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USING ATTENDEE PERSONAS TO DRIVE REGISTRATION

By

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In our last blog, *Using Segmentation to Drive Registration*, (<https://tinyurl.com/y29rmxp4>), we offered a segmentation model based on the attendee's past behavior to improve relevancy and personalization of communications. A recent study by Hanover Research supports this approach as **93% of B2B executives say that personalized and relevant communications drive both their engagement and decisions.**

So if this works, what are other segmentation models organizers can use for more relevant and personalized communications to drive registration? In the past several years, another successful marketing approach that is now widely used is **personas**. HubSpot reports that using **personas increase click-through and response rates by a minimum of 16%** and that is certainly another segmentation approach to consider.

What are the personas of trade show attendees? As in our last blog, let us try to keep this straightforward so implementation is reasonable. From our data analysis over the last 27 years we feel the most common personas are:

- **Buyers** – attendees who are there to purchase or research in advance of a purchase. They are actively looking to “spend money” – just the kind of attendee your exhibitors want at the show, and in fact, the more the better.
- **Non-exhibiting sellers** – attendees who are there to sell their company's products or services, but are not exhibitors. Many sales and marketing individuals attend shows to meet potential customers who are either attendees or exhibitors.
- **Executives** – senior management of firms in the industry or those executives who have some other reason to attend. Many times, they are looking to meet other executives for peer networking or competitive evaluations.
- **Learners** – individuals who have attended past seminars or other educational events. In fact, this group might also be sprinkled with individuals from the buyer, seller and executive groups.



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- **Customized** – based on each show’s industry or market focus one or several customized personas could be developed.

On average, 70% or more of attendees can be segmented by personas.

Using Personas to Drive Registration

Using personas in marketing has been around for quite some time, and I’ll assume you have read or otherwise learned about Personas. If not, there are many books and firms promoting Personas, and one we would recommend is HubSpot. Here’s a link to their resource section <https://www.hubspot.com/resources>.

At the core of Persona marketing is the concept that knowing more about individuals allows for much more personalized and relevant messages and offers. It puts the focus on the “customer” and not on the product or service being sold or in this case the aspects of the show. Here are some data and descriptive elements to select from in building your Personas.

- Demographic
 - Gender (if appropriate)
 - Age – millennials vs. baby boomers
 - Geographic – US vs. non-US
- Firmagraphic
 - Job title and function
 - Size of company
 - Type of company – SIC/NAICS code
- Job characteristics by title or function
 - What are their goals and objectives?
 - How is their performance measured?
 - Who do they report to?
 - What might be their biggest challenges?
 - What tools are needed to do their job?
 - What media consumption
- Industry/market customization
 - Specific job titles and/or functions – e.g. engineers
 - Industry trends and new developments related to job
 - Others

The selection of the descriptive elements for your show results in the composite Personas to use in developing relevant messages that will improve engagement and drive registration.



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Creating Persona Segments

There are four logical ways to segment personas that are relatively easy.

1. Use the titles of the individuals.
2. Design the registration form to identify the persona characteristics you want
3. Ask them why they are attending.
4. Show specific personas

Titles and Function Segmentation

We have specialized in helping organizers with title and function segmentation, as historically it has not been a data element that has received much attention and standardization. Whatever the individual wrote down on the registration form became the registration record. Therefore, many titles are abbreviated, truncated, non-traditional and even misspelled due to input error.

Over the 27 years working with registration data and titles we have compiled over **400,000 titles for inclusion in the *DHM Title/Function Master Database***. These titles have been standardized and assigned one of six title levels:

1. Executive (Owner, Partner, Board Member)
2. Senior Management (VP and Managing Director)
3. Mid Management (Director and Manager)
4. First Level Management (Supervisors and Team Leaders)
5. Non-management (Technical Rep. etc.)
6. Other (not identified)

In addition, the specific title denotes functional area as well, and from these 400,000 titles, here are examples of some functional areas also that can be assigned to the individual record:

Administration	IT/Programmer	R&D
Analyst/Analytics	Law Enforcement	Religious
Architecture	Legal	Sales
Banking/Financial	Maintenance	Technician
Communication	Management	Training
Consultants	Marketing	
Customer Service	Media	
Engineering	Meeting planners	
Finance/accounting	Operations	
Human Resources	Purchasing	



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For your specific show, other functional descriptions might be needed.

To generate Persona segments the past registration file is matched against the **DHM Master Title/Function Database** and coded by title level and functional description. On average about 15% of the registration file cannot be coded and classified, but 85% is good.

In addition, the registration file should also contain actual attendance. Attendance history hopefully can include a 3-5 year span of **actual attendance of the individual to identify first timers, repeats and loyalists**. Let us assume that attendance data is available, and we have enhanced the registration list with title level and functional description. This creates an even better Persona sub-segmentation opportunity.

Registration Form Design

Registration forms are the bases of the show database and can be used to capture not only important data elements but also one or two elements to aide Persona segmentation. However, be careful as too long of a registration form deters completeness and accuracy. One way to assure the best registration data is to explain why you want the data and/or what you are going to do with it. Accurate and complete data registration goes up once this rationale is given.

Ask Why They Are Attending

Some of the Persona identification are gained by data analysis, but if you want to determine the reasons for potentially attending, like buying, selling, learning, networking, etc. – just ask early in the registration campaign. Subsequent communications then can be far more relevant to the reason(s) for considering attending the show.

In addition, depending on each reason for attending, specific offers or events should be developed to align with these motivations. As an example, if learning is the reason for attending, an offer of recordings of the sessions or how about a speaker’s networking cocktail hour. These extras may be just the reason you “tip” a “maybe I’ll attend” to “I’m going”.

Show Specific Personas.

Most shows focus on a specific industry or market, and here is an opportunity to not only develop Personas that are aligned with the industry or market, but also highly relevant communications that will break through the clutter. Likely, potential attendees know of the show and are broken into three categories:



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- I'm attending for sure
- I'm thinking about attending
- I'm definitely not attending

You're really marketing to the "I'm thinking about attending" group and the more personalized and relevant the messages and offers, the more likely they will "tip over" to the "I'm attending" group – this is no news to you. The difficulty is actually creating these messages and offers, and that's where Personas come into play.

As an example, communications to individuals with technically orientated jobs is quite different from those to sales and marketing people, even in the same industry. Here's where industry trends and hot topics will drive engagement, but with a slant toward the job function.

To Sum Up

Using either behavioral or Persona segmentation to drive relevant messages and offers will result in higher registration and attendance – who can argue with that?



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Direct Hit Marketing

Direct Hit Marketing is based a Colorado based firm and has been providing data analytics to the trade event industry for 28 years. This data service starts with the event's registration data and combines it with the targeted mail, email and phone communications that drove registration. This data analysis returns to the organizer up to 35 reports of what worked and what did not. The cost savings in mailings alone typically more than offsets the data analytic fee, plus provides insight in how to improve future marketing programs as well.
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