

CATALYST

the **MARXGROUP**

Business Strategy | Marketing Communications

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Tradeshow Mania Continues

The Week After...

By Tom Marx

It's two weeks after exhibiting in the most important trade show of the year. You've had your post-show sales strategy in place for weeks, even months. You've already been in touch with the prospects you met at the event. The sales funnel is full and you're working hard to mine the gold! So, what's missing?

There's usually one item that gets left out in this post-event frenzy of activity – memorializing those lessons that were learned during the planning and execution of the tradeshow. Without a powerful checklist of what worked and what didn't work, what's preventing the same mistakes from happening the next time? Why reinvent the wheel?

Allow us to offer an effective, and proven, results- tracking structure.

Have a meeting

We're not talking about a casual conversation over coffee. We're talking about a sit-down conversation with key players – from marketing, sales, media, communications, event planners and anyone else involved with the design and production of the exhibit and event.

Some examples of the topics you could talk about include:

Qualified Leads: Make an honest assessment of the value of the people who stopped by the exhibit. Were they the ideal buyers, or did they stop by for the free pens and candy? Were they mostly sales reps, existing customers, suppliers, or were they serious buyers?

Lead Generation: How did the pre-event lead generation program work? Did it generate traffic, or would those buyers have stopped by in any case?

Media Relations: Did you get the right media to stop by? If live interviews were available, did you get your fair share? How was your coverage in the show dailies?

Exhibit Effectiveness: Did the exhibit itself work? How was traffic flow? Was the exhibit highly visible from the aisles? Was your branding prominent and clearly demonstrated? Was there a sufficient conversation area or meeting space?

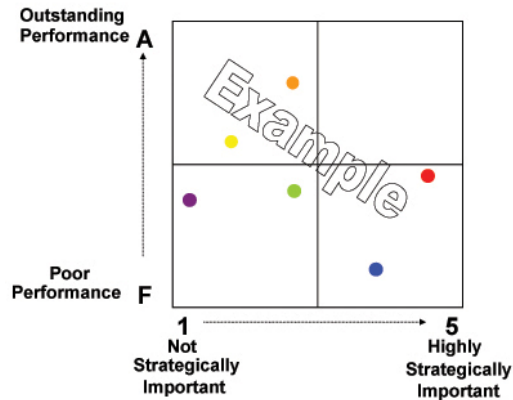
Exhibit Logistics: How effective was the timeline for exhibit design, creative, production, drayage and shipping?

ROI: What was the ROI? This could be anywhere from "our presence at this trade show gives us a year's worth of leads" to "we really don't get new business, but we have to be there because our competitors are" to "this is the best venue for keeping a positive relationship with our customers" and so on.

Create Your Metrics

Create a metrics chart and grade each one of the topics stated above "A-F" on one axis and "1-5" on the other axis. The "A-F" axis is where you grade the production performance of each topic, with "A" being outstanding and "F" indicating total failure. Use the "1-5" axis to evaluate the strategic importance of each topic, with "1" being extremely important and "5" being unimportant.

Click [here](#) for a detailed version of this metrics chart.



Each of the topics mentioned above has its own strategy. For example, let's study **Media Relations**. What were some of the breakdowns and some possible remedies? What would have happened that would have led to a more satisfying result?

- **Breakdown:** New product press releases were sent too late.
Remedy: We'll need to study the publisher's schedule and develop a timeline.
- **Breakdown:** We didn't get our fair share of media interviews.
Remedy: Let's be in contact with key editors and writers with valuable news and invite them to meet

with us at our exhibit at a specific time.

- **Breakdown:** Our competitors were in the show dailies and we were not.
Remedy: In our budget planning, let's decide on the strategic importance of being in the show dailies. (NOTE: Don't expect it to happen if additional funds don't become available – they almost never do!)

These are examples of straightforward fixes that could make a big difference. Your metrics chart will enable you to make grounded assessments. Use the metrics table show-after-show or year-after-year and see if you are improving.

Once you make your assessments and take a step back, you'll see what's most important for your future trade show focus. If **Media Relations** got a "C" for production performance and a "1" for importance, as compared to **Exhibit Logistics** getting an "F" for production performance and a "4" for importance, where you'll need to put your focus will be much clearer. Because of its priority, improving your media program would take priority over improving the logistics of getting the exhibit to the hall and back.

After you have the meeting, circulate the report and the event metrics chart. In order for the key players at the meeting to remember the lessons for the next event, we recommend they place a reminder in their calendar and attach the documents to the reminder. Our competitors were in the show dailies and we were not.

"Tom's Tip"

REMIND YOURSELF

Hang your trade show evaluation metrics chart on your wall and add a big date for when you need to start work. Tomorrow is not soon enough.