feel are the most important:

Before The Show

1. Pre-Show Promotion

In today's competitive trade show arena, you need to invest in promotions to get more

attendees to cross from the aisle into your trade show booths. This calculator helps you calculate your cost per contact from pre-show promotion, so you can see how much extra value promotions bring your program.

2. Attendance

Surprise: Your best shows may not be the biggest shows, but the shows that have the most people that fit your target market. This calculator helps you delve deeper into each show's audience to discover the shows that are the best value for you.

3. Estimated Budget

With this calculator you can quickly estimate for a show how much you might spend on key areas such as booth space, trade show displays, travel, show services, and more. The estimates are based on industry average budget expenditures.

After The Show

4. Budget Versus Actual

So, how close to your estimated budget did you actually spend? This calculator lets you compare what your actual costs to what your original estimates – and see where you had the biggest percent differences.

5. Cost Per Contact

This simple calculation lets you calculate how much each individual contact cost you after your entire show budget is added up. Then you have a cost that you can compare against other ways to get face-to-face contacts.

6. Cost Per Lead

One of the most popular metrics, this calculator not only helps you calculate cost per lead, which

is your total trade show exhibit program investment divided by your number of leads, but also track (and define) leads by quality, such as “A” leads, “B” leads, and “C” leads.

7. Potential Return On Investment (ROI)

While ROI is the ultimate measurement for most companies, it can take many months, if not years to close B2B leads with their longer selling cycle. This gets you a viable number quicker, by considering lead counts, percent of sales-likely leads, average sales dollars, and exhibiting investment to get to a potential ROI.

There are also 13 more metrics you can measure, calculate, record, and report with this updated Measurement Made Easy CD. And as with previous versions, the program allows you to record your show data, and then print reports for management.

We are grateful for Marketech for creating this program and allowing us to share it with you.

Measure and justify your trade show program with the newly updated Measurement Made Easy CD. Go to <http://bit.ly/1a6h7EO> to ask for your free copy of this program.



6 Things You Can Test To Improve Your Trade Show Marketing

Mike Thimmesch

Want to improve your trade show marketing? Put it to the test.

In direct mail you can test the list, the format, and the offer. In print ads, you can test the headline, the ad size, and the placement. In internet advertising you test the pay per click ad, the ad bid, and the landing page. But what can you test in trade show marketing?

You would be surprised at the amount of productive experimentation you can do to refine and improve your trade show marketing. Here are 6 things you can test:

1. Trade Show Selection

This may seem obvious, but you really can choose which shows you keep and which you stop exhibiting at. Last month I met an exhibitor that has for years tracked the sales they get from every show they exhibit at, and only keeps exhibiting at a show if the profits they get from the sales generated are greater than the cost to exhibit at that show. He focused on shows outside his industry that were in the vertical markets of his best clients. That's a great item you can test.

2. Booth staffers

Sounds odd to test people rather than a headline or an offer, until you realize that your staff is the headline, offer, and more, rolled up into one. So track how many qualified leads each of your booth staffers bring per hour they staff your booth. (You track that by having them write their initials on each lead card they fill out.) You'll be surprised at what a range of results you get.

Then strive to keep the top performers for future shows. (I am assuming that you've already given each booth staffer equal training.)

3. Engaging lines

While veteran booth staffers have their favorite engaging lines, there is no guarantee they will always work. If you exhibit at different vertical market shows, or have a different promotion in your booth, you should encourage your staffers to try various opening lines to engage attendees in the aisle. Huddle with the staff after an hour or two into the show to see which ones are working best, and then ask your booth staffers to all use the winners.

4. Promotions

You can test different promotions at different shows, or even different promotions at the same show. We've gone to a show with two different at-show promotions, one fun and one more professional, and tried both simultaneously. After an hour, we stopped using the fun promotion that had been a major hit at a previous show. The more professional promotion did better because it was better tailored for the second show's specific vertical market. You can also test whether you get more bang for your buck with pre-show or at-show promotions.

5. Exhibit design

Just as you can try a different message in an ad, you can also try a different image or main benefit statement on your trade show exhibit graphics. If you exhibit at lots of shows, it's a justifiable expense to get two mural graphic to see which gets the most leads. You just have to count the leads during the times you have the different graphics up. You're best off switching the graphics for complete show days, or even entire shows. But be aware of a variance in the traffic level in the exhibit hall during those two time periods to make it a fair test. Hint for your test: Try exhibit graphics that have fewer, but bigger, elements and that emphasize client benefits.

6. Trade show marketing strategies

When you're ready to tackle the big stuff, go for testing your trade show marketing strategies.

Do you get more from a show when you target the entire audience equally, or just try to get appointments with a select few top prospects and existing customers? Do you bring lots of products and set up a temporary store in your booth, or do you just bring your best sellers and communicate your main company benefits with big, bold graphics? Do you spread your budget among 30 shows equally, or concentrate on your best 10 with a bigger exhibit and a more integrated program of pre- and at-show promotions with fully trained booth staffers?

One of the premises of A/B split and multi-variate testing is that you can isolate specific elements to precisely track their effect in the response rate. However, with trade shows, it's difficult to isolate test elements well enough to get a highly accurate test. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't try testing at all. While you may not be able to track results to the 3rd decimal point, you should be able to recognize clear-cut winners when they emerge.

These 6 items are worthwhile elements to test. When you get clear winners you can noticeably, if not dramatically improve your trade show ROI. If you have ideas on other elements, go for it!



Reporting Your Results to Management

Marc Goldberg

After you have measured the results from your trade shows or events, it is important to communicate the results to management.

Key elements to remember ...

- Tie report to pre-set objectives/goals
- Focus on to whom the report is going to be sent
- Identify what's important to your audience
- What is important to their boss?
- Is the report clear? Have someone else read it before submitting
- Keep it to one page – include both “words” and “pictures”

Report Contents

Lead Generation

- Number of leads generated and number of “hot” leads
- Geographic breakdown of leads (including domestic and foreign)
- Cost per lead
- Estimated sales
- Products that drew the most interest
- Slicing and dicing the data – other things you can report on:
 - Number of new companies not currently prospected
 - Types of companies that inquired
 - Professional title breakdown
 - Leads by day and hour of the show

Attendees

- Attendance breakdown – mix, any change from desired audience, your impact on audience
- Target audience – profile of attendees, who stopped and what was their product interest

Demonstrations

- Number of attendees viewing product demos
- Leads gathered from demos

Promotions

- Promotional products
- Websites: pre- and post-show website hits
- Consumer – benchmark geographic sales
- Show specials
- Hospitality invitations
- VIP events

Competitive Intelligence

- What competitors were exhibiting at the show?
- What size booths did they have? Prime location?
- How was their booth traffic?
- New products? Product focus? Delivery promise?
- How else did they participate?
- Comparative investments?

Media Success

- Were there press meetings?
- Who were your contacts?
- What was accomplished in the press conferences?
- Will the press publish your press releases?
- Will future articles feature your products?
- Number of press kits picked up?
- Website hits?

Customer Interaction/Feedback

- Comments about product/staff
- Product information requests
- Complaints

Trends Noted

- Industry trends
 - How they might impact your business
- Show trends
 - Audience shifts, product shifts
 - Costs to exhibit
 - Themes and display types
 - At-show activities
 - Marketing methods

Sessions Attended

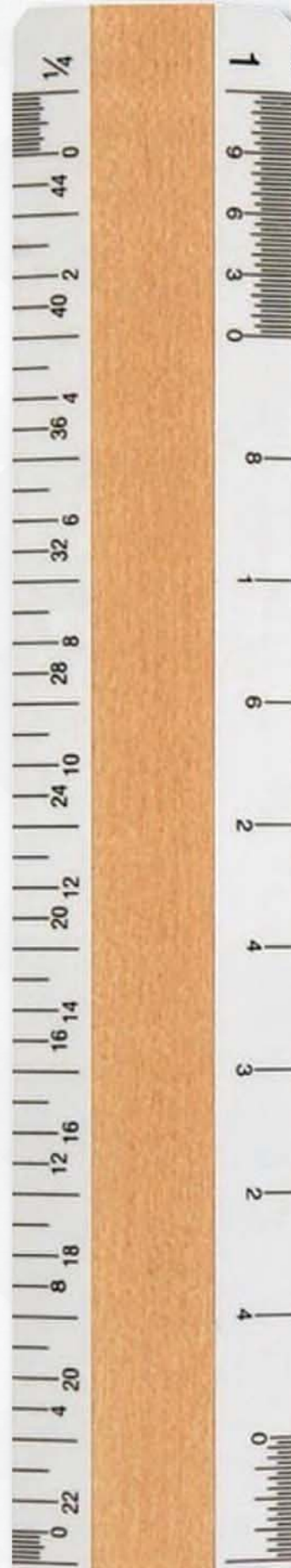
- Summary of what was learned

Tutorials

- Speakers from competitive companies and topics
- Number of session attendees
 - Leads gathered through the workshop/seminar

Recommendations for Future

- What was done right
- What can be improved
- New ideas for the next show/meeting



International

Global Exhibiting Checklist

Marc Goldberg

Things You Need to Know Before You Go International

Bridging the Cultural Gap

- ☐ Show respect for your host and their country
- ☐ Know appropriate greeting etiquette
- ☐ Keep language simple; don't use slang or colloquialisms
- ☐ When in doubt, err on the side of formality
- ☐ Don't use exaggerated gestures
- ☐ Understand business hierarchy and negotiation techniques
- ☐ Learn a little about the history, culture and current events of the host country
- ☐ When in-doubt, observe the behavior of someone from the country
- ☐ Find a "cultural mentor"
- ☐ Keep your sense of humor

Language Considerations – fortunately for Americans, English is wide spoken throughout the world. However, you might want to think about the following:

- ☐ Bring multi-lingual staff
- ☐ Hire an interpreter – a native born translator who can deal with dialects
- ☐ Prepare graphics in English and the local language
- ☐ Translate brochures, business cards, videos
- ☐ Have translations double-checked by a native speaker from the country you plan to visit
- ☐ Make sure that not only are the right words used, but they convey the right meaning
- ☐ Use pictures rather than words to get your message across.
- ☐ Try to learn a few words in the host country's language

Marketing Guidelines

- ☐ Straight-forward materials with simple language are most effective
- ☐ Avoid "slick" advertising campaigns, substance counts
- ☐ Be prepared for the media
- ☐ Provide technical information in metrics (weights and measurements)
- ☐ Bring plenty of collateral, but control distribution
- ☐ Have business cards printing in the host's language on the reverse side
- ☐ Add city, telephone country codes and USA on your business cards
- ☐ Have all materials reviewed by local representatives for content, language and political correctness

Presentations, Demonstrations and Giveaways

- ☐ Bring working products to the show – demos are most effective in bridging the communications gap
- ☐ Live presentations are not as popular overseas, but “hostesses and models” are still used in certain countries
- ☐ Videos can be very effective – make sure they are in the proper format
- ☐ Make sure giveaways are practical and relevant to your business – avoid cheap, meaningless gifts
- ☐ Business hierarchy is important – consider two levels of gifts – one for normal prospects and one for more serious visitors

Design

- ☐ Find out as much as possible about the venue before you consider the design – be flexible
- ☐ Typically international exhibits are sleeker and more angular with less color and fewer graphics that we use in the US
- ☐ Colors have different connotations from country-to-country – make sure you investigate the interpretation of the colors you select in the host country
- ☐ Custom exhibits and shell schemes dominate global marketplaces
- ☐ Political, sexual or other risky subjects should be avoided in graphics
- ☐ Consider the inclusion of a hospitality area when exhibiting in Europe – private conference rooms are also an important consideration
- ☐ Try to have consistency in your design if you exhibit in several global locations

Staffing

Your style of exhibiting will change depending on the country in which you are exhibiting. Pay attention to the local differences and adapt. Generally speaking, you will spend more time with each prospect and be less assertive than you will be in the US.

- ☐ Provide a pre-departure briefing for all staffers on culture, business practices and negotiating techniques
- ☐ Avoid aggressive US style of exhibiting
- ☐ Arrange as many appointments as possible before leaving the US
- ☐ Top management should plan on attending – peer exhibiting is important
- ☐ Include your local representative in your planning and staffing
- ☐ Bring multi-lingual staff – sales and technical
- ☐ Bring more staffers due to the longer show hours and more days international events are planned
- ☐ Name badges are not common, therefore qualifying skills need to be sharpened
- ☐ Dress in conservative business attire
- ☐ Hospitality is important in global exhibiting
- ☐ Develop a simple lead card, business cards may not be the norm in the host country

Logistics

- ☐ Select the right freight forwarder – one that has a majority of its business in international exhibit transportation – one that has experience in the host country or region – one that speaks the local language – one that can help you with documentation – one that has a on-site agent
- ☐ Have the right documentation – commercial invoice – Shipper’s Export Declaration (SED) – Certificate of Origin – Import License (primarily for medical and food products) – ATA Carnet or Temporary Import Bond

Some tips:

- ☐ Allow adequate time for shipping and customs clearance
- ☐ Know the total weight, volume and value of the shipment
- ☐ For declaring value use the replacement cost rather than retail price
- ☐ Arrange the return shipment before leaving the US
- ☐ Label all boxes with the stand number
- ☐ Label all boxes with name, address and phone number of the in-country agent
- ☐ Carry copies of the airway bill or other shipping documents with you
- ☐ Consolidate shipments to reduce handling fees
- ☐ Check for in-country import restrictions
- ☐ Rely on an experienced international customs broker

Miscellaneous – other thoughts on international exhibiting

- ☐ Read the show book as soon as you receive it
- ☐ Come prepared to sign up for the next event before you leave the current one
- ☐ Labor unions are not as prevalent as in the US, so you have more freedom in set-up and dismantle – familiarize yourself with union rules and policies in the exhibition country
- ☐ Book your hotels up to a year in advance
- ☐ Check on the possibility of Value Added Tax (VAT) refunds for hotels, meals, car rentals, exhibition space
- ☐ Check on entry requirements – visa requirement
- ☐ Obtain information on security before leaving the US and make proper arrangements
- ☐ Take extra cash, depending on where you are going your credit cards may not be accepted
- ☐ Carry copies of all important papers – passport, airline tickets, travel documents, credit cards numbers and important telephone numbers



Notes:

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