

The Core Qualities of an Exhibit Manager

By Barry Siskind

This is what an exhibit manager faces every day:

- A CFO who demands a positive ROI before approving the exhibition budget and a CMO who insists that the show is for branding purposes only, which in your mind disqualifies any results you hope to achieve from any sort of Return on Investment formula.
- Colleagues who continually chide you into justifying why you do not insist on expanding your budgets to ensure that your exhibits are green.
- Non-industry friends and acquaintances who, when they hear what you do for a living, either say, that's nice and quickly change the subject, or do people still go to trade shows?

From your perspective, it's a difficult field to plow. The result is premature burn-out or what is often worse, blind acceptance where you lose that spark to make a difference that brought you to the job in the first place.

Does any of this sound familiar? If you answered yes, then don't get too discouraged. What I am describing is felt by nearly every exhibit manager at some time or another. This feeling buries some and rolls off the back of others. Putting yourself in the latter group begins by understanding the unique qualities that successful exhibit managers possess.

Happiness

Successful exhibit managers are pretty happy people - happy about such things as a job that isn't nine to five, isn't predictable, allows them to meet a large cross-section of people, and is incredibly challenging. They approach each day with the knowledge that today something is going to go wrong, and they relish the opportunity of solving whatever it is.

Resilience

Not every exhibit works as expected, and there are times when, in spite of best efforts, a disaster occurs. Resilience is the ability to stay in the game when faced with the obstacles and failures that invariably happen. There is no such thing as a finished exhibit program; it's subject to continual honing and tweaking. Successful exhibit managers face each challenge as an opportunity to learn how to make their program better.

Persistence

Developing and executing an exhibit program requires lots of networking, convincing, and cajoling along the way. Sometimes it feels like an uphill battle, yet the exhibit

manager, who has that stick-to-it-ness, responds to ensure the exhibit program lives up to its maximum potential.

A blend of creativity and attention to detail

The job of an exhibit manager is a careful blend of an open mind to see and react to new and interesting ideas and attention to detail and logistics. That's not always an easy combination of skills. If too much attention is paid to the logistics, at the expense of the creative, then there is a risk of stagnation. Too much attention to creativity, and not enough to logistics, can result in chaos.

Adventure

Name one other job that has: the potential of travel to exciting locations, a chance to mingle with senior executives, a place to meet key decision makers, an opportunity to make a real difference, a place to launch new products, the prospect of expanding your company into a new marketplace, or the occasion to build the awareness of your corporation's unique value proposition. These are just some of the benefits you enjoy.

These five attributes are the core qualities that an exhibit manager must possess. So, don't let the nay-sayers get to you. Fall back on your strengths and move forward. Join the ranks of those who are truly successful at doing this job.

Barry Siskind, President and Founder of [ITMC](#), is a trade show consultant, trainer, speaker, and an internationally recognized expert in trade and consumer shows. Each year, he addresses numerous conferences and association meetings around the globe. Over the past twenty-five years, Barry has traveled throughout the world working with thousands of public and private sector clients in virtually all industry groups. He creates, facilitates and delivers a wide range of services to companies involved in exhibit marketing. Barry is also a best-selling author of trade show business books: *The Successful Exhibitor*, *The Power of Exhibit Marketing*, *Making Contact*, *Bumblebees Can't Fly*, *Eagles Must Soar*, and his latest book *Powerful Exhibit Marketing*.