



Looking Back to Move Forward: How to Make This Your Best Tradeshow Ever!

By Jefferson Davis, Competitive Edge

Plato once said *“the unexamined life is not worth living”*. With a key show coming upon you, you can use Plato’s sage advice to improve your tradeshow program. Now is the perfect time to take a careful look back at your exhibit program to determine what worked, what didn’t, and most importantly what you need to do to take it to the next level this year.

Tradeshows are truly one of your most effective marketing and sales media, if done properly. You can get more done in three days at a tradeshow than you could in weeks or even months in the field IF you are prepared to take advantage of the many opportunities presented.

However, for a variety of reasons, many exhibitors fail to take full advantage of the opportunities presented. The reality is that too many exhibitors end up making *“expensive appearances”* that deliver no meaningful or measurable contribution to their company's sales and marketing objectives. And it really doesn’t have to be this way.

Decide right now that this will be the year you convert your company's exhibiting program from making *“expensive appearances”* to making meaningful and measurable contributions to your company's sales and marketing objectives.

To help you with this analysis, here is a list of 26 critical exhibiting questions you should ask to identify specific areas for improving your tradeshow performance:

1. How many shows did you exhibit at?
2. What was your process for selecting these shows?
3. What were your specific reasons for exhibiting?
4. Did you convert your reasons to specific exhibiting goals?
5. Were your goals converted to written action plans?
6. Did you have a process in place to measure and report progress made toward your goals?
7. How much did you invest in tradeshows in total?
8. Do you know where your money was spent by major exhibiting category?
9. Do you have a detailed tradeshow budgeting procedure that helps you manage and report exhibit spending?
10. How much floor space did you rent and why?
11. What was the focus of your exhibit?
12. Was your exhibit interactive or static?
13. Did you create an exhibit experience worthy of an attendee's time?
14. What specifically did you do to promote your exhibit prior to the show?

15. How satisfied were you with the quantity and quality of traffic at your exhibit?
16. Who staffed your exhibit and why?
17. What did you do prior to the show to prepare your staff for success?
18. How well did your staff interact with booth visitors? How do you know?
19. What was your procedure for qualifying and capturing leads?
20. How did you route and track the progress of your tradeshow leads?
21. Did you have a specific plan for lead follow-up?
22. Do you have a procedure for measuring and reporting exhibiting performance and results?
23. What was your Cost Per Lead?
24. What was your Cost Per Interaction?
25. What was your Return on Objectives?
26. What was your exhibiting Return on Investment?

Your answers to these questions or lack thereof, will point the way toward creating rapid and significant improvement in your exhibiting performance and results.

Jefferson Davis, president of Competitive Edge is known as the “*Tradeshow Turnaround Artist*”. Since 1991, his consulting and training services have helped clients improve their tradeshow performance and results to the tune of over \$500M. Mr. Davis can be reached at 704-814-7355 or Jefferson@tradeshowturnaround.com