

SUCCESSFUL EXHIBIT MARKETING

by Bob Dallmeyer

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Introduction:

Exhibitions are the best face-to-face marketing opportunity for companies around the world. They provide outstanding sales, marketing, research, branding, financial, and other rewards for companies that understand some important exhibition marketing fundamentals.

Executive decision-makers consistently rank exhibitions as their “Number One” choice for obtaining purchasing information -- beating out 12 other business media choices, including direct mail, advertising, telemarketing, etc. Exhibitions are the only sales and marketing medium that delivers a pre-qualified visitor to your company’s stand in a face-to-face selling environment. And these visitors, called visitors, invest their own valuable time and expenses to be at the exhibition. This is truly an outstanding marketing opportunity.

Peter Drucker, in his book *Post Capitalist Society*, calls this new century the age of specialization and knowledge. “We no longer make or move things; we apply knowledge to knowledge.” And because exhibitions are the prime opportunity to accomplish this, *UFI, The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry*, presents this marketing resource for exhibiting companies and exhibition organizers, who can share this information with their exhibitors. Much of the research data is based on studies originally performed by the Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR), based in Chicago, Illinois, USA.

Step 1: Selecting the Right Exhibition for Your Company

Choosing the best exhibition that matches your company’s sales, marketing, branding, or other objectives is your first step toward success. It is a challenge, however, since there are an estimated 30,000 business-to-business exhibitions held each year all over the world.

Here are some thoughts to facilitate your selection process:

1. Focus on those global exhibitions offered in the industry sector that are appropriate for your company.
2. Evaluate these exhibitions according to their importance within that sector, as well as their local, national, or international appeal. For example, how long have they been operating?
3. If your competition is exhibiting in these events, it may be a good indicator that you should consider exhibiting.
4. Carefully review the audience demographics (the published metrics or data about the visitors, exhibitors, press, VIPs, etc.). The exhibition visitor profile should offer your company a good potential for making sales or gathering sales leads. Do your customers attend the exhibition?

5. If your focus is on company branding, these visitor metrics should help you determine if there is an opportunity to achieve this.
6. Be sure that the company producing the exhibition has a good financial reputation. Find out how long they have been in business.
7. The total geographical area served by the exhibition should match your marketing needs.
8. The facility where the exhibition will be held should be evaluated, particularly for its technology offerings?
9. Evaluate the city where the exhibition will be held - are there good hotels nearby? What about entertainment opportunities for meeting with your current customers?
10. Consider accessibility to exhibition by air, rail, auto, since this will affect attendance. Are there other transportation options available?
11. Evaluate the support services offered at the exhibition. For example, translation services are usually required.
12. Finally, the time of year the exhibition will be held and political considerations can be important factors.

After a thorough study, contact those exhibitions that are appropriate for your company's marketing goals and needs. Remember that exhibitions are about making sales immediately, or significantly shortening the sales process for future sales.

Step 2: Setting Objectives

The second step toward exhibiting success is establishing objectives for your company's participation. The sad truth is that 71 percent of exhibiting companies do not set objectives or plan strategies for their participation. Even worse, only half of these companies with objectives ever follow through on their stand. However, those companies that establish and measure objectives consistently achieve great success.

Objectives provide direction for every aspect of your company's exhibition participation: your marketing strategies, branding plans, budgets, exhibit architecture, graphics, products, literature, IT support, and the necessary staff.

Objectives & Sales

Objectives also stimulate sales performance in the stand, particularly if they are measured in terms of their quantity and quality of contacts by the staff. This means you should turn your company objectives into personal goals for each member of your staff to achieve at the exhibition. Research consistently proves that successful exhibiting companies make sales related objectives their priority.

Basic Objectives

To set objectives, you must define what your company wants to sell, promote, market, brand, or communicate in an exhibition -- and to whom. Typical objectives are any combination of the following:

- 1. Increase sales through new orders or qualified trade show leads*
- 2. Introduce new products or services*
- 3. Enhance your relationships with current customers*
- 4. Conduct market research*
- 5. Obtain contact names for the company's e-mail list*
- 6. Open new markets or territories*
- 7. Gain media exposure*
- 8. Check out the competition*
- 9. Enhance the company image or brand*
- 10. Conduct sales meetings in conjunction with the exhibit*
- 11. Provide education to the visitors*
- 12. Recruit new employees.*

Setting objectives is the first step in any successful exhibition marketing activity. As the marketing guru, Lawrence J. Peter, wrote: *"If you don't know where you're going, you will probably end up somewhere else."*

Step 3: Target Marketing

Target marketing is the next important step in the exhibition marketing process. In theory, it's quite simple: you contact the visitors you want to see at an exhibition and tell them where your stand is located and what you are exhibiting, branding, demonstrating, etc.

Visitor Categories

At an established exhibition, the visitor group is composed of the following categories:

- 1. Buyers and/or specifiers of purchases, some of whom will be attending for the first time, while others are loyal visitors, returning year after year;*
- 2. Press representatives (both print and electronic);*
- 3. Very Important Persons, VIPs or Opinion Makers;*
- 4. International visitors;*
- 5. Students, who may be influential buyers in the future;*
- 6. Others involved with the industry.*

Actual Target Audience

It is important at this point to be realistic about the number of visitors you can expect to meet at any exhibition. You and your team must understand that not every visitor has an interest

in what your company is exhibiting. In fact, research proves that approximately 15 percent of an exhibition audience has general interests in any product or service category. To be certain in your exhibition planning, consider 10 percent as your specific target audience.

Step 4: Pre-Show Communications with First Time Visitors

Contacting this target audience is a matter of choosing between many communications options, but keep this in mind: visitors spend their own money and give up valuable time to be at the exhibition – so you must do everything possible to make their investment worth the effort. Also, use the appropriate language or dialect in your communications.

At a typical exhibition, *40 percent of the audience is attending for the first time.* Furthermore, *over 50 percent of these important buyers and/or purchasing specifiers will not attend another exhibition in the year ahead.* This creates a tremendous marketing opportunity for your company. In fact, *research shows that 88 percent of your prospects were probably not contacted by one of your field sales representatives in the previous year.* So you need to let these new prospects know about your participation. Here are some suggestions about how to do that:

1. Advertise in pre-show publications – both print and electronic - and special show issues of your industry's trade journals. Remember to mention the important sales features of your exhibit, where it's located, who will be on the stand, etc. *Pre-show advertising can more than double your stand activity during a show, since 83 percent of the visitors use show "previews" to help them plan their visit.*

2. Offer "show specials" or other promotions in the stand to positively position your company and its products. And personalize your marketing message to each audience segment: *Let them know that if they do business with you, life will be better and they will save money.*

3. Take advantage of all the new promotion opportunities on the Internet. Most exhibition organizers provide direct links with your company's Web site, as well as excellent on-line advertising opportunities. "Banner advertising" or web logs, called "blogs," can effectively call attention to your stand's special features and its location. Remember to use the appropriate languages.

Step 5: Pre-Show Communications with Long Time Visitors

Another important CEIR Research finding: *60 percent of a typical exhibition audience has been attending for two or more consecutive years.*

The exhibition organizer can help you effectively reach this visitor group by providing mailing lists and other database information. You can then use targeted direct mail to tell these important

buyers and/or purchasing specifiers that you are hoping to see them at the show this year. *An effective direct mail program can increase visitors to your stand by 53 percent.*

Direct Mail

Personalized direct mail is a highly effective motivator, and you should try to send at least three mailings. Research proves that each mailing increases the response rate in your stand: one mailing gets 25 percent visitor response, two mailings generate 50 percent and three mailings create a 75 percent increase. Furthermore, the buyers' perception of your company's presence at an exhibition increases positively with each mailing you send.

Specialty Items

Give-aways, or specialty items, creatively used in conjunction with direct mail are also quite effective. Choose a unique item, if possible, one that is memorable and environmentally friendly. Consider this approach: Send one half of a specialty item to these previous visitors and invite them to pick up the other half in your stand during the show.

Advertising

Advertising to this group is also important because it reinforces your show presence and enhances your company's recognition. You might even consider some follow-up telemarketing to key prospects and opinion makers; this personal contact makes a very positive impact.

Also, evaluate a variety of advertising opportunities, as each can be effective, depending on your needs: World Wide Web sites, print advertising in show publications, industry journals, local and regional edition newspapers, outdoor billboards, radio and television, hotel video programs, multimedia kiosks or banners placed throughout the exhibition, shuttle bus advertising, and more.

Newsletters

Either printed or electronic, newsletters are another effective way to promote your participation in an exhibition. It should be easy to read and filled with valuable information targeting your current customers and prospects. It can be in several languages, according to the visitor profile, yet focused on techniques to increase profitability. A newsletter permits you to position your company as an expert in your industry sector. It is more effective when sent before the event and post-show, as a final promotion.

Sponsorships

Sponsorships are particularly effective in demonstrating your support for an exhibition. Be sure that the sponsorship package offers opportunities for increased exposure for your company. And make sure your target audience knows that you are a sponsor in the exhibition, as it underscores your commitment to their industry.

Finally, don't leave anything to chance: make exhibitions an integral part of your company's total marketing mix. *Research shows that exhibitors who carefully plan and integrate*

other marketing media into their exhibit programs are more successful at attracting their targeted audiences and converting them into qualified sales leads.

Step 6: Management Perspectives

Never doubt that your pre-show activity is worth the effort, since 75 percent of all visitors arrive at an exhibition with a predetermined agenda as to whom they plan to see and very often what they plan to evaluate and buy. You want your company to be one of them and pre-show promotions are the best way to do that. Also, for the larger mega-shows where visitors must be highly efficient with their time, they are greatly influenced by what they see/ hear prior to the show.

CEO Studies

Incomm International (based in Chicago, IL) asked chief executives why they attended exhibitions and their responses were overwhelmingly positive:

84 percent said they attended for personal contact with their customers;

78 percent wanted to assess the marketplace and exhibitions were the best way to do that;

69 percent wanted to see what their competition was doing;

66 percent came to support their exhibition staff.

Here's another bit of interesting research: *A survey of CEO's found that 18 percent attended an exhibition because some exhibiting company gave them a complimentary pass.* If the exhibition organizer offers complimentary show registrations, by all means use them to further reinforce your participation with this management group.

Finally, a recent study of the most successful companies at exhibitions found that they had one thing in common: they all engaged in pre-show promotion, or target marketing. Some companies mistakenly think that the exposition organizer is solely responsible for getting a quality audience to the event. Smart exhibitors know that they share the responsibility and promotions are the key. The bottom line is that everything you do in advance pays real dividends at the show.

Step 7: Staffing Your Exhibit

Your most important consideration is to select people who are enthusiastic about your company and its products to work on your stand. If you have multi-lingual persons, that's an added bonus.

If you have a large stand, consider using a mix of employees – that is, executives, sales/ marketing specialists, and technical support persons -- as each fulfills a vital role in dealing with

prospects and customers. For example, research indicates that technical support people are especially valuable for giving on-the-spot solutions about high technology products or services, plus they relate better to show visitors with similar backgrounds.

If your budget limits you to having a few people on the stand, have a telephone or computer link to your technical department or home office for instant solutions to visitors' questions.

Visitors remember far more about an exhibit than just booth design and literature: the appearance of your staff is very important, as they represent an integral part of your image on the show floor. Also, their ability to converse in the appropriate language of the region is necessary; you may have to hire translators or students to ensure a positive experience in the stand.

In the final analysis, it is most important that you have an exhibit team that works well together, is knowledgeable about your products/ services, and is helpful to the visitors.

Step 8. Pre Show Staff Seminar

It's good business practice to always hold a pre-show seminar in your exhibit or a nearby conference or hotel room before every exhibition. Everyone working the stand should attend this meeting. Here's a possible meeting agenda to guide you:

1. *Introduce everyone on the team, including translators;*
2. *Review the stand, the exhibit structure & graphics, its layout;*
3. *Discuss the marketing plan;*
4. *Review objectives for each member of the team;*
5. *Discuss the products to be displayed and/or demonstrated;*
6. *Outline plans for greeting current customers at the exhibition;*
7. *Present the staffing schedule;*
8. *Discuss the lead qualifying and selling processes;*
9. *Explain how to complete lead forms on prospects;*
10. *Finally, discuss how to relate effectively to the prospects with buying power.*

Staff Goals

When reviewing your company objectives, give every team member personal goals to achieve during each hour he or she is on the stand. Show them how to efficiently work in your exhibit, and remind them that you only have 5 seconds to make a positive impression with the visitors – so be alert at all times. A negative impression takes at least 30 minutes to correct. *The better prepared your staff is, the greater your chances of achieving success.*

Step 9: Selling from the Stand

Some team members may not know how to sell in the exhibit and others may be attending the exhibition for the first time. It is important to help these people be successful by offering them a thorough briefing about the show, its audience, and proper selling techniques.

A recent study of executive decision makers found that 46 percent of them purchased products while attending an exhibition. And 26 percent signed purchase orders at the last show they attended. Therefore, it's important for your team to be able to make sales in the stand, not just obtain leads.

Basics of Selling

To help your staff do this, review with them the *three basic steps* to selling at exhibitions:

1. *Sell yourself,*
2. *Sell your company,*
3. *Sell your product or service.*

For some of your team, the big problem is "*selling yourself*" in the exhibition environment and this is where some coaching about greeting strangers helps. Also, assess each individual's people and language skills, and be prepared to work a little more with those persons who may not be comfortable meeting people. Some companies use a buddy system, teaming a self-conscious or shy person with a more outgoing one, who acts as coach. Others match sales people with technical people, to create a winning combination. And, all successful exhibiting companies hold daily staff meetings to build team spirit.

Next, "*selling the company*" phase was underway long before the show opened. Exhibitions are part of your company's marketing mix, so all the branding on your website, the pre-show advertising, direct mail, press releases, and other promotions create a company awareness level that translates into visitor confidence and recognition in the stand. However, all your sales and marketing messages must be consistent and fully integrated. In today's competitive marketplace, it's recognition that works best for your company's stand.

The final step, "*selling the product,*" is often the easiest, since most team members have some product knowledge. However, moving from the product discussion phase to closing the sale may not be easy for them to accomplish, as it's much different than a sales call in the prospect's office, because you have only a few minutes to bring the prospect into the stand, qualify her or him, have a meaningful discussion, get the lead or sale information, and then disengage. To repeat: the more comfortable your staff is with exhibition marketing basics, the more successful they will be at the show.

Step 10: Working with the Press

It's a known fact that more than half of all exhibition visitors want to see "*what's new*" in products and services. "*New*" is one of the two most effective words in communications today, which is why "*new*" and exhibitions are synonymous. Therefore, make sure your company promotes its *new* products, *new* services, *new* personnel, and even *new* facilities at exhibitions. In the stand, use bold graphics, demonstrations, and other effective methods to get the visitor's attention. Pay attention to have proper translations of the appropriate languages. *Experience has shown that hands-on/ interactive presentations involving the audience make new products or services more memorable and their introduction more successful.*

Press Release

Prepare a press release on "*what's new*" for your company. Here are some suggestions about the press release:

1. *Avoid using exaggerated sales terms (called 'hype') as they generally don't translate well;*
2. *Be brief, yet factual;*
3. *Include photos with descriptions (captions);*
4. *Send press releases to all official show publications before the show;*
5. *Post it on the Internet;*
6. *Prepare press kits for your stand and the exhibition press office.*

Press Conference

You may want to schedule a press conference during the exhibition. This may include sending special invitations in advance of the exhibition, special treatment for VIPs, speeches by company leaders, printed, electronic and audiovisual support materials, food and drinks, other amenities (like a souvenir of the event). Successful media relations are highly important for a company's marketing efforts.

Step 11: Managing Expectations in the Stand

As stated before, 15 percent of a typical exhibition audience has a general interest and 10 percent has a specific interest in products, services, or companies at the exhibition. Therefore, you should target your sales or lead projections for this 10 percent audience segment. Any contacts or prospects exceeding that figure are an added bonus (and probably the result of excellent team work).

Projecting Stand Activity

Another important concept: your overall sales activity is based on the number of persons working in the stand, as well as their ability to interact with the visitors. Here's an example: If it takes about ten minutes to discuss, demonstrate and qualify an visitor/prospect in your stand, then each staff member could possibly *make six leads per hour*. However, this doesn't allow time

for breaks, lunch, etc. Also, the number of visitors in the aisle varies from hour to hour, so there will be times when your stand activity is very slow. So, for this example, perhaps four leads per hour per staff member is a better target. By multiplying the number of hours a person works in the exhibit by this four leads per hour, you have an individual's total lead-making opportunity. Add up the totals for everyone working the stand and you have the *maximum lead activity* you can expect for the show.

In certain exhibitions, your company may be gathering prospects' names and addresses for post-show follow-up or to add to your e-mail database. In this case, obtaining great quantities of leads per hour is possible. In fact, it may be useful to have one person solely responsible for entering these names into your database.

Step 12: Networking and Your Competition

Networking is the responsibility of everyone working your stand, including top management. Face-to-face meetings with customers, prospects, the press, students, and industry leaders are extremely beneficial for future sales and company growth. Therefore, allocate time in each day for this important function.

Another staff responsibility is to see what the competition is doing at the exhibition. Observe their stand activity and, if possible, visit with the competitors to learn what they are introducing, demonstrating, selling, etc. This is particularly helpful to new employees of your company, as it permits them to watch the competition in action.

Step 13: Meeting Your Current Customers

Research shows that 95 percent of all decision makers meet with their current suppliers at exhibitions. That's why customer appreciation should be an important part of your exhibition marketing strategy. And if you need more motivation, *remember that your competition is targeting your customers as prospects to grow their companies*. Research also reveals that 77 percent of these decision makers found at least one new supplier at the last exhibition they attended.

Exhibitions bring together many competing companies and visitors can easily compare many products and suppliers in a short time. Therefore, the stand is an excellent platform for your company to let your customers know how important they are. You should know in advance which of your customers is attending and plan to spend quality time with them, not only in the stand, but at social functions in the evenings. Find out if they have specific requirements or product questions, and have the appropriate staff members on hand to answer them. Don't overlook this important customer activity, or your competition could seize the advantage.

This is known as relationship selling. Here are some reasons, based on extensive research, why customers visit your stand:

1. *To learn about the latest styles, trends, modifications, improvements, etc. to their existing products and/or services;*
2. *To see the newest product offerings;*
3. *To meet with technical representatives regarding equipment updates or problem solving;*
4. *To meet the management team;*
5. *To compare and evaluate competitive products;*
6. *To pay a social visit or attend a hospitality function;*
7. *To network;*
8. *To purchase something new.*

Step 14: Greeting Prospects on the Stand

It's a general rule that at most exhibitions, 86 percent of the visitors have "*buying power*" -- that means they either make their company's purchases or directly influence the purchasing decisions. Therefore, it's smart marketing to treat everyone coming into your stand as a potential new customer. Consider this: if someone takes the time to visit with you, there has to be some level of interest in your company or its products. Finding what that interest is and turning it into a positive relationship is the challenge for your exhibit sales team.

Research also shows that 94 percent of the buyers at exhibitions compare similar products, sometimes just for reassurance that they are getting the best products available. Many of these product comparisons involve your staff and their presentations, so remind them about being friendly, knowledgeable, and brief. In fact, more than half the exhibition audience, including your customers, is testing your staff's product and company knowledge, while 19 percent is checking their attitude. Therefore, it is very important that your team understands that, during the show, they are the only representation of your company, so there is just no room for a "*bad show day*."

Another key point about exhibitions: only fifteen percent of the audience (at most) is comfortable being approached directly by your sales team. Most visitors prefer to approach your staff, in their own manner. In a study by Incomm International of visitors who visited exhibits but did not achieve their objectives found this:

- (a) *Sixteen percent didn't trust or feel comfortable with the exhibit salesperson.* Suggestion: It's a good idea to plan breaks away from the stand to keep your team relaxed and refreshed so they make good eye contact and smile with sincerity. Also remind them to read visitors' facial expressions and not try to greet people while standing in the aisles.

(b) *Twenty-eight percent said no one assisted them when they came into the stand.*

Suggestion: Sometimes the staff is too busy with prospects or customers, and little can be done to accommodate everyone. However, if your sales team spends valuable time talking to each other or on their cell phones, you have a major problem of lost sales time. If translation services are required, there may not be anyone available to assist at a given moment. When not engaged in conversations with prospects, the staff should be standing near the aisles, ready to greet and qualify likely prospects. If you divide your total exhibition costs by the number of hours the show is open, you quickly realize the true value of each moment in the stand.

(c) *Forty-two percent felt that the salesperson didn't understand their needs.* Suggestion: Be sure the staff listens carefully to what the prospects are saying and responds appropriately. During the exhibition selling process, careful listening often puts the prospect in the role of helping to make the sale.

Step 15: Qualifying Prospects

Research shows that companies with formal staff training significantly increase their ability to convert their stand visitors into qualified leads. Exhibitions are an outstanding opportunity for obtaining qualified sales leads. In one recent study, 76 percent of executive decision makers asked for price quotations at the last exhibition they attended. Equally important, 51 percent requested a sales representative to visit their company.

However, not all visitor prospects can make purchasing decisions at the exhibition – they only want to compare companies, products, services, prices, etc. The exhibit staff should understand this and be able to gather important sales lead information so that any sales contact is facilitated. Pricing information, quotations, and future sales calls can be expedited in this manner. Timing is one of the most important criteria, since all exhibition leads (or new sales opportunities) have a distinct time period within which they can be accomplished.

To summarize, qualifying visitor prospects consists of the following:

1. *Be sure there is a need for your product or service;*
2. *Be sure there is a reasonable buying time period;*
3. *Be sure there is adequate funding or budget;*
4. *Be sure the contact has power to make or influence purchases.*

Step 16: Lead Classification

Some companies use a “*lead classification system*” which reflects the two important variables affecting an exhibition lead: *Time* and *Money*. The time frame within which a product or

service will be purchased by the visitor is the first critical consideration, so that your company's response can be completed on time. The next consideration is the amount of money involved in the possible purchase, since this often dictates the level of your company's effort in the lead follow-up process.

Here's a simple lead classification system that works for many companies around the world:

"A" Lead: Large money value, short purchasing time period

"B" Lead: Small money value, short purchasing time period - or -
Large money value, long purchasing time period

"C" Lead: Small money value, long purchasing time period

"D" Lead: Send literature and/or add name to e-mailing list.

Another reason for this classification process is simply this: when the exhibition is over and everyone is exhausted, the only sales leads that need immediate attention are the "A" and "B" leads. The others can be followed up in the weeks ahead, when the team is more rested.

Many companies use Internet-based lead handling systems to ensure that leads are properly recorded, classified, and followed up. These systems are often used to automatically prepare the prospect's letter, with pricing information, and set the stage for subsequent face-to-face meetings with company representatives.

Finally, and most important, keep track of all your exhibition leads so you can measure your ultimate sales success and overall results. This will also help you justify future exhibition investments, as well as compare results between different shows. It's a proven fact: Companies that measure their results are far more successful at exhibition selling.

Step 17: Working Smarter in the Stand

Research proves that we are at our peak performance level for a maximum of 4 to 6 hours in the stand. After that, we start to become exhausted, both physically and psychologically. It is important to recognize this situation and schedule your staff to work 4 hours maximum, if possible.

Dehydration is another real problem, so it is important to drink lots of fluids while working the stand – in particular water. However, food or other drinks (except water) should not be brought onto of the stand, as these distract from the opportunity to make face-to-face contacts. Speaking of food, encourage the staff to eat healthy meals, particularly a good breakfast, as the body needs fuel for the long day.

The ergonomics of exhibiting, that is the special needs within a stand, are also important. For maximum effectiveness, two people should work in every 9 square meters of exhibit occupied

by your company. It's also important to keep clutter to a minimum for both appearances and safety.

The staff should always stand, not sit, during the exhibition. Therefore, comfortable shoes are a necessity. Some exercising is advisable as it helps the staff feel physically better. Cell telephones should not be used in the stand – except for business; every minute of exhibition time is too valuable to waste by talking on the telephone.

Finally, some simple things to make your experience easier: pack extra business cards, pens, spare glasses, and batteries for your electronic gadgets.

Step 18: Other Exhibit Considerations

Literature

Ninety-five percent of visitors ask for sales literature or information from exhibitors. This literature is often expensive, so distributing it at the show is not cost effective. Sadly, 65 percent of all literature collected from exhibits is thrown away almost immediately.

A more cost-effective way to handle literature requests is to get the visitor's name, address and e-mail address, and send them the information via the Internet or post after the show. Keep in mind that a visitor who takes time to make a literature request is likely to be serious about your company, so follow-up is very important. Furthermore, receiving your company's literature in their office creates a better likelihood that it will be read - in fact, studies show that it will get a 20 percent readership rate, which is considered excellent. And you have another quality name for your company's mailing email contact list.

Travel Impact

Because exhibitors and visitors generally travel to participate in exhibitions, the economic impact of this industry is significant. It is very important to make your reservations for airlines, hotels, car rentals and ground transportation, entertainment and dining well in advance of the event. In fact, at larger exhibitions, more than half of the audience travels more than 2400 kilometers (400 miles) to attend. At smaller shows, 43 percent of the visitors live within a 100 kilometer (60 mile) radius.

Your company's targeted marketing involving new product introductions, branding, market penetration, and promotions is generally planned on a *geographical basis*, and its timing is often strategically linked to exhibitions. Understanding audience composition at regional and smaller national shows, and the appropriate languages, is important when preparing your company's exhibition marketing plan.

Step 19: Final Comments

Successful business is built on relationships. Exhibitions are renowned around the globe for producing positive business-to-business relationships between exhibiting companies and visitors. You can't have a face-to-face relationship with a website or a sales brochure. *In the final analysis, your company's exhibition success is directly related to how well your stand personnel interact with the show visitors - your current and future customers!*

About the author:

Bob Dallmeyer is a longtime friend of *UFI, The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry*. He has over four decades of exhibition experience, working as a corporate exhibitor, exhibition organizer, industry supplier, and educator. He has served as chairman of both the International Association for Exhibition Management (IAEM) and the Trade Show Exhibitors Association (TSEA). He was a director of the Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR) and was named *Tradeshow Week's* "2004 Showman of the Year". He writes for *Trade Show Executive Magazine*, *Exhibition World*, and *TSEA's Web News*. He currently represents Brussels (Belgium) Exhibition Center in North America and, in 2006, he will be inducted into the Convention Industry Council's "Hall of Leaders." He is an instructor for IAEM's "Certified in Exhibition Management" program and lectures at several universities. He consults, lectures, and provides master training sessions on exhibition marketing around the globe. For more information, contact him in Los Angeles, CA at +1 323 934 8300 or email: Dallmeyer@cs.com or in Brussels, at info@glocal-solutions.com.