
June 2010 | Exhibition Guru

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GET REAL

In January this year during presentations at our company Kick Off, with exhibition partners (venues and suppliers) and at some exhibitor presentations I made the comment that I thought this year would be far harder than last and would be further compounded by the National election. A number of people commented to me "no, last year was not bad and now the U.S is recovering it will be great".

Last year, let's face it; we all knew it was going to be tough so we made decisions to weather it. However, the lag effect and how we mirror the U.S economy has now caught up and the mood is somewhat changed. The bad news is we have to navigate the year ahead; the good news is it will change for the positive next year so let's get real!

Last month I talked about how companies bagged out their competitors and the negative effects it can have, so I thought it pertinent to hit face on the reality of the market, and what might be best not only to survive but thrive.

My view has been that in tough times, whilst being careful, it's the time you send a message you are here to service and stay; it's not the time to send a message that you're doing it tough. Clearly in a lot of cases you won't do the same dollars as you did last year. If at an exhibition you can do within 15% of your set targets then you're doing ok, and remember, whilst some may drop, equally some results will increase as the offering meets the market's needs.

It's interesting, at a few events you hear the floor talk of how exhibitors are going, and when I confront them I hear a different figure. It seems some don't want to be seen doing better (or worse for that matter) and therefore floor speculation isn't a great barometer, which is one of the Get Real points.

The fact is people are still visiting exhibitions and we are not seeing major swings in attendance. In fact, we have had a few attendance increases, the cash to credit card purchases on the exhibition floor have changed and how people are spending has changed. Consumers are being far more selective and cautious, but in most cases are still spending similar amounts to last year but with different purchasing patterns.

If I get on my soap box for just a minute, exhibitions still represent the best and most cost effective way to meet your qualified market, meet your existing customers and new ones, that's totally measurable.

So let's recap the six major things you can focus on while at an exhibition, that if you focus on will not only make you feel more positive but deliver better results than you might be experiencing. Ask yourself whether you are you

doing all the aspects under each point?

1. SELL

Make immediate sales, generate high quality sales leads, build a prospect pre-qualified prospect database

2. RELATIONSHIPS

Build on the current relationships, educate the market, up-sell and cross- sell, collect customer testimonials and re-sell lapsed customers

3. RESEARCH

Test market awareness and perceptions, research your marketing campaign, market new products/services

4. BRANDING

Create or raise market awareness, position as your brand as market leader and partner, boost investor perceptions, develop new markets, educate through demonstrations ,launch and focus new products/services

5. AGENTS/PARTNERS

Also consider the practical aspects. Perhaps the staff need to carry business cards, note pad and pen? This may distort or even cover part of the uniform.

6. MEDIA RELATIONS

get onto the media radar, generate media coverage, build relationships with media key editors, media contacts and journalists

IN A NUT SHELL:

It's going to be a year to match your offering to that of the market, so listen and watch what they are looking for. Be prepared to change and back yourself as the relationships and perceptions of this year will shape how you come out of it next year.

So keep it real and I'll see you on the floor.