

How to exhibit successfully.

Given the importance of exhibitions to the success of your business, one would expect most companies to measure their exhibition success closely. In reality, all too many don't – a fact that concerns many event organisers greatly.

Because we care about the success and measurability of your exhibitions, we have put together a couple of pointers on the best ways to organise your events.

Why measure?

There are four major reasons for measuring the results of every exhibition you attend (as an exhibitor)

- To justify your investment – every item in your marketing budget needs to show a return on investment. Measuring gives you the facts you need to get the marketing mix right
- To help choose the best exhibition for you – Not all shows are alike, measuring can help you spend your money at the right shows
- To improve your own activities – What you do before, during and after each show can matter as much as which shows you choose. Measuring also allows you to improve your teams' performance
- To encourage goal-driven activities – What gets measured gets done. If you want see your team focused on results, tell them what they are!

Marketing may be a science, but it's rarely a perfect science. Every time you evaluate an exhibition, you're actually measuring many things, including the show itself, the market climate, your own activities and your competitor's activities.

The three most important elements of any exhibition are goals, goals, and goals. You need to have a clear statement of what your company wants to achieve before you can find out whether you've succeeded. Counting leads, or numbers of business cards taken is not enough, in fact we've identified 21 goals you need to be measuring.

Sales

1. Generate sales leads
2. Make a direct sale
3. Build a contact database

Brand Building

4. Create or raise market awareness
5. Position or re-position your brand
6. Educate by demonstrating
7. Boost financial analyst/investor perceptions
8. Develop new markets

Customer Relationships

9. Build relationships with current customers
10. Educate customers
11. Up sell and cross sell customers
12. Collect customers testimonials
13. Re-sell lapsed customers

Channel support

14. Identify or recruit new distributors or partners
15. Support your current sales channel
16. Build your reputation as a partner

Market research

17. Market test a new product
18. Research your marketing campaign
19. Test market awareness and campaigns

Media relations

20. Get on the media radar
21. Build relationships with key editors and journalists

Measuring goals

So you've created your list of goals, how do you now measure these results?

At the show

- Keep it simple – Busy shows can be overwhelming. The more simple your system, the more likely it will be used
- High or low tech – Collecting business cards from pre-screened prospects is a simple solution. But consider light pens for capturing even more data
- Brief all staff – Everyone on the stand must understand your goals, your priorities and your measurement system for the exhibition
- Review your progress regularly

Quality not quantity

The best exhibitors don't just measure the number of leads generated, they measure the lead quality as well – this is the likelihood that the particular contact will go on to become a client.

After the show

- Hold a de-brief – You're all exhausted, but a short de-briefing session with all stand staff can help capture the most important learnings while still fresh
- Reporting – Write a brief topline report, summarising the results so far
- Keep the books open – New business can come in weeks after the event, especially if it is overseas
- Consider the long term value of each sale – even if you only obtain one customer from an event, it may be a customer that is loyal, spends a lot of money and stays with you for a long time
- Write a final report – summarise the results obtained against the goals set. Share the report with the key people, aiming to improve performance at the next event using the experience gained