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HOW DOES A CHANGE IN CITIES IMPACT ATTENDANCE?

BY

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OVERVIEW:

Trade shows are of two types when it comes to the venue/city location:

1. Stay in the same city year after year or;
2. Rotate between two cities or change the venue location from year to year.

If you are of the first type, this blog is not for you - sorry.

On the other hand, **if your show changes or is thinking about moving to a new city, read on.** You will find the impact on attendance not only insightful, but this may well alter your marketing plans.

WHY DO SHOWS CHANGE CITIES?

The reasons shows change cities vary from the **logical to irrational**. Over the years, we have seen or heard of the following reasons – from logical to somewhat irrational, such as:

- It is a normal and historical rotation – typically geographic in nature, such as one on the east coast and on the west coast.
- To align and serve the geographical concentrations of attendees and/or industries.
- The show has outgrown the convention facilities as it has grown over the years. This is particularly true when it started in a smaller city with limited convention floor space.
- After many years in one city, the thought that a move to another city should bring in new attendees.
- A significant number of attendees and exhibitors have suggested a move to another city.
- A new president, senior executive or board member joins the organizer and lobbies for a new city. The event organizer adds or changes venues based on the senior executive's experience with another show or conference.
- The individual responsible for the site location recommendation had a great FAM trip hosted by the convention center of the new city and wants to go back.



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We have heard all these justifications (maybe with the exception of the last one) as to why a show is now going to another venue.

What is the impact on attendance and what has prior data analysis shown?
If your show does change cities or are considering it – read on!

A CASE EXAMPLE

The Trade Show:

We cannot name the show for obvious reasons, but this show alternated between two popular convention cities – Orlando and Las Vegas. Attendance ranged from 8,500 to 10,000. The following is an analysis and results over 6 years of data – with three shows each in Orlando and Las Vegas. The **purpose was to understand attendance dynamics** between cities so that any possible adjustment in marketing plans were aligned with the analysis results. The **goal was to decrease marketing cost** and look for **methods to increase attendance** as well – a difficult double hit from any analysis.

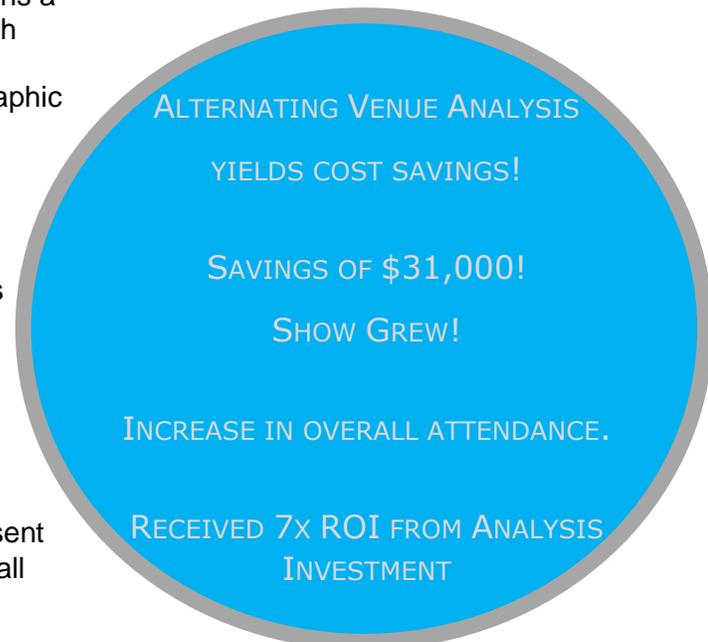
What we did:

We applied our **ALTERNATING VENUE ANALYSIS** that runs a number of comparisons of attendance patterns for both individuals and the company locations. This analysis program looks at attendance by year attended, geographic location (domestic and international) plus other key demographic metrics.

Three key insights uncovered:

Among other results here are three significant insights uncovered.

- 41% of the companies only sent people to Orlando and this represented 29% of all attendees.
- Corollary to Orlando, 46% of companies only sent people to Las Vegas that represented 35% of all attendees.
- Only 13% of companies sent individuals to both locations. As expected, they were large firms and sent multiple people accounting for 36% of attendees. Remarkably, half of these large firms, while sending people to both locations, reduced the number sent by as much as 80% from their preferred venue.





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How the client was able to turn data insights into marketing actions:

We returned the client's database with the individuals and companies flagged per the insights gained so that **segmentations based on analysis insights** were usable in their marketing campaigns. The organizer planned a number of new direct marketing campaigns utilizing sequence and frequency of email and mail communications.

The net result was a **reduction of almost 37,000 direct mail pieces** to likely non-attendees, but touching them with only email. The mailing **savings was over \$31,000**, yet the **attendance grew** at the next event. The event organizer sent special messaging to senior management at firms that had not sent people to both locations and this resulted in a pickup of almost 200 attendees. The client realized a 7-times return on their analysis investment.

Do you alternate cities or are you thinking about it?

For those **events currently alternating cities**, call us, as this analysis can be done even if you only have one or two years of data. Obviously, the more years of data the better picture you will gain.

If you currently have events in more than two cities, we can perform this analysis as well. We will return data insights that will more than likely save you the cost of the analysis plus opening up some marketing options to increase attendance. A call costs nothing!

If you are **thinking about changing cities**, some of the lessons learned from this and other alternating venue analysis we have done are:

- **Geography and distance from the venue significantly affects attendance.**
Concentrate marketing and/or direct mail on firms and individuals closer to the new city.
- **The larger the firm, the better the odds they will send attendees to the new city.**
Segment your list by size of firm and be sure to communicate to senior level executives, as they will frequently be involved in approving attendance of one or more individuals. Realize that these organizations and individuals still may have a preferred venue.
- **The closer the company and individual to the city, the later a decision to attend.** It is less of a considered decision and could be more of an impulse decision.
- **Companies within 50 miles also tend to have a higher no-show rate.**
These companies put in less cost to attend, which makes not showing up easier to justify. Their registrations should receive a retention messaging sequence to enhance verified attendance rates.



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TO SUM UP:

Short and sweet – if you alternate cities, our Alternating Venue Analysis will likely uncover valuable data for marketing leading to cost savings exceeding the fee for the analysis. This is particularly true if you use direct mail as a primary media of communication.

Call or email Steve Juedes at SteveJ@DirectHitMarketing.com and 303-666-0798 or me at JohnC@DirectHitMarketing.com or 602-402-6588. We look forward to working with you.