



E3: Exhibiting Effectiveness Evaluationtm Post-Show Exhibitor Resource Report

INTRODUCTION:

As part of NSTA's commitment to exhibitor satisfaction, over the last few years we've provided exhibitors with complimentary exhibiting educational programs and content including live and re-playable webcasts, articles, and an Ask the Tradeshow Expert email Q&A service, all of which can be accessed at <http://www.nsta.org/exhibitsadv/resourcecenter.aspx>

At the 2012 NSTA National Conference on Science Education, for the first time, the E3 Exhibiting Effectiveness Evaluation was provided as a complimentary, value-added service to a select group of exhibitors. This unique and personalized exhibitor program was provided in support of the following objectives:

1. Reinforce and improve effective exhibiting practices in the exhibit hall
2. Improve exhibitor awareness, knowledge, performance, effectiveness and results
3. Deliver an improved exhibit hall experience for conference attendees

PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

Companies are evaluated during the conference and provided with a brief, but thorough observation and evaluation of their exhibit in action. The evaluations are conducted individually by experienced exhibition industry experts led by Jefferson Davis, President of Competitive Edge. You may contact Mr. Davis about the program or with questions at jefferson@tradeshowturnaround.com.

The evaluators were on the exhibit floor during exhibiting hours. Selected exhibits were observed by one of the evaluators in three major categories. The findings were documented on an evaluation form utilizing a consistent set of twenty-one specific and visually observable evaluation criteria. After the show, confidential evaluation reports with results, commentary, scoring and benchmarks are emailed to the primary contact for each company evaluated.

Exhibitors are encouraged to use the evaluation feedback to reinforce effective practices, and to consider making improvements in underperforming or less effective areas of their exhibit program. As you review your results, please remember the goal of the program is not to be judgmental or critical, but simply to provide constructive feedback so you can improve the overall effectiveness of your exhibiting program.

We sincerely hope the feedback and direction provided by experienced specialists will guide you in making improvements and achieving a positive, productive and profitable exhibit program.

THE EVALUATION CRITERIA:

- 1. Exhibit Presentation:** Your exhibit plays a critical role in your exhibiting success. Visually it must first attract attention and then it must quickly and effectively communicate who you are, what you do and why attendees should stop and enter. The exhibit should communicate and reinforce your corporate branding and convey specific messages. Since the booth is a defined space where your staff and attendees interact, it must be effectively designed to facilitate traffic flow, ensure visitors can quickly find what they are looking for, support interaction with your staff, and help meet the information needs of visitors. To evaluate overall exhibit effectiveness, evaluation questions included:
 - a. Does the overall exhibit grab attention?
 - b. Is it quickly/easily discernable what the company does/offers?
 - c. Is it quickly/easily discernable who the company is?
 - d. Are there sufficient graphics/are they well placed/legible?
 - e. Do the graphics communicate clear, concise, specific message(s)?
 - f. Do the message(s) inform/educate/give attendee a reason to stop?
 - g. Is the exhibit easy to enter?
 - h. Is the exhibit easy to navigate?
 - i. Can visitors quickly discern what is being displayed and where?
 - j. Is there enough open space for attendees?
 - k. Is the corporate identity effectively integrated in exhibit design?

- 2. Product/Service Presentation:** Attendees visit exhibits for a number of reasons. They want to physically interact with companies, people and products and services. They want to be engaged, study and learn, and evaluate products and services.

To be effective, product presentation/demonstrations require careful planning based on the following considerations; a.) Knowing who your ideal booth visitor is b.) Creating an engaging, interactive, informative experience by thinking through what you want them to see, do, experience and remember as result of the visit. Be sure to consider how your product/service fits into the overall experience. Remember, attendees want hands-on, interactive experiences. They want to be able to efficiently and effectively collect and evaluate product/service information and understand how your products/services can help their business. To evaluate product/service presentations evaluators observed the following:

 - a. Are products/services physically displayed or presented?
 - b. Is the display/presentation thoughtful, creative, unique?
 - c. Is the display/presentation engaging and/or interactive?
 - d. Is feature/benefit signage integrated into presentation?
 - e. Is takeaway product/service information readily available?

- 3. Exhibit Staff:** While your booth and product presentation are important, your exhibit staff may be the most critical factor in the effectiveness of your exhibit. Regardless of the size or attractiveness of your exhibit, your staff's availability and interaction skills can make or break your program. Attendees make quick judgments about your company and your products/services based on their observation of and interactions with your staff. Attendees want visible staffers available who acknowledge them quickly. They expect professional, friendly, knowledgeable staffers who respect their time and show interest in their needs. They appreciate staffers who take a moment to learn who they are, why they are visiting, and then work diligently to address their

needs efficiently with personalized information. To evaluate exhibit effectiveness evaluators observed the following:

- a. Are there an appropriate number of booth staffers?
- b. Does their dress quickly/visibly identify them as a booth staffer?
- c. Do they keep body language open to visitors/attendees in aisles?
- d. Are they quickly responsive to booth visitors?
- e. Are booth staff behaviors appropriate?

HOW TO USE YOUR INDIVIDUAL REPORT:

While reviewing your evaluation report, please be objective as possible and remember, scoring is not an attempt to discount the considerable effort you put into your program. It is simply to acknowledge effective exhibiting practices and spotlight potential ineffective practices so you can improve performance and results from every show you do.

A “Yes” rating means the exhibit is performing effectively in the area described so keep up the good work. The areas to pay close attention to are marked “somewhat” or “needs improvement”. These are the specific practices where sometimes a small adjustment or change can make a big difference in your exhibit staff’s effectiveness.

While some of the evaluation questions are self explanatory and provide direction for immediate improvement, some descriptions require more information to understand how to improve the rating. Below is a complete listing of all evaluation questions with suggestions for elevating your ratings and improving performance at future shows.

INFORMATION TO IMPROVE YOUR RATING

1. EXHIBIT PRESENTATION:

- a. ***Does the overall exhibit grab attention?*** The competition for attendee’s attention on the NSTA exhibit floor is intense. Step outside of and look at your exhibit through the eyes of an attendee in the aisles. Consider how you are using exhibit architectural shapes, design, size and scale, color, lighting, graphic images, copy, motion and demonstrations to grab the attention of the attendees you want to speak with.
- b. ***Is it quickly/easily discernable what the company does/offers?*** Make sure a graphic narrative and images help answer this all important question. Prominently placing products that are easily visible from all angles in the aisles also help answer this question.
- c. ***Is it quickly/easily discernable who the company is?*** Make sure your company logo is properly placed at various sight levels so attendees can see it from a distance walking down the aisle and at eye level in and around the exhibit. Remember, corporate ID needs to be visible from many levels and perspectives to sufficiently reinforce the brand.
- d. ***Are there sufficient graphics/are they well placed/legible?*** Sometimes less is more graphically. Graphics must be placed at or slightly above eye level. Consider placement height, viewing distance and legibility to improve this rating. Detailed informational graphics should be used in the exhibit in conjunction with products and services, and identification and promotional graphics that attract attendees into the booth should be simple, pictorial and positioned on the periphery of the space.

- e. ***Do the graphics communicate clear, concise, specific message(s)?*** Attendees move quickly through the exhibit hall and won't take much time to read a lot of copy. They scan a booth very quickly and need both images and text that communicate clear, concise and specific messages. Provide consistency within your message throughout the exhibit so that at a glance people can quickly understand the main message and then can drill down to specific areas to gather more details about that message. (some booths had too many messages all competing for the same visual demand).
- f. ***Do the message(s) inform/educate/give attendee a reason to stop?*** An effective exhibit will tell a quick story. Use bulleted feature and benefit messages to both inform and educate. And remember, you will attract more attendees by showcasing new products and services and placing these messages in highly visible areas around the booth. Attendees will usually stop and converse with less than 10% of a show's exhibits. As they walk the aisles, they make decisions about which ones they will engage in conversation. It is important that your exhibit communicate exactly who you are looking for, so attendees can decide to stop.
- g. ***Is the exhibit easy to enter?*** Avoid obstacles that block entrance to your exhibit. This can include but are not limited to booth architecture, tables, information counters and/or display cases that limit or prevent attendees from crossing the carpet line and entering your booth. Even the choice of booth carpet color can play a significant role in encouraging or discouraging attendees to enter. Sometimes positioning a table or display case a few feet off the carpet line can make a difference whether or not attendees decide to enter.
- h. ***Can visitors quickly discern what is being displayed and where?*** Use large, visible directional signage to help attendees quickly and easily find what they are looking for. When product kiosks are used, it helps to clearly label each kiosk. This makes it much easier for visitors to efficiently find what they are looking for. Think about the placement of the display/information areas next to each other and how those areas support each other to tell a story or relationship. You might find an attendee focused on one product area but did not see a related product that they might not know you provide. New digital and electronic small sign options can be used very effectively to help attendees understand what is being displayed, and where.
- i. ***Is there enough open space for attendees?*** You must have sufficient open space for attendees to enter and easily navigate your exhibit and also space for attendees and your staff to interact. When the booth is overcrowded and hard to navigate it detracts from the overall visitor experience and reduces the amount of time they spend in your exhibit.
- j. ***Is the corporate identity effectively integrated in exhibit design?*** Make sure your corporate colors and images are effectively integrated into the exhibit architecture, signage, kiosks, and furnishings and even down to the color of the carpet. Display your corporate identity at tiered viewing levels so these can be seen from a distance, as you approach the booth and at eye level throughout the exhibit. Corporate colors provide continuity throughout the space as well as make the space feel larger with the use of same color and branding. Unifying your exhibit using consistent corporate colors repetitively throughout the space will also help you achieve enhanced brand awareness and improve retention for your participation.

2. PRODUCT/SERVICE PRESENTATION:

- a. ***Are products physically displayed or presented?*** A display is generally static. A presentation is usually interactive. Tradeshow attendees value hands-on, interactive experiences whenever possible. Simply displaying products in a static format on a table will do little to encourage attendees to engage with the products. The NSTA audience is composed mainly of “Teachers”. “Teachers” are a savvy group when it comes to presentation and capturing attention – they deal with it every day. Your exhibit must demonstrate, through creativity, your understanding of this primary audience driver.
- b. ***Is the display/presentation thoughtful/creative/unique?*** The extra thought and effort you put into your product/service presentation is instantly evident to visitors and wins you major points. The objective in your display is to demonstrate creativity while economizing on the amount of time visitors need to find and acquire the information they seek. Think about your product or service and try to find a fun, unique and engaging way to recreate an in-classroom experience for maximum impact.
- c. ***Is the display/presentation engaging and/or interactive?*** Visitors want to engage by touching, feeling, inspecting, and interacting with your products as much as possible. Long term retention and mindshare is improved when multiple senses are engaged: visual, auditory and kinesthetic.
- d. ***Is feature/benefit signage integrated into presentation?*** Presenting product information only verbally limits sensory input options and thereby limits impact, understanding and recall. Supporting key product messages with visible, bulleted key-points expands sensory input. This can also be achieved by nearby interactive monitors and/or with continuous loop PowerPoint or DVD presentations. These approaches help increase comprehension, retention and post-show recall. If you are presenting a PowerPoint, video or DVD on monitor(s) in the exhibit be sure to identify what’s on the monitor. This can be achieved through topper(s) attached to the monitor or an easel sign on the counter. The signs can be very helpful for the audience as too often the volume is turned down and attendees are watching a “silent movie”. The signage identifies the presentation topic and helps put the content into context for viewers so they know what they are viewing.
- e. ***Is takeaway product/service information readily available?*** Despite preference for receiving information post-show, there are still a high number of attendees who want detailed information and/or product samples to take with them for more immediate review. Whether you use printed materials and/or provide data on USB Drives or CD ROMs, it is important to have information readily available for those that request it.

3. EXHIBIT STAFF:

- a. ***Are there an appropriate number of booth staffers?*** The rule of thumb is one staffer per 50 open square feet of space. Understaffing or overstaffing a booth can be counter-productive and is generally an ineffective practice. Consider the size of your exhibit and exhibit hall traffic flow and patterns. Make sure you have enough staff available to engage visitors. But not too many! Too many people can block booth graphics and messaging. This is critical in the smaller booths, so it is best to stand a step inside the booth’s edge so your messaging can be visible and graphic messages can cause people to pause in the aisles or draw them in. If you wonder if you have too many staff, take a photo with your staff standing in the booth without attendees before the show begins. If it already looks crowded without attendees, you probably have too many staffers.

- b. ***Does their dress quickly/visibly identify them as booth staffers?*** This is a bigger problem in the larger exhibits because like attendees, many exhibit staffers wear suits and ties. While this is professional and entirely appropriate for this audience, it presents a challenge for the attendees (and the evaluators) in determining who exhibit staffers are. To address this, consider some form of uniform or color-coded dress or accessory strategy such as a large badge to make it easier for attendees to quickly identify your staff. For example, you can consider matching ties and jackets with scarves for the female staff, or boutonnieres. You can also use corporate branded shirts with embroidered logos worn with the same color jacket and matching slacks or skirts. Not only will this make it easier for attendees to find a staffer in the booth but you will look very professional and consistent as well.
- c. ***Do they keep body language open to visitors/attendees in aisles?*** Over half of an attendee's decision to notice and pay attention to a specific exhibit is based on what the booth staff is doing or not doing. Staffers should be positioned a couple feet off the carpet line – not in the aisles. They should maintain an open body posture with their eyes directed toward attendees in the aisles and upon visitors as they enter the exhibit.
- d. ***Are they quickly responsive to booth visitors?*** Attendee's time on the exhibit floor is limited and they will not wait much more than one minute or two to be engaged by a staffer. You should have sufficient staff available at any given time whether it is the first day or the last day to manage traffic flow. To engage attendees who are passing or considering entering your booth requires a little proactive behavior on your staff's part. It also makes sense to assign specific meet and greet staffers, and to position them near entrances to your exhibit. This can be an excellent support mechanism to help product demonstration and sales staffers who may be engaged with visitors.
- e. ***Any inappropriate booth behaviors?*** Behaviors like eating, drinking, sitting down, leaning, clustering in groups, looking or acting disinterested, talking to other staffers and using cell phones and/or texting in the booth create an undesirable image of your company in the minds of target attendees. These behaviors decrease booth traffic by discouraging potential visitors from stopping.

Thank you for exhibiting with NSTA. We truly value your participation and sincerely hope you find this Exhibiting Effectiveness Evaluation to be a valuable tool in helping your company execute a more effective and profitable exhibit.

If you have any suggestions on this program or ideas on how to improve it, I welcome your input.

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