

# **Setting Goals and Objectives that Focus, Motivate, and Stimulate Your Trade Show Program**

**By Barry Siskind**

It has often been said that the secret to exhibit success lies in its focus. All too often exhibitors either try to accomplish too much from their exhibitions or their goals are vague at best. The trick to getting your trade show program off on the right foot is to spend time well before you take any other steps to decide exactly what you want your exhibit to accomplish and how you will measure your results.

But, setting objectives goes beyond the obvious need for a method of measuring results. Well thought-out goals help motivate those whose time, expertise, and support is necessary for a successful exhibit program. These goals are also necessary for creative solution-finding, a crucial part of the strategic plan that is more often than not hindered by shrinking budgets.

## **Focus:**

The place to start is by asking “What am I expecting my exhibit to accomplish?” Your list might include generating quality leads, engaging customers, or reinforcing your brand. In fact, there are over one hundred possible goals for your show participation. This first step will help you eliminate those objectives that are of little importance to your business. You now have a short-list of five or six objectives that make your trade show investment worthwhile.

The next step is to ask, “Which of my short-list goals will justify the time, energy, and resources I will need to make them a reality?” Now you cull the list attempting to find your bottom-line by narrowing down your choices to one or two at most. This isn’t as easy as it sounds. Often deciding which objectives to eliminate can be as difficult as deciding which to include.

The third step is to quantify your objective(s). Worthwhile objectives need to be measurable. Ask yourself, “How will I know if I have accomplished this objective?” If you can’t answer this question, then the objective you have chosen is not worth pursuing.

## **Motivate:**

Exhibition program motivation usually refers to the front-line people who work in the booth. However, there are other people whose time and talent you will rely on that also need to be motivated. These are the people who work in finance, administration, logistics, sales and marketing. This represents a lot of people who, quite frankly, have other things to occupy their time. Taking the time to assist you comes at the expense of their other priorities. However, if you state a clear objective that will demonstrate how the exhibition program compliments other organizational priorities, you are in a stronger position to motivate this group and secure the commitment you are looking for.

## **Stimulate:**

The seeds of creativity are fertilized with clear, measurable, and realistic objectives.

One of the issues many exhibition managers face is a shrinking budget. While having a clearly stated objective will justify the need for additional resources, often the money is not forthcoming, leaving you in the precarious position of having to accomplish more with less.

Some exhibit managers faced with this stark reality throw up their hands in an act of surrender which can have a devastating effect on their exhibition program. Others use this opportunity to creatively find solutions to replace the shortage of money. These same managers may reuse existing display materials and find inexpensive alternatives to signs, graphics, and eye-catching displays. When you allow your objectives to act as something that will spark the creative juices inherent in us all, the results can often be amazing.

Focus, motivation, and stimulation – three things made possible when you take the time to create well-formed objectives for your exhibit program. If you are not setting objectives now; think about what you might be missing.

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*.