## THE SHOW'S OVER, SO NOW WHAT?
### John Coe and Steve Juedes

**Shows Over - time to rest?**

Trade shows are all-consuming for organizers! When over and the last truck has left the dock, a giant feeling of relief is felt by all. Unfortunately, for the marketing team, the rest period isn't very long, as the post-show analysis needs to be done followed by planning for the next show. CEIR reports that, on average, **planning starts for the next show 10 months out**.

**So Now What?**

Market planning is a combination of feedback from attendees, exhibitors, and sales people all combined with a data analysis of the show's registration file. Insights and conclusions from this post-show analysis form the basis of **"what to do next year" to improve results**. In general the focus of planning to improve results fall into three broad categories:
1. Increasing attendance of the groups that exhibitors want and need
2. Improving marketing cost efficiency in driving this attendance
3. Retaining of current exhibitors plus finding and signing up new ones

What follows in this paper is Direct Hit Marketing's recommendation to significantly aid in the planning process based on our experience of 30 plus years in the industry. Of course, we wouldn't be true to our colors if a good portion of the recommendations weren't based on data analytics. So here it goes.

The first order of priority is to obtain feedback – both qualitative and quantitative from attendees and exhibitors. While it's likely this type of feedback is already gathered, here's our suggestion.

- **Attendee and Exhibitor Feedback:**
  Feedback and input from attendees, exhibitors and any other stakeholder should be gathered while the show's experience is fresh in everyone's mind. The **comments from attendees and exhibitors are critical** and they should be solicited and recorded quickly. Don't forget that these comments are qualitative and not quantitative. One suggestion to aid this post-show input is to equip all staff with a form before the show to easily input what they have heard and from whom. As they say – plan ahead!

In addition, more formal surveys of attendees and exhibitors are a quantitative way to obtain feedback whether they are suggestions, complaints or overall satisfaction ratings. Our recommendation is that **all exhibitors should be surveyed** (both by a questionnaire and/or telemarketing) as they represent the majority of revenue, and retaining them will be critical to the next show's P&L.  Certainly the sales group will have visited them at the show and this feedback is important, but potentially slanted as to what exhibitors say to sales and what sales wants to report.  An independent or third party survey will uncover a more holistic and granular view of the exhibitor's experience and input for improvement.

For attendee surveys, meaningful segmentations should be structured. The likely segments should include loyalists, first timers, North America, International, various levels of paid attendees (if you have them), floor pass only, key KPI attendees, etc.  The obvious intent is to obtain actionable input to improve next year's marketing programs by segment.

Beyond the feedback from attendees and exhibitors and the subsequent analysis, another opportunity exists to fuel improvements in next year's marketing programs and it lies in the registration data.

- **Analytic Analysis of Registration Data:**
  The registration data is fresh, and should be viewed as a pot of gold for planning. Unfortunately, few organizers perform in-depth analytics to significantly alter their marketing planning. Yes, attendance statistics are available from most registration firms. This data is usually superficial, and deals only with this year's registration data.  Over the last 30 years we have found that these **six in-depth analytic reports** offer the most insight for next year's marketing plans.

  1. **Full Attendee Profiling and Trending Analysis**
     This analysis package includes the New Company/First Timer analysis below and attendance dynamics that looks at locations and individual attendance patterns over the last 5 shows. It identifies key segments based on attendance behaviors and blends these patterns across key demographic variables to develop new segments to target for relevant messaging and measurement. This package may include 20 or more analysis reports.  Clearly the most insightful analysis for marketing plans.

2.  **New Company First Time Analysis**
    This analysis module (which is part of the Full Attendee Profiling Analysis above) helps the marketing team understand the attendance dynamics between new and repeat attendance at both the individual and business location levels.

    With multi-pass custom matching, we can help present a breakout of:
    - Repeat contacts from repeat locations
    - New contacts from repeat locations
    - Repeat contacts from repeat locations

    This insight leads to more relevant segmentation and messaging.  In addition, this analysis will identify companies that send or are not now sending multiple attendees for future targeted marketing efforts.

3.  **Direct Marketing Multi-Channel Analysis**
    By combining registration data with the direct marketing campaigns that drove the registration, a critical insight as to **what worked and what didn't** is obtained. If you are not sure which direct marketing campaigns performed best or which list segments are working, this analysis will uncover the needed insight. It will also examine the number and type of touches needed to obtain a registration. There are typically over a dozen analysis reports with this package. Not only do these very insightful reports add to next year's campaign effectiveness, but areas for cost reductions will also be uncovered as well.

4.  **Attendee No-Show Analysis**
    Free registration and floor passes from exhibitors have become very common for trade shows. As one might expect **no-show rates are up**. To combat no-show rates organizers need to understand more than the overall no-show rate.

    The Attendance No-Show Analysis examines no-show rates across relevant show demographics, geography, titles, functional area, custom registration types, and logical industry segments. From this data view marketing is now better equipped to **tackle the no-show problem with data driven tactics and messaging**.

5. **Educational and Special Event Analysis**
   Education and special events can be a source of secondary revenue for any show, conference or event. Therefore, we have developed a deep analysis of the performance of these educational offerings. This module is **customized to your tradeshow** and education dynamics. This is not a cookie-cutter analysis. We spend the time to understand your special event approach and value to you.

   We develop reports that trend your show's educational results across multiple years at the course and/or track level. Educational attendance patterns by attendee, revenue dynamics by year, track, and course are all analyzed.

   **Then a deeper dive is taken with a look at all attending organizations and their educational attendance potential compared to their actual educational participation**. This provides the marketing department the ability to target the best companies for the next year's educational offerings.

6. **Alternating Venue Analysis – If Appropriate**
   Many trade shows have alternating venues. One question that is always asked is how does alternating venues affect our attendance patterns?

   We have discovered that when alternating venues are used **between 32% - 43% of attending organizations will attend both venues**. However about a third will send more or less people based on the venue's location. On the other hand, **more than 50% of firms never send anyone to the alternate venue**, and even those who go to both may cut their attendance by 80% at the alternate venue. This insight is significant to market planning when it comes to targeting specific organizations.

   The actionable insight is to target those firms based on prior behavior based on the show's location. Many clients have realized significant direct marketing result increases and/or savings with using this insight.

With one or more of these six post-show analytic reports, **planning for next year's show will be far more precise and productive. The goal to increase the show's attendance density will be far less challenging.**

**We also recommend using our Online Marketing Platform Event Track™ to make marketing decisions real-time during your event's marketing cycle and to have a major head start on post-show analysis.**

- **Exhibitor Profiling:**
So what can marketing do for sales 10-11 months out from the next show?  Actually quite a bit, as this is the **time to ramp up lead generation** to replace exhibitors who don't sign up for next year's show plus also sell enough new exhibitors to increase the overall show's square footage. No sales plan is written to sell fewer exhibitors and less square footage – it's always more!  The challenge is how to sell more!

The most productive assist marketing can provide at this planning time comes from an **exhibitor data profiling process** that identifies, by selected criteria, which exhibitor segments are currently the most prevalent exhibitors.  Typically, this criteria is industry code (either SIC or NAICS), size of firm by employee, or some other relevant or available data element.  Once this profiling is done, then marketing can use this profile to **find companies who are "look-alikes" for a targeted lead generation** campaign.

This "look-alike" process is one of the most common ones in B2B marketing, and can be done with a number of data vendors. We can help in this process.  Once the prospective firms are identified, then a lead generation campaign should be developed.  This is another important topic for organizers and now fits into the role of Account Based Marketing.

We are not recommending this "look-alike" process replace the typical ways organizer sales groups go about finding new exhibitor prospects, but rather an approach to supplement these existing methods.  Hopefully, the prospective lead list is long and if so, marketing can support sales with content that promotes the value of exhibiting at the show.  **Our opinion is that the benefit of face-to-face meetings is increasing in today's post-pandemic world**.  This is an under promoted value of trade shows.

**To Sum Up:**
Successful marketing in all industries has its roots in good planning.  Good planning starts with an in-depth understanding of past campaigns and results.  No one disagrees with this.  Yet, many show organizers leave the insights available from data analytics on the floor, and thus **miss one of the most insightful tools for planning**.  Simply put, data-driven marketing and sales starts with a post-show analysis immediately after the show's over. Hopefully, we have laid out several processes and recommendations to improve market planning and thus next year's show results.

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Direct Hit Marketing (DHM) has been providing data analytics to the trade show industry for 30 years. DHM offers other data services to organizers and for a full description of these go to www.directhitmarketing.com/datasciencesolutions.

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