

Shake up your event results!

In the past, a number of trade show directors have said to me, “we’re doing an adequate job and getting average results, but what do we need to do to get great results?” Many companies that participate in conferences and tradeshow are frequently so busy, that their staff is looking at executing and not strategically planning events over time. Where do you stand? Are you just getting average results and need to do better?

In my view, there are four parts to improving your performance and turning average results into great ones:

The strategic view:

- 1) **Hire the Pros-** Get an objective non-company expert to look at your soup to nuts plan and perhaps attend an event to get the true picture. This could be a paid expert, or a ‘friend’ from another non-competitive company who is willing to do you a favor. I would direct to hire a consultant to do an ‘event audit’ if you can afford it. The outside person will help you find things that might not be evident to someone who works on the events from day to day
- 2) **Go to an event outside of your field** – Take a visit to an event and go and speak with the exhibitors who are there. Better yet, contact the show organizer and ask for someone to meet with you at the event to give you a tour(if they have time) and perhaps further ideas that you can use.

Prior to the show:

- 1) **Increase your pre-show marketing-** It is assumed that you are doing some pre-marketing before the event. If so, try something different which will help you draw people to come to the event. Ask the show organizer for ideas and perhaps work some ideas together with the show organizer. Frequently they have programs which are free or low cost to you, which will help them draw attendance to the event. If you are not promoting your participation prior to the event, consider building up this part of your marketing strategy, whether mailing or emailing customers and prospects about something new you’ll be featuring at the show.
- 2) **Change the messaging-** Is there a new application of your product or service? It is assumed that your annual tradeshow marketing plan has connection with your product development folks and that since they are rolling new ‘stuff’ off the assembly line and your tradeshow plan is an extension of that plan, your message is periodically being renewed. If not, consider updating your messaging at least quarterly.

At the show:

- 1) **Try something new onsite-** If the logo laden stress balls aren't cutting it any more, then consider doing something more interactive and lasting, that filters the right prospects to you, such as a dinner for your best prospects or cocktail reception.
- 2) **Change the 'look' of your booth-** Review and change your signage and graphics periodically and if you can afford it, plan to give your booth a major re-vamp annually.
- 3) **Change your onsite marketing collateral-** Does it showcase your latest products and services? Are they focused on features or benefits? Could they use a re-design? Again consider updating, changing the format annually.
- 4) **Bring in new booth staff and content experts-** Are the staff that is in your booth excited and happy to be at the show? As I have mentioned in past articles, energized booth staff are key to enticing the right prospects and services, so if you need to bring other staff, then change who you bring to the event.

After the show:

- 1) **Try different measurement tools-** One of my favorites is the ROI Toolkit which has been built by the Center for Exhibition Industry Research(CEIR) and the Professional Convention Management Association(PCMA):

<http://roitoolkit.exhibitsurveys.net/Home/Welcome.aspx>

Perhaps you are doing better than you are, or you just aren't tracking people the right way. The tool above will give you a tighter way of measuring what you are doing.

- 2) **Get attendance audits-** As I have said before in past articles, having a third party auditing the attendance and demographics of the event will give you an indication whether you actually attending an event for your target audience. If you don't have this information from the event organizer, ask for it!

Your job is to get new leads for your business. Although you are increasingly busy, it's good to take a look periodically at the forest from above! Optimally you will look at your results overall annually and your show to show results after each event. If you're not getting the results you need, put on the strategic hat and take a chance, you'll be surprised how well you do!

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