

# EXHIBITOR SUCCESS

## PROGRAM

INSIGHTS FROM *THE EXHIBITION GUY*...Stephan Murtagh

### **67% of Companies Don't Have a Plan When Exhibiting...**

Ok it's very cliched to say it but "Fail to Plan, plan to fail" but let's take this a step further if you fail to plan and invest a lot of money in exhibiting at the same time, you are not only wasting an opportunity, you are also wasting money...a lot of money.

Having been in the Exhibition industry for 30 years, it amazes me to see that this is not just an issue with small companies (who to be fair are probably less experienced) but it also runs the gamut of the big companies too...who really have no excuse. Having surveyed thousands of exhibitors over this time, it seems to come down to people in those companies not knowing where to start. There are undoubtedly a lot of strings to the bow when you are exhibiting, and this seems to be where the problems start.

⇒ Overwhelmed leads to confusion which then leads to inaction.

Planning is such a critical part of exhibiting success and the reality for post covid exhibiting is that we need to be even better prepared than before. Budgets and value are becoming even more important and getting a strong ROI/ROO (Return on objectives – more on this later!) cannot be delivered by "winging it."

"Hope is not a strategy."

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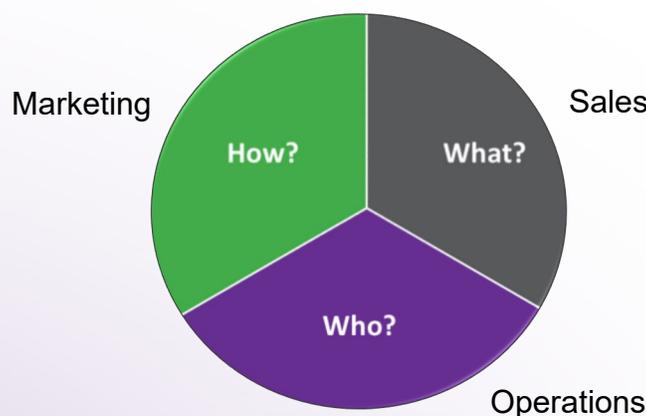
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The good news is, there is a better way, and it doesn't need to be complicated. In fact, complication is one of the barriers to great planning. By simplifying and compartmentalizing your plan into 3 different sections (See below), not only do you become less stressed, you perform better and your stand and effort deliver the results you want.

The real key to this is the 1-2-page written plan. It may seem simplistic, and it is...that's why it works. It takes away the fancy padding and enables you to focus on what is really important. By doing this you go into the show knowing you are prepared and ready for the task at hand, building great relationships and connections.

So, let's take a step back and look at what this written plan and why it's the real bedrock of great exhibiting, but more importantly how it can help you. There are essentially 3 elements to the written plan and in broad terms they come down to Marketing, Sales & Operations. If you plan for and cover for these 3 areas, you are setting down the marker of what you want to achieve, how to do it and who does what.



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#### 1. Marketing:

One of the key reasons why marketing lets exhibitors down at tradeshows is, a lot of exhibitors assume the organizer will do all the marketing to get visitors there. Yes, of course they need to do marketing but so do we.

“It’s the organizers responsibility to get people through the front door of the show but it’s our responsibility to get visitors to our stand!”

What’s become obvious post Covid is that we need to be far more targeted on attracting the right buyers and not just lots of them. This is actually an advantage to us as exhibitors as we can drive a far more specific approach to the target market. So, what should be in this part of the plan? Well, it comes down to answering these specific questions...

#### **Marketing – The Questions for our plan**

- Who exactly are we targeting?
- Who are the top 20 buyers we want to visit our booth?
- What’s our key message or draw for them to visit us?
- Which social media or other channels are we using to get to these people?
- When are we starting our pre-show marketing?
- What budget do we have for our pre-show marketing effort?
- What non-social media marketing are we doing?
- When are we sending out invites? Postal or Digital
- What marketing collateral do we need?
- How are we allocating the budget(money/time) between now & the event?

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When we figure these into our plan, we set in place a plan that will help drive visitors and consolidates the marketing done by the organizer and ultimately increasing our opportunities, visitors to our stand and ultimately our ROO.

#### 2. Sales:

The next area of the written plan we need to consider is the sales piece. What exactly is it that we are trying to achieve? One of the biggest assumptions many exhibitors make is that it is all to do with sales figures. Yes, of course that's important but the sales actions that you do and the necessary actions to lead you to them are the first step. If we solely exhibit with a sales figure in mind, we may end up disappointed as very often, as we know the sales don't come in until months post event. So how we plan the sales effort along the way makes a huge difference. The sales actions in the grid below are all precursors we need to do that will help generate the sales themselves. One of the biggest mistakes I come across in this regard is...The person who books the booth is not always the person who works the booth, and this can cause miscommunication about what the real objectives are. By having all this written down and shared with the team, not only does it foster a much stronger team relationship, but everyone knows the key metrics.

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### Sales – The Questions to Ask and Answer...

- How many leads do we need to get each day?
- What number of meaningful conversations each day?
- How many EXISTING clients do we need to meet daily?
- Who are the best people to work the booth?
- How many demonstrations per rep per day?
- If we have special offer pricing for show, what is it. Does everyone know it?
- How many appointments have we/can we pre-book for the event?
- How many appointments do we need for the diary post event?
- What is our follow-up plan/template/strategy for post event?
- What is our “Hero” product for this particular show?

By putting these in a plan, we are building an expectation for the team, but we are also making it easier for our team to plan for their own success.

### 3. Operations

The third part of the written plan should focus on all the operational issues. They focus on the “Who” is doing what! These can often be overlooked, but equally can cause the most amount of stress during the whole exhibiting experience. In some ways, these things tend to be the most straightforward but are often seen as trivial.

When we commit these to paper, we are far more likely to value their importance in the overall exhibiting scheme and lead to a far less stressful experience when exhibiting.

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Some questions for your plan would include:

#### Operational Issues – Planning

- Who is actually working the booth?
- Do we need hotels/transfers? Whose booking them and when?
- Have we standby people if there is an issue?
- Who is building the booth?
- Do we have all the relevant mobile phone numbers? Couriers, Organizers, etc
- Who is bringing what?
- Have we run through the exhibitor's manual with team?
- Show Dates, Times, Stand Number, Hall, Location etc?
- Date for team briefing for pre-show?
- Have we a follow up plan in place for when we come back from the show?

Realistically all pretty straightforward stuff but in my 30 years' experience, I come across very few companies who plan for these types of operational issues but the ones that do are always more successful when exhibiting.

There is no doubt that some shows are better and more successful than others, but this also applies to exhibitors...The ones who are really prepared and put a small amount of time into writing a plan get a far higher return from exhibiting and considering your investment, this is time very well spent.

I hope these tips are of help and all that remains for me is to wish you happy and successful exhibiting. It's absolutely worth the effort.