

The Selling Power of Exhibitions and the Statistics to prove it!

(By: <http://www.themarketingsite.com>)

The majority of exhibitors have told Reed Exhibitions SA that exhibitions are a fundamental part of their sales and marketing strategies. They rely on events to create dynamic marketplaces in which many thousands of people with shared interests can come together. We have found that more and more companies use exhibitions as part of their integrated marketing approach and are shifting a portion of their marketing budgets into Exhibitions.

We often forget that Exhibitions are a direct response medium. The primary purpose of participating in an exhibition is to obtain qualified leads that result in sales and ultimately in profits. The Centre for Exhibition Industry Research CEIR) says that "the top reason for exhibitors to take part is that it is the most efficient (and cost effective) way to make multiple customer contacts in a short period of time."

While the exhibition industry prematurely predicted its own demise earlier this decade because of the Web, something curious happened: the rise of the virtual office served only to reaffirm the importance of human touch in doing business. Margit Weisgal, President of Sextant Communications USA, said: "An exhibition enables you to develop trust and rapport with your customers. Once you have that, you can leave voice mails and e-mails with a face behind them."

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Exhibitions are the Number One source for visitors who make the final purchasing decisions.

- Exhibitions 90%; Direct Sales and Field Sales 75%; Public Relations 75%; Internet 63%; Direct Mail 58%; Trade Publications and Journal Advertising 55%; Telemarketing 50%
- It provides exhibitors with immediate and deferred sales opportunities, because they are a convenient and a fast way to find and buy the products and services they need.

Exhibitions are the most effective for attaining the following marketing objectives and drawing quality audiences

- Promote Brand Image and Visibility 22%; Take Orders for Product and Services 20%; Promote Awareness of Company and Capabilities 19%; General Sales Leads 15%; Introduce New Products and Services 13%; Enter New Markets and Regions 11%
- Exhibitions are an excellent forum for decision-makers to evaluate new products, make new contacts, enhance supplier relationships and conduct purchasing activities.
- In fact, the majority of visitors - 57% - are planning purchases in the next 12 months.
- 83% of visitors have buying influence
- 37% of attendees with buying influence have the final say in the purchasing decision.

Sales leads and Sales calls

- Companies use exhibitions more often in the selling process (87%) than b-to-b advertising, direct sales/field sales, direct mail or public relations.
- 48% of exhibition leads do not require a sales call to close.
- Exhibitions reach unknown prospects: Exhibitors meet new people, uncover unknown buying influences and also discover that 88% of attendees have not been called on by one of their sales people in the preceding 12 months. **This statistic has remained consistent for more than 20 years.**
- 76% of exhibition visitors arrive with an agenda. They know some of the companies and/or products or services they want to see and they generally know which educational/technical sessions and social events to attend.

Exhibitions meet marketing objectives

Exhibitions are statistically equal to direct and field sales in meeting a company's marketing objectives.

- Exhibitions ranked 20% in meeting marketing objectives, while direct and field sales scored 21%.
- It ranked second only to advertising in promoting brand image and visibility - 22% vs. 26%.
- How do visitors learn about exhibitions? Direct Mail (52%) remains the most effective method. Attended Previous Exhibitions (31%), trade publications (28%), word-of-mouth (24%), invited by exhibitor (22%), member (22%), Internet (18%), article or editorial (12%) and newspaper (7%).
- Top reasons for remembering an exhibit (other than size): Product demonstrations, product interest, literature, exhibit colour and design, exhibit personnel, well-known company, stage/theatre presentation, give-aways.

Exhibition visitors are a channel of communication to many others in their organisation. This extends the exhibitors' messages beyond just those who attended the show. A majority of individuals will channel the information upward in the hierarchy of the

company, which helps exhibitors to reach the hidden influencers and other key decision-makers.

- 35% of visitors will share the information with 1 to 3 people; 35% with 4 to 6 people; 10% with 7 to 10 people and 20% with 11+ people.
- It gives access to a captive audience that is primed to buy: 86% of visitors either make or directly influence buying decisions; 85% have not been called on by a sales person before the show; 75% make at least one purchase at the exhibition.

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- Trade exhibitions give you access to a captive audience that is primed to buy: 86% of visitors either make or directly influence buying decisions; 85% have not been called on by a sales person before the show; 75% make at least one purchase at the exhibition.

USA Statistics

Despite the outlay of time and money, an exhibition is still a very economical way to build your business. Closing a sale with an exhibition lead, costs an average of \$705 and takes 1.3 follow-up calls. Closing a sale without an exhibition lead costs an average of \$1140 and takes 3.7 follow-up calls.

- In the USA more than 4,500 exhibitions are held each year, 50-million square metres of net exhibition space is used, 123-million visitors attended exhibitions in 2000. The exhibition industry accounts for \$100-billion in annual direct spending.
- 81% of leads generated at exhibition result in sales (CEIR - USA).
- Direct Selling, the most successful form of marketing, has an 85% success rate; closely followed by Exhibitions (81%), Advertising (66%), Direct Mail (62%), PR (58%) and Telemarketing (38%) - USA.

In some sectors - high tech, manufacturing, transportation, communications and wholesale goods - exhibitions are the preferred venue for doing business. "When you are buying something expensive, there are times when you've just got to kick the tyres," says Michael Hough from Penton Media. You've got to be there (as an exhibitor) for those customers - further proof, apparently, that 90% of success in life is just a matter of showing up."

The importance of follow-up to justify your investment in Exhibitions!

For most exhibitors, the really hard work begins once the show is over. Your objective

should be to get sales, not to get visitors. Often, exhibitions aren't the end of the sales process; they are however a key component. To get sales, you need a follow-up system designed to build relationships and nurture them through the buying cycle.