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## **New Ways to Measure Tradeshows**

**By**

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### **WHY SHOULD ORGANIZERS CARE?**

The answer seems obvious. If exhibitors are unable to prove that all the effort and expense they spend for their tradeshow participation pays off, they won't continue to exhibit at your show. There are many other marketing channel allocation options today. Exhibiting organizations are pressed to justify their marketing spend allocation, and the **tradeshow budget (for many exhibitors it is 20% to 35% of their marketing budget) is always under scrutiny**. Plus, many new digital and social alternatives challenge the tradeshow budget and are viewed as newer cutting-edge marketing tactics.

**Your sales people face this issue daily!** It's either brought up overtly by tradeshow managers or lies just below the surface. They want and need all the ammunition they can muster to defend the importance of the live face-to-face that only tradeshows and live events deliver. **They have to justify the tradeshow and help the show managers prove the live event's value**. This "proof" comes down to proving to senior management that the show is worth the expense. It's that simple, but gathering the proof is a bit more difficult.

Tradeshows not only have to demonstrate measurable results that are meaningful, but now also have to prove that they're equal or better to other marketing tactics. Here lies an opportunity for the organizer's sales staff **to present to exhibitor managers some new ways to measure shows that are in sync with these newer marketing tactics**. Hopefully this whitepaper will aid your sales staff and add value to their exhibitor calls.

### **NEW MEASURES**

First, to be clear, the traditional measurement of sales leads generated, customer visits, show purchases, etc. are and will remain the most important measurements. The problem is that the **most important one – sales leads – takes time to measure** and to determine if the leads are qualified and will convert into sales. Presenting and justifying the tradeshow budget is on a yearly cycle, but lead qualification and conversion is not. So we need **other measures to complement the sales lead numbers**.



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Here are a few suggestions for your sales staff to use:

- **Website Traffic**

To get the most from this measurement, it takes planning, and the best digital practice is to plan and measure using the standard biorhythm of the show – pre, during and post.

- **Pre-show Plan**

Inform exhibitors when the first wave of show promotion will hit as that's when attendees will start to engage. Some show organizers offer preshow e-mail campaigns to exhibitors sent to individuals that are pre-registered. Take advantage of this opportunity when available. A **custom landing page** is highly recommended that is clearly featured on the website announcing the firm's exhibit plans, special product/service introductions or reason/offer to stop by the booth. Many variations and options can be based on the exhibitor's plans. Google Analytics will tell the tale of engagement. There should also be **an option for those not attending the show to engage and/or respond, thus increasing results.**

- **During the Show**

**From the opening to closing of the show, website traffic should be measured as a demonstration of engagement by attendees.** The best practice would be to promote a show special offered not only in the booth but also on the website. Then the total number of "takers" will increase by those who don't say "yes" at the booth but do say "yes" online. This will add to the number of leads for follow-up after the show, and we all know that's an important measure.

The normal website traffic levels before the show should also be measured, and an increase of visitors could be attributed to exhibiting at the show. This "before" and "after" measurement assumes no other conjoint website promotion separate from the show so that the increase can be attributed to the show.

- **Post-show Residual or Long Tail**

Even after the show, website visitors may come from seeing the booth or noting a sponsorship, if this was part of the show expense. Once again, some organizers offer a post-email opportunity for exhibitors to e-mail the attendees. Take advantage of this opportunity. The best way to measure this "long tail" would be to change the show's landing page to reflect a post-show message and offer. The offer should also feed the lead funnel to further increase this measure.



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These website/digital recommendations are basic to digital marketers, and that's the issue. They are digital marketers and not frequently involved in tradeshow activities. The most important recommendation to tradeshow managers is to **involve the digital staff** either internal or agency to execute these or other inventive digital strategies (like video taken at the show) to develop an integrated tradeshow marketing and measurement program.

- **Social Media Engagement**

Less important, but still an opportunity, is the involvement of social media sites to promote and support the exhibitor's tradeshow program. We all are aware of the social media sites and of these, LinkedIn is the more productive for B2B, even though some feel Facebook comes in a close second. While an exhibitor's approach to social media may vary, the postings and tweets, support the show and could be called "surround sound."

Most senior executives have a somewhat skeptical view of social media activity, and need to be shown how they translate into real results vs. only activity. Therefore, don't promote these "activity" measures too strongly, but **they do speak to the broader issue of brand awareness**, which is also hard to measure. When measuring the impact of social media, a before and after measurement as to how your followers grew and interacted is the most meaningful.

- **Press Coverage**

New product introductions, company events, special announcements, etc. all can be worthy of press coverage. Frequently, the industry magazines and websites are at the show and should be engaged. Most large exhibitors have PR departments or agents and will assume this responsibility, but smaller firms generally do not have these resources. Therefore, it's a smart idea to **remind these exhibitors of the press opportunities and/or firms that will be at the show**. One well-placed article or web mention can lead to surprising results, particularly if the senior executives are quoted or mentioned.

- **Outbound Marketing**

Exhibiting at a tradeshow is accompanied by special offers either for a trial, purchase, or valuable content such as a book or e-book. Sending emails and blogs to customer and prospect lists will obviously stretch the use of these offers, and lead to responses from those not attending. Clearly this is another way to stretch the budget and add to the overall results.



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- **Brand Awareness Study**

As mentioned, brand awareness is hard to measure even for sophisticated ad agencies. Most brand awareness studies are a “before and after” approach to see if brand awareness increased. **As an organizer, you have the attendee list, and could easily conduct a brand awareness study and/or service for select exhibitors or sponsors.** If this extra service is offered, be sure to consult with a market research or branding agency so the results hold up statistically. Don’t delay the study, as speed of contact to the attendees will produce higher response and memory rates.

## **TO SUM UP – DO THESE NEW MEASUREMENTS HELP?**

In selling your show to exhibitors, suggesting other ways to plan and measure results of the show could go a long way to help them provide measurements to management that prove your show is and remains a valuable investment of marketing money. This is particularly true for the tradeshow manager when defending the budget for next year. On the other hand, if the level and quality of leads was below expectations, these measures won’t save the day.

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