The 8 Deadly Mistakes of Exhibition Managers

What Keeps You From Selling Booths?
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A Successful Exhibition

A successful exhibition depends on a number of things: perfect organization, an accommodating venue, good suppliers and, most importantly, a decent amount of sold booths! Exhibition sales teams put maximum effort into ensuring re-bookings, renewals and the acquisition of new business. But what is it that keeps exhibition sales professionals from fully realizing these goals? Here are the 8 deadly mistakes of exhibition managers.
Poor Knowledge About Your Clients

Your relationship with your clients is the foundation of your business. Knowing them and what they need is essential in order for you to deliver events that are of high relevance - events that will be re-booked and recommended. Failure to understand this blocks important revenue.

Ask yourself:
How much do I know about exhibitor and attendee satisfaction, their expectations and needs? How do I track and save this information to make it easily accessible in the future?
How to build a relationship with your clients.

- Keep track of exhibitor preferences such as preferred locations on the show floor and booth dimensions.

- Allow easy access to past bookings and client history in order to understand what sold successfully in previous years.

- Survey your attendees and exhibitors during the application process and get their feedback after the event to find out what ideas or suggestions for improvement they might have.

More useful information on attendee expectations:

- *Aligning Exhibitions With What Attendees Want Most (WHITEPAPER)*
- *Expectations In Exhibitions: What Attendees Really Want (BLOG)*
Inaccurate Data

Never have we worked with larger masses of data. While “Big Data” certainly is an opportunity for the exhibition industry, it also challenges organizers. There is nothing worse than inconsistent contracts and invoices due to inaccurate data: For example, person 1 enters data in a spreadsheet, person 2 re-enters the data in the finance system (and who knows if person 3 remembers to put it in the CRM or not).

One of the most common reasons for bad data is the fact that the exhibition sales process is disconnected from financials. Ensuring accurate data should be one of your highest priorities in order to increase customer satisfaction and your team’s motivation. No one likes working with dirty data!
How to master the art of data management.

- Work with industry-specific CRM software.
- Implement a data management strategy and assign a data manager.
- Work with one integrated system that ties your financial data to your exhibition data.
- Avoid manual and double data-entry by using online tools.
- Work with clever analytics and reporting tools.

More tips:

- Data Resourcing: There’s Data In Them Hills
- Success Through Data
- Advice From A Leading Data Analytics Expert On Where Organizers Need To Focus Efforts
What extra benefits do you offer attendees in order to raise the perceived value of your event and boost traffic to exhibitors’ booths? Do you offer any educational sessions in addition to the exhibition? Does the event theme match the exhibitors’ and visitors’ interests?

In times of self-learning and education, an extraordinary educational track with workshops and sessions can attract many people and add that extra dimension of quality to your event. Try to cover relevant topics and offer sessions for visitors and exhibitors. In addition, attendees will appreciate the networking possibilities that are generated by well-led, interactive sessions.
How to wow attendees with great content.

Create interactive events with educational tracks, seminars, workshops, barcamps and roundtables in addition to the show floor activities.

Stay on top of trends and news in the industry through Social Media, blogs, events, publications and magazines.

Invite popular keynote speakers and experts.

Avoid sales pitches on educational tracks.

Tie your event to the digital world 365 days a year and make sure you communicate important content through Social Media.

Consider streaming important events or sessions as part of a Hybrid Event.
Unbalanced Show Floor Traffic

Are there uncrowded aisles and empty stands in some areas of your show floor? Is the party gathering on the main floor? Every exhibition has unpopular areas. However, it is essential to find a balance between all areas and lead visitors all the way through the exhibition stands – even those at the very back of the hall.

What sounds easy can be as complicated as rocket science. It is only natural that visitors feel less attracted by some areas: Very often we see that dedicated villages with special themes consist of rather uninviting, small exhibition stands with dull and unappealing furniture. Whereas, on the main floor, show visitors are attracted by creatively designed exhibition stands with food, drinks and entertainment.
How to balance traffic.

- Explore technological possibilities offered by near-field communication: Try to drive traffic to certain areas with iBeacons or via apps with scavenger hunts.

- Offer plenty of networking zones and enable exchange between exhibitors (e.g. through “get togethers” or exhibitor parties).

- Sell booths directly from the floor plan and locate them in a well-balanced way.

- Put extraordinary and nicely designed booths in prominent positions to attract visitors to certain areas.

- Use clever apps to predict booth traffic based on the click-throughs to exhibitors’ online profiles and sell extra exposure to exhibitors that have low traffic to their booth.
Inefficient Workflows

Do you get the feeling you spend too much time on unimportant tasks? Any exhibition sales professional should have quick and easy access to client information, regardless of whether they are on the road or in the office.

Spending time on administrative tasks means less time for clients and prospects. Not being able to work on the road means losing time that you could invest in selling. And don’t forget about mistake #2: multiple data entry points are a common source of costly mistakes and inefficiency. Do everything you can to improve your sales productivity, monitor your sales pipeline and constantly keep an eye on opportunities.
How to increase sales efficiency.

1. Work with an integrated exhibition sales solution where you enter data only once and can drill down from event data to financial data in a few clicks.

2. Use a mobile version of your sales and CRM system that gives you the same access to information on the road as it does in the office.

3. Work with a system that allows you to sell directly from the floor plan so you can propose and assign booths in one step and send out proposals directly from the floor plan.

4. Ensure your sales pipeline is connected with orders and finance. Use powerful filters that allow you to monitor your sales progress and specific activities on a daily basis.
A Poor Event Website

You only get one chance to make a good first impression. Make sure you take this opportunity to impress your visitors with a fantastic event website.

Unfortunately, many exhibitions are lacking in this regard. From incomplete show information to bad usability and terrible exhibitor zones, we’ve seen it all! Don’t scare away potential clients with a poor event website or a lack of information. Your goal should be to make your site attractive and relevant to both exhibitors and visitors.
How to build a great event website.

- Make it user-friendly and don’t hide important deadlines.
- Include important show and location information at a glance.
- Tie in Social Media and a blog to allow an actual online conversation (don’t forget about mistake #3 and the possibility to access content throughout the year).
- Provide an interactive floor plan with exhibitor information.
- Use trust-building elements such as client quotes.
- Make it responsive and accessible on all mobile devices.
- Work with analytics to find out and prove what works well - and what doesn’t.

More tips:

5 Awesome Event Websites
How To Create A Great Event Website (PDF)
More Than Just A Pretty Face: Event Websites That Work
Bad Reporting

Bad reporting is best friends with bad data (and there we have mistake #2 again). Good reporting starts with clean data that is stored in a central place, ideally an integrated system where you can store both CRM and event data.

So what makes a report meaningful? Valuable, real-time reports give you the power to be better informed, react quickly, steer your sales processes in the right direction and sell more successfully (For example, being able to identify customers that pay in a timely manner vs. the “bad payers”). You might even benchmark your salespeople and allow them to pull easy reports on their performance by themselves.

Many successful exhibition sales teams have implemented standard reports to have a better overview of their activities and how they directly influence sales success.
How to sell more with meaningful reports.

Don’t make mistake #2.

Work with an on-screen reporting tool easy enough to allow end users to pull their own reports from the system in a quick and efficient way.

Work with a system that connects your client and event data so you don’t miss any important data.

Implement standard reports such as attendee reports or exhibitor profiles.
Losing Track Of Opportunities

Not knowing your potential sales opportunities is a business killer and a truly deadly mistake in the exhibition world. A successful sales force needs to be fully aware of their pipeline in order to sell efficiently – now and in the future.

Ideally, sales managers should continuously keep an eye on sales activity and potential revenue from new business opportunities. Find out how long it takes your team to respond to an inquiry and how fast they move from a fresh, hot lead to a sold deal. Are their predicted close dates realistic? What are the most successful sales channels?

This knowledge will make it much easier for you to make realistic sales forecasts. Furthermore, consistent opportunity tracking will help you monitor and reach your objectives.
How to monitor your sales opportunities.

- Use a professional sales system that supports opportunity management.
- Define a status for each step in the sales process.
- Track untouched opportunities at all stages.
- Monitor how many activities the best sales person produces.
- Monitor which type of activities the best sales person produces.
- Use this pattern to ensure all sales persons use it.
- Do a pace analysis and monitor the performance of your sales efforts compared to the previous year in order to see if you are on track. This will give you the chance to steer your business in the right direction before it’s too late.
- Keep track of your conversion rates and know your numbers.
Successful exhibition managers and sales professionals know what their clients want and work with systems and processes that allow them to follow up on web applications or inquiries extremely quickly.

Shore up your success by providing relevant content 365 days a year and impress both exhibitors and attendees with a great event website. It's also important to be sure you're working with consistent data and the right tools that will allow you to store all relevant information in one place and pull meaningful reports on demand.

Want to know more about exhibition sales and CRM software that can help you sell more efficiently? Contact us at emea_marketing@ungerboeck.com.

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