

# YOUR EXHIBITING STRATEGY

By Don Woodard



Jack Trout, renowned marketing consultant and the author of numerous books on successful marketing techniques states, “What I’ve learned over and over again is that success isn’t about having the right people, the right attitude, the right tools, the right role models or the right organization. They all help but they don’t put you over the top. It’s all about having the right strategy.”

First, you need to determine what makes you unique. Then develop a strategy that will place that difference into the minds of your customers and prospects. Tradeshows and other event marketing and sales opportunities can take a leading role to reinforce that difference.

## The Basics

An article in the *Harvard Business Review* described a report conducted by Nitkin Nohria, William Joyce and Bruce Roberson as “the most rigorous study of management practices ever undertaken.” They found that superior business performance in this competitive world is all about mastering business basics. And their number-one finding was the importance of “devising and maintaining a clearly stated, focused strategy.”

To achieve excellence in strategy is to be clear about what the strategy is and to constantly communicate it to customers, prospects, employees, and shareholders. A good strategy includes finding the differentiating idea. Evaluate what separates you from your competition. It does not have to be product related. But it should provide a benefit for your customers.

## The Perception

Trout also states, “Better products don’t win. Better perceptions tend to be the winners.” Each person evaluates in his or her own mind what the better product or service is based on his or her individual needs. You really cannot control this decision simply by stating your opinion verbally or through advertising. However, with successful marketing you can influence their perceptions.

Exhibit marketing is an ideal strategy to help influence your customers’ and prospects’ perceptions of your products, services, and overall company. Trout asks, “What is truth?” Truth is the perception that’s inside the mind of your prospect. “It may not be your truth, but it’s the only truth you can work with. You have to accept that truth and then deal with it.”

## The Answer

Does your exhibit strategy position your difference into the minds of your visitors at shows? Is your difference constantly being communicated in all of your marketing and sales efforts? Does your difference provide a benefit for your customers? ■