

An Analysis of Changes in the Key Factors Affecting Exhibit Recall in the Last Decade

By Barry Siskind

The highly anticipated report by the Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR) titled *An Analysis of Changes in the Key Factors Affecting Exhibit Recall in the Last Decade* has been released. The report's focus is on the issue of memorability. Since the majority of business transactions occur post-show, it is important that visitors can recall, in a positive way, the exhibitors with whom they plan to do business. Memorability is also important for brand awareness. In the 1980's, brand scored 4% on the recall scale. In this report, it has grown to a whopping 53%.

Reasons for remembering exhibits other than size:

Reason	Average
Product Interest	67%
Well-Known Company	53%
Product Demonstration	49%
Stage Theater Presentation	24%
Booth Personnel	24%
Color/Design	21%
Giveaway/Samples	14%
Literature	14%

(Source: CEIR MC 46, October 2010)

Booth size has always been the number one recall factor. This may be due to three reasons:

- The physical dominance at the show.
- The repeated exposure created from their dominance.
- Exhibitor is usually a well-known, large company.

The past few years has seen shrinkage in the number of large dominate exhibitors due to budget restrictions and an increased emphasis on ROI where companies often opt for smaller exhibit space. However, the reduction in size can be overcome when other elements of recall are considered.

As we see in the study, product interest and well-known companies are the two crucial factors in exhibit recall. Visitors attend exhibitions to see new products or learn more about those products that they have previously been exposed to. It is therefore important for the exhibitor to showcase their new offerings.

Well-known companies are not just those with strong international brands, but also those who have made a concentrated effort to reinforce their name, brand promise, and the solutions they offer. For small and medium size companies, this is a strong justification to reinforce their

identity through pre-show promotion, being active in the social network, and participating in other show-related activities such as the educational program or through sponsorships.

Product demonstrations have increased in importance. More visitors want to see and experience new and interesting products and services. Product demonstrations that attract a large number of visitors who watch one presenter or one-on-one demonstrations are elements that savvy exhibitors should include in their exhibit planning.

The importance of booth personnel has also grown in the last decade. This leads to the need for exhibit integration. This means exhibit managers must include a balance between the physical characteristics of the booth and the human resources. Exhibit recall can quickly turn from positive to negative as a direct result of poor interpersonal interactions between the personnel and the visitors.

Literature and give-away items have decreased in importance. The drop in literature may be a result of companies attempt to green their booths. Excess literature is bulky, expensive to ship, and often ends up not read. This creates a tremendous amount of waste. Most visitors today appreciate receiving the same information electronically with no waste at all.

Give-away items have decreased slightly due to budget cuts and a lack of metrics to measure their benefit. Other research has shown that when give-away items are handled correctly, there is a positive return and yet few exhibitors have been quick to embrace the true value of these items.

The report concludes that “An exhibit is in reality an integrated organism of both physical and human systems working in concert to obtain maximum results.” Exhibit managers can no longer give lip-service to the importance of well-trained exhibit staff while doing little to train them. Trade show organizers who sit back and let their exhibitors blindly struggle with the integration of these resources run the risk of lackluster results. The role for both the exhibit organizer and the show organizer is clear. Both need to work in concert to implement the technologies that ensure that visitors leave an individual booth and the show with positive recall.