

How to Measure Exhibition Success

A Workbook for Marketers



Exhibitions

Business doesn't get any more direct than this

How high is 'up'?

Take a peek into the strategies and budgets of the world's most successful marketers and you're bound to find one medium figuring in them all: exhibitions.

Top marketers understand the power of exhibitions from experience. No other medium brings prospects to you. No other medium harnesses all five senses to make your company's people, products and services come to life. And no other medium can help you accomplish so many goals within so many disciplines - including sales, marketing, customer relationship management, market research, public relations and sales channel building.

The measure of success

Given the importance of exhibitions in the marketing mix, one would expect most companies to measure their exhibition activities closely.

In reality, all too many don't - a fact that concerns marketers and organisers alike.

In an effort to address this situation, we conducted a Round Table session plus a series of one-to-one interviews with marketers from a wide range of companies and industries.

This book, a practical guide to helping you measure your exhibition activities, is the result of this research.

Of course, UFI - the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, has a not-so-hidden agenda. We're convinced that the more marketers measure their exhibition results - and compare them to those of other media - the more they'll use exhibitions.

Method vs madness

Every exhibition is different for every exhibitor. No single measurement tool will work for everyone 'off-the-shelf'. Instead, each company needs to develop a simple measurement methodology that's appropriate to its needs and goals.

This guide provides a framework for developing your own approach to exhibition measurement. Try it. Use it. We think you'll be surprised at how easy it is - and at how much exhibitions already do for you that you may not even realise!

Scoring more goals

We've identified twenty-one goals exhibitions can help you achieve (see page 8), grouped under these six areas:

- Sales
- Customer Relationships
- Market Research
- Brand Building
- Channel Support
- Media Relations

No other medium helps you progress on all these fronts.



Why measure?

There are four major reasons for measuring the results of every exhibition you attend:

- **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 exhibitions for you** - Not all shows are alike. Measuring helps identify your winners.
 - **To improve your own activities** - What you do before, during and after each show can matter as much as which shows you choose. Measuring lets you improve your own team's performance and results.
 - **To encourage goal-driven activities** - What gets measured gets done. If you want to see your team focused on results, tell them what results you mean - and show them you're measuring!
- Put this way, it's easy to see why measuring your exhibition results is not just important, it's essential.

E=mc² ?

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

It's dangerous to jump to a conclusion about an event based on only one experience.

You might conclude that an event was wrong for your company when actually it was a competitor's special promotion that rained on your parade. Similarly, you might think your pre-show mailing was a major success when it may have been due to the show audience doubling.

The key is to capture your learning so that you can improve your plans over time.

The good news

The good news is that it can be done. Many of the most successful exhibitors have found an effective way to measure exhibition results.

The methodology you develop doesn't have to be elaborate or complex. Sometimes the simplest systems work the best and get used the most.

But measuring exhibition results is not as simple as counting business cards, and there's no 'one size fits all' solution. We may not be able to give you a standard score sheet, but we can show you how you can develop a system that works for you.



No goals, no glory

The three most important elements of any exhibition measurement system are goals, goals and goals.

You need to have a clear statement of what your company wants to accomplish before you can find out whether you've succeeded.

Counting sales leads is the easy part - everyone does that. But leads are far from the only thing you need to be measuring. In fact, we've identified twenty-one different goals that marketers achieve using exhibitions (see the box on the right).

You might want to use an exhibition to achieve any or all of these goals. But first you need to identify them, make them explicit, and decide how you're going to measure your success at achieving each one.

Quantifiable goals drive action

When it comes to exhibitions (and most other things) the best goals are quantified. Even when it comes to more 'fuzzy', qualitative goals, it's usually possible to find a way to measure success and build that metric into the goal itself.

So instead of stating the goal as, 'To earn media coverage', you might say, 'To earn five articles or product reviews in the top three trade titles over the next two months'.

You can see how much easier it would be to measure your performance against this goal when it's stated in a measurable way.

Make your goal-list comprehensive

As you can see from the list over the page, exhibitions can help you achieve a huge variety of goals. But to make the most of each show, you need your list of goals to reflect this.

Don't just stop at a sales-lead target. Try to capture all of the value you can get from your exhibition activities by listing (and pursuing) as many goals as apply. That's how you maximise your return on investment - and that's how you give each exhibition the credit it's due when it comes time to evaluate and set budgets.

Of course, a more complete list of goals will have to be realistic and prioritised - you can't expect to do everything every time out (though you'd be surprised how much you can achieve on a wide range of fronts in even a single exhibition).

Where to start goal-setting

If you've recorded your results from past shows, setting goals for an upcoming event will be much easier.

If you haven't got this historical data to work from, talk to the show organisers. They might have a sense of some reasonable targets - and can use past audience data to help.

You can also talk with other exhibitors who target similar people to find out what kind of results they've achieved.

In the absence of any of this input, just wing it! You've got to start somewhere. Your first goal-setting exercise might not be accurate, but if you take the trouble to capture your learning, you'll get better every time you exhibit.

Twenty-one goals!

Here are twenty-one specific goals that exhibitions can help you achieve:

Sales

- Generate sales leads
- Make direct sales
- Build a contact database

Customer Relationships

- Build relationships with current customers
- Educate customers
- Upsell and cross-sell customers
- Collect customer testimonials
- Re-sell lapsed customers

Market Research

- Market test a new product
- Research your marketing campaign
- Test market awareness and perceptions

Brand building

- Create or raise market awareness
- Position or re-position your brand
- Educate by demonstrating
- Boost financial analyst/investor perceptions
- Develop new markets

Channel Support

- Identify and recruit new distributors or partners
- Support your current sales channel
- Build your reputation as a partner

Media Relations

- Get on the 'media radar'/generate coverage
- Build relationships with key editors and journalists



The Measurement Matrix

This chart can help you translate the twenty-one general sales and marketing goals into simple metrics you can use.

Choose the most important strategic goals from the left-hand column, then create specific, tactical goals for your next exhibition, using the suggested metrics.



*Gross impressions is the total opportunities to see. i.e. total attendance of show plus readership of press in which coverage was achieved.

STRATEGIC GOAL	SUGGESTED METRICS	NOTES & SUGGESTIONS
Sales		
1.1 Generating sales leads	• Number of A, B, C leads, etc.	• Use quality rating system; (See page 12) • Use your sales conversion rate to measure value of leads
1.2 Direct sales	• Orders taken/Revenue	• At show, and in following weeks and months • Don't forget lifetime value of new customers
1.3 Building contact database	• Number of new contacts	• Use quality rating
Customer Relationships		
2.1 Building relationships with current customers	• Number of customers met & recorded	• You might pre-determine a desired action (e.g. a demonstration) for customers
2.2 Educating customers	• Number of 'update' sessions held	
2.3 Upselling/Cross-selling customers	• Number and value of sales to customers	• See 1.2
2.4 Generating customer testimonials	• Number and quality of quotes won	
2.5 Regaining lapsed customers	• Number and value of lapsed customers met	• Follow & record successes
Market Research		
3.1 Test marketing a new product or service	• Number & quality of feedback sessions	• Survey form? Questionnaire?
3.2 Test marketing campaign or offer	• Number & quality of feedback sessions	• Test a different offer each day?
3.3 Researching brand awareness/perception	• Number & quality of feedback sessions	
Brand Building		
4.1 Building brand awareness	• Number of *gross impressions at, during, after show • Number and quality of seminar/demonstration attendees	• Calculate equivalent value of these impressions if bought as advertising
4.2 Positioning/re-positioning brand	• *Gross impressions of specified message delivery • Number and quality of seminar/demonstration attendees	• Beyond 'logo viewings'
4.3 Demonstrating benefits	• Number and quality of seminar/demonstration attendees	
4.4 Boosting financial analyst/investor perceptions	• Editorial coverage in financial press	
4.5 Developing new markets	• Number/quality of contacts from new market	• Including new sector or country
Channel Building		
5.1 Finding new distributors/partners	• Number/quality of partners met or signed up	• Consider likely lifetime value
5.2 Supporting current sales channel	• Number of dealers/partners met	
5.3 Building your reputation as a partner	• Number/quality of prospective partners met	
Public Relations		
6.1 Generating editorial coverage	• Column inches/broadcast minutes gained	• Pre-, during and post-show
6.2 Building relationships with editors and journalists	• Number of editors/journalists met	• Calculate equivalent value of these impressions if bought as advertising • Quality of interaction

Ready, steady, measure!

So you've used the Measurement Matrix to develop your prioritised list of quantifiable goals. Now how do you measure your results against these goals?

Here are a few tips:

AT THE SHOW

- **Keep it simple** - Busy shows can be overwhelming. The simpler 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** - Check your progress each morning and throughout the day. If necessary, adjust your targets or change your activities.

Leads: It's about quality

The best exhibitors don't just measure the number of leads generated, they measure lead *quality* as well. One lead classification system grades every lead this way:

- A - Large order, ready to buy
- B - Small order, ready to buy OR Large order, longer time frame
- C - Small order, longer time frame
- D - Send literature or add name to database
- E - 'Other', e.g. press, salesmen...

However you choose to define it, lead quality is a key metric for all of your exhibition efforts.



SAMPLE MEASUREMENT FORM

Exhibition Report

COMPANY/DIVISION NAME:

EXHIBITION NAME:

DATES:

VENUE:

REPORTED AUDIENCE SIZE:

SHOW/STAND MANAGER:

REPORT AUTHOR:

REPORT DATE:

SHOW-RELATED MARKETING ACTIVITIES

- PRE-SHOW (LIST ADVERTISING, EDITORIAL, MAILINGS, E-MAIL, ETC.)

- AT SHOW (DESCRIBE STAND SIZE, THEME, ACTIVITIES, COMPETITIONS, SPONSORSHIPS - ATTACH PHOTO IF POSSIBLE)

- POST-SHOW (DESCRIBE MAILINGS, EDITORIAL, ETC.)

- OTHER MARKETING NOTES (DESCRIBE COMPETITOR ACTIVITIES, STAND LOCATION ISSUES, ETC.)

STATED GOALS (SEE MATRIX, E.G. - (TO GENERATE 50 A LEADS AND 150 B LEADS)

TO DEMONSTRATE NEW PRODUCT TO 35 EXISTING CUSTOMERS

TO EARN THREE FEATURE ARTICLES AND FIVE PRODUCT REVIEWS IN TOP SIX MAGAZINES...

ACTUAL RESULTS (INCLUDE SPECIFICS, I.E. VALUE OF NEW BUSINESS GENERATED, ETC.)

NOTES ON RESULTS

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Keep in touch

AFTER THE SHOW

- **Hold an instant de-brief** - You're all exhausted, but a short de-briefing session with all stand staff can help capture the most important learning while it's fresh.
- **Write a quick topline report** - Once you get back to the office, summarise the results so far and share them with the team - noting that more leads, sales or benefits will likely continue to come in.
- **Keep the books open** - New business can come in for weeks and months after an event. Be sure to update your show report to reflect this.
- **Consider long-term value of new business** - Even an event that generated one new customer could be a smashing success - if that customer spends a lot every year for many years.
- **Write a final report** - Summarise the results achieved against each goal you set. Share the report with key managers from sales, marketing and top management. By the time the next year's show comes up, you should all have a pretty complete idea of the value of your participation.

Again, the goal here is not to create paperwork but to capture your learning so that you can improve your exhibition marketing over time.

The measuring and reporting should become second nature - an integral part of your exhibition activities. Once that happens, the improvements must follow.



In a sense, this booklet is a work in progress. We need to know how marketers currently measure their exhibition performance. How have you got on with the tools discussed here and what have you found effective in your own exhibitions?

Please let us know how you approach measuring your exhibition activities. You can e-mail us at info@ufi.org or drop us a note at the address on the back of this booklet. Over time, we hope to create a best-practice knowledge base that we can share with all marketers on our website.

More help

There are two important resources that can help you make the most of your investment in exhibitions:

- **Your show organiser** - Talk to your organiser team about your company's targets. They can help you establish reasonable goals - and achieve them.
- **UFI - the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry** - We're here to help. Call the UFI on +33 (0)1 42 67 99 12 or visit www.ufi.org for more information.

About UFI

UFI - the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry is the leading voice of the exhibition industry. Our members are committed to making exhibitions work hard for both exhibitors and visitors and to maintaining the highest standards of professional service. When you see the UFI logo on an event, it is nothing less than a seal of approval.

UFI offers membership packages for organisers, service providers, associations and for venue owners. For more information call +33 (0)1 42 67 99 12 or visit the association website on www.ufi.org.

UFI has produced two more free booklets for marketers:

- **Exhibitions Work:** The case for a powerful, cost-effective medium
- **How To Exhibit:** Maximising the power of exhibitions

To order your copies, call +33 (0)1 42 67 99 12 or email info@ufi.org





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