



To Realize a Healthy Bottom Line, Show Managers Need To Become 'Ex-Centric'

For show managers to sustain long term growth, and reap the rewards of a healthy bottom line, they need to become fixated on the success of their exhibitors or as I like to call it 'Ex-Centric'. Your exhibitors need to become the center of your life.

One of the most frustrating moments in show management occurs when an exhibitor leaves the show. So much investment has been made selling the space, that it's a tragedy when they leave.

The key to developing a successful show, is adding to your exhibitor base, not replacing a portion of it every year. Although not the norm, some shows need to replace 70% of their show. More typical numbers are in the 25 – 35% range. The more you can do to lessen this 'exhibitor slippage' the better it will be for your organization and your bottom line.

Why do so many leave? Is it because your show doesn't offer a great opportunity for them to meet good, qualified prospects? No indeed, they leave because they just don't understand how to take advantage of the unique opportunities that shows offer.

You'll typically be dealing with three distinct groups of exhibitors.

1. New Exhibitors
2. Returning Exhibitors
3. Exhibitors that are leaving your show and you don't know it yet.

Your challenge is to keep exhibitor groups 1 & 2 from slipping into group 3 and the only way to do this is to teach the exhibitors how to succeed.

This raises the question: whose responsibility is it to 'train' the exhibitors?

I can remember very early in my career, addressing a group of show managers. When I mentioned training the exhibitors, one of the audience in the front row, stood up, threw his program at me and stomped down the aisle yelling, "It's not our job to train those *#&%#*s."

At that point, not only did I question my career choice but I began to question my own message.

Of course it's not your job to train them, but it certainly is in your best interests. Whether you are running a trade or a consumer show, your goal needs to be to maximize your ROI and keep the exhibitor in your show as long as possible, and the only way to do that is to make sure your exhibitors derive full value from the space they rent.

This means they need to be shown the strategies that are unique to the show floor. They need to know how to make sales, qualify leads and convert leads to sales.

In these times of fiscal accountability, there is no other way that exhibitors can quantify their success.

Because I do a lot of consulting with show management companies, it's not unusual for me to get a call like this: My largest exhibitor, a 30' x 40' (insert your largest exhibitor here) is leaving the show,

Options for Training Your Exhibitors

- * **Do It Yourself:** If you have the expertise on board, present your own in-house seminars.
- * **DVD Training:** There are exhibitor training DVD's available through the Exhibitor Institute.
- * **Hire a Professional:** The Exhibitor Institute can provide exhibit marketing consulting and booth staff training for both exhibitors & show management.
- * **Webinars:** The Exhibitor Institute can provide interactive on-line training for your exhibitors.
- * **On-Line Streaming Video:** The Exhibitor Institute provides a comprehensive exhibitor training resource through it's *Exhibitor Success Centre Program*. Customized web sites can be developed for individual or groups of shows.

what can I do? The answer is usually, "not much". By the time your exhibitor lets you know about it, they've gone through a long process and it's tough to reverse.

This exhibitor has slipped into Group 3 and you now have to resell that space rather than selling a new space. Tough to sustain growth working like that. One step forward two steps back. If you experience a lot of 'slippage', you end up selling like crazy, just to maintain where you were.

Show managers often integrate the slippage into their business model and they give up huge percentages of their business rather than attacking it.

When you invest in your exhibitors success, the results aren't limited to lowering the slippage. Here's what will happen. Your retention rates and your attendance will go up, your slippage and your cost of sales will go down, your bottom line will improve and you will build more value with your exhibitors than you ever thought possible.

Secure the future of your show and your bottom line: Get Ex-Centric.

Fred Fox, founder of the Exhibitor Institute has over 30 years experience preparing exhibitors to succeed at trade & consumer shows. For more information on our 'On-line Exhibitor Success Center concept, contact Fred at: fredfox@exhibitorinstitute.com or visit our [Exhibitor Success Center Demo Site](#).