

Tradeshhow Tip Sheet

This month: Eeny, Meeny, Miney, Show?

- > 1865 Beach Ave NE
- > Salem, OR 97301
- > 503-371-9411
- > Fax: 503-371-9402
- > www.interpexhibits.com
- > info@interpexhibits.com
- > Editor: Tim Patterson

Which Tradeshhow(s) Should You Attend?

Different tradeshows in different cities can look the same at first glance. One show may have a big overlap with nearly the same set of exhibitors as another show. But the shows are miles apart in their goals, marketing thrust, training sessions and audience attendees. So which show should you go to?

It's not always an easy answer. In a perfect world, your company should be able to find several likely shows each year to hawk your wares. Budgets often don't let companies do ALL the exhibiting that they'd like, however, so you have to pick and choose. What questions do you ask and how do you best determine what shows you should attend – and what objectives and goals do you set for those shows?

Some things to look at include show location, cost of the show, who's attending, the overall cost vs. your expected ROI and of course how those factors mesh with your various goals for the shows. It's also worth considering exhibiting if you can reach a hot market where your competitors are NOT exhibiting. For example, if you offer a service to an industry – but you're not IN the industry – going to a hot industry show may open a multitude of doors that you hadn't previously considered (for instance, offering design packaging for exhibitors at a food industry show).

Location, Location, Location...?

The closer the show, the lower the level of entry – generally speaking – at least for your transportation and shipping costs. If you have a choice between exhibiting at a regional show vs. crossing the country to exhibit at a similar show, the first factor to consider is the cost of shipping your booth and of transporting your crew.

The second critical factor – and maybe more important – is how does the show location affect the product or service you sell? If you can market nationwide, it may make no difference if you exhibit in Boston or Los Angeles. But if your product distribution is weaker on the east coast than the west, that may affect your decision in a positive or negative way. If you are looking for increased distribution on the east coast, exhibiting at the show may be a smart move. Again it de-

pends on other factors such as who is attending (are they good prospects for growing your distribution chain?), or the difficulty of branching out.

A third important factor to consider is: what is the biggest benefit to exhibiting in a distant location? For instance, if the payoff is to crack new markets at a relatively low cost, that may be a deciding factor.



Does the show open up a new market to your company? Is the cost of exhibiting in line with your expectations?



Who's on our latest tradeshow marketing podcast?

Find out today at www.Tradeshowguy.com/podcast

What does the audience makeup of the show tell you? Does the show you're considering give you access to your market?

How Much is That Booth Space in the Window?

Seasoned exhibitors know what it costs to exhibit at any given show. They just crunch the figures from the last few times they attended that show, plug in any anticipated or published changes and run the numbers again. It's all part of the budgeting and marketing process.

If your company, however, is much newer to exhibiting, just renting the booth space may seem daunting. Which is why a lot of newer exhibitors might consider looking at starting smaller shows closer to home, even if they aren't the 'ideal' show. It's a great way to get a few shows under their belt before stepping up to the challenge and expense of a large national show with several thousand competitive exhibitors.

Booth rental space is the cost of entry. But of course there are always add-ons. Some may make sense, others may not. Things that will increase

your booth rental costs include drayage, electricity, carpet rental, booth set-up and dismantle, booth cleaning and more. Technology has taken away some of the extras that you used to have to pay for, such as telephone lines or internet access, which means that the cost for services a show offers continue to push upward.



Visitor, Shmisitor

Before committing to a specific event, understand as much as you can about the audience makeup. The show producers should have oodles of information on attendees. Go over the attendance breakdown of CEO's, decision-makers, marketing managers, shop stewards, whatever – and determine which show is the most likely to reach the people and companies who are most likely to become your customers. It's often not a snap decision and may take some digging to see what the attendee makeup really reveals.

If you can think long-term about your exhibiting plans, it may be a good idea to attend the show before you actually exhibit at it. Buy a pass, spend

a couple of days at the show as an attendee, ask questions, take notes, take a few pictures, talk to lots of people (exhibitors and attendees) and get a feel for how your booth would fit in at the show. The experience of having attended a show before you actually set up a booth is invaluable and will help shape your decisions when it comes time to exhibit.

Bottom Line

With the huge amount of possible shows you can exhibit at, determining which shows to attend and which not to attend is often the hardest decision for the tradeshow marketing manager. The more information you have, the more people you talk to – and of course the more experience you have at exhibiting – the easier the decision becomes.

Making the decision on WHICH show to spend your company's exhibiting dollars is a critical decision – it may be the most critical in your tradeshow marketing strategy. If you have the perfect booth, the trained staff, great products and services to offer, but the show is off the mark, your impact is greatly diminished.