

Management for Professionals

Klaus Solberg Søylen

# Exhibit Marketing and Trade Show Intelligence

Successful Boothmanship  
and Booth Design

 Springer

Management for Professionals

Klaus Solberg Søylen

# Exhibit Marketing and Trade Show Intelligence

Successful Boothmanship  
and Booth Design

 Springer

---

# Management for Professionals

For further volumes:  
<http://www.springer.com/series/10101>



---

Klaus Solberg Søylen

# Exhibit Marketing and Trade Show Intelligence

Successful Boothmanship  
and Booth Design



Springer

Klaus Solberg Søylen  
School of Business and Engineering  
Halmstad University  
Halmstad  
Sweden

ISSN 2192-8096                      ISSN 2192-810X (electronic)  
ISBN 978-3-642-36792-2            ISBN 978-3-642-36793-9 (eBook)  
DOI 10.1007/978-3-642-36793-9  
Springer Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013939355

© Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg 2013

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are reserved by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed. Exempted from this legal reservation are brief excerpts in connection with reviews or scholarly analysis or material supplied specifically for the purpose of being entered and executed on a computer system, for exclusive use by the purchaser of the work. Duplication of this publication or parts thereof is permitted only under the provisions of the Copyright Law of the Publisher's location, in its current version, and permission for use must always be obtained from Springer. Permissions for use may be obtained through RightsLink at the Copyright Clearance Center. Violations are liable to prosecution under the respective Copyright Law.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

While the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication, neither the authors nor the editors nor the publisher can accept any legal responsibility for any errors or omissions that may be made. The publisher makes no warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein.

Printed on acid-free paper

Springer is part of Springer Science+Business Media ([www.springer.com](http://www.springer.com))

*Dedicated to:*

*Leipzig  
Old city of trade shows*

*and*

*University of Leipzig  
Alma Mater*





---

## Preface

This book is about trade shows, which is a function studied under the heading of *exhibition marketing*. Some readers may wonder about the title “*trade show intelligence*”. That is an aspect of exhibition marketing which focuses on information gathering and analysis. It is a consequence, we might say, of the *Information Age* and the realization that trade shows, to be truly effective and profitable today, need to take full advantage of the information opportunity which a trade show is.

Trade shows have become increasingly sophisticated and complex just over the past 20 years. That itself has resulted in part from advances in the study of marketing, which has given company managers many more choices. People who attend these occasions today have much higher expectations for the exhibition and the behaviour and performance of exhibitors than they had only a few years ago. That in turn has created a demand for more education in this field. Students and budding professionals need a thorough understanding of the different roles and functions of a trade show; the days of just showing up and doing one’s best are over.

The aim of this book is twofold: to survey the research literature in the field, and to show how successful boothmanship and booth design is achieved at trade shows. The book is not written from any individual national perspective, but sets out to address a truly international audience. This has meant drawing on cultural elements and citing examples from trade shows all round the world.

To date, trade shows have been neglected in the literature of marketing. Philip Kotler, for instance, devotes only a few paragraphs to the topic in his *Principles of Marketing*. At the same time, these events continue to prove themselves to be a highly significant function within the marketing profession, indeed one of its leading activities. That is reflected in the figures for spending on trade shows.

Statistics for 2010 show that there are now more than 30,000 exhibitions with a size of over 500 m<sup>2</sup> annually, attended by 2.8 million companies and 260 million visitors.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See UFI, *2011 Exhibition Industry Statistics*, p. 14. The UFI organization, based in Paris, is the largest interest organization for trade shows; the acronym originally stood for *Union des Foires*

The project of writing this book has stemmed from the experience of taking part in a number of different international trade shows with dozens of companies for over a decade now, initially with smaller IT companies and with Swedish furniture manufacturers.

The aim has been to write a university textbook for students who plan to specialize in the field of *event marketing* and more particularly *exhibition marketing*, while at the same time producing a book that might be of interest to practitioners. As such, it is very much a do's-and-don'ts book, but not like the bulk of the existing literature: for instance, it does not contain as many checklists as other books on this topic tend to include. Checklists are unavoidable in the practical activity of exhibition marketing, but they are not a necessary element of *marketing theory*. Also, this book does not go down to the same level of detail as many other books; for instance, it will not tell you what voltage to use in different countries, or how to fill in the registration form for a particular show. Rather, it offers you different ways of organizing your exhibit or booth, and it outlines the particular sales behaviour and managerial challenges required to make trade shows both efficient and successful. To help the reader in the task of learning exhibition marketing, all keywords important for a thorough understanding of the theory are given in italics. Thus you can check your knowledge by seeing what you are able to remember and explain. This is also done in order to help employees in company training sessions, and teachers in finding good exam questions.

Many people imagine that selling at exhibitions is just like selling at home; that the skills and requirements are more or less the same. One of the aims of this book is to show that people who think like that are mistaken.

The book adopts the exhibitor's perspective. The emphasis is on exhibition behaviour. Exhibitors often overlook the fact that exhibitions give them the opportunity not only to distribute information, but also to gather information from customers, from their competitors, and from stakeholders. Exhibition behaviour draws on the study of *market psychology*, the *psychology of marketing*, and *behavioural economics*. All of these subjects are explored here as we set out to present the trade show in each of its aspects.

One problem in writing a book on trade shows is that little research is available, even though there are plenty of books on event marketing in particular, and things have improved over the past decade. A large majority of existing studies have been carried out by trade associations and interest groups; fewer by academics. Most of the books available are written by consultants, who often carry their own personal views over into the conclusions in the hope of fostering business opportunities. That is only to be expected; it is understandable enough.

---

*Internationales*. It is now the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, but the old acronym is still used. The second largest interest organization is the Society of Independent Show Organizers (SISO) in the USA, with about 2,700 events, according to its homepage. In Latin America there is AFIDA, and in Southern Africa EXSA.

I first became acquainted with trade shows when I worked as an auditor with KPMG at the Norway Trade Fair in Oslo in 1996. Since then I have had the opportunity of attending a number of the largest exhibitions around the world as a consultant, working for more than two dozen companies, mostly in Europe and the USA. This took me to events such as the International Furniture Fair of Milan (*Salone Internazionale del Mobile*), the world's largest interior-decoration trade fair, and the *Consumer Electronics Show* (CES) at Las Vegas, one of the world's largest technology-related trade shows. Much of the content for this book began as notes I made in order to help those companies understand how to get the most out of the trade shows we attended, either as exhibitors or as visitors. At the same time, I have very much remained an academic with a keen interest in marketing and later also in *intelligence studies*. I hope the book will appeal to both practitioners and academics alike.

I would like to express my thanks to the staff members of all the various companies I have travelled with over the years. They are too many to be mentioned individually here, but some of their names will crop up in the book. Special thanks are due to Prof. Per Odenrick of the University of Lund, Georg Gärdh of Träriket, Lars E. Thon, Chief System Architect at Aeluros Inc., The Knowledge Foundation, Per Jenster Chairman of NIMI, Paul Woodward Managing Director of UFI, Annette Fink of AUMA, Gordon Nary and Jim Wurm at E2MA, Richard Liden of Karskrona Municipality, UNIVA in Lund, Charles M. Orgish of Stanford University and to Prashanth Mahagaonkar and Barbara Bethke at Springer.

Completed in Blumenau and Porto Belo, Brazil

Halmstad, Sweden  
January 2013

Klaus Solberg Søylen



---

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)</b> . . . . .	1
1.1	Event Marketing . . . . .	10
<b>2</b>	<b>Booth Staff Behaviour</b> . . . . .	15
2.1	Various Participants at a Trade Show . . . . .	22
2.1.1	Product Lifecycles and Giveaways . . . . .	29
2.1.2	Technological Aids . . . . .	33
2.1.3	Complaints and Stress at Trade Shows . . . . .	34
2.1.4	International Boothmanship . . . . .	41
2.2	The Exhibitor . . . . .	44
2.3	The External Co-worker: Exhibitor-Appointed Contractors (EAC) . . . . .	54
2.4	The Co-exhibitors . . . . .	56
2.5	The Visitors or Attendees . . . . .	58
2.5.1	The Psychology of Waiting and Meeting in the Booth . . . .	63
2.5.2	Conversation at the Booth (Face-to-Face Marketing) . . . .	64
2.5.3	Body Language in the Booth . . . . .	70
2.5.4	Booth Tidiness and Organization . . . . .	72
2.6	Organizers, Show Management, Show Owners, Show Promoters, and General Service Contractors (GSC) . . . . .	74
2.7	Trade Shows and Trades Unions . . . . .	78
<b>3</b>	<b>Booth Design and Marketing Materials</b> . . . . .	81
3.1	Booth Location . . . . .	89
3.2	Booth Design and Construction . . . . .	90
3.3	Booth Furniture . . . . .	99
3.4	Marketing Materials for the Trade Show . . . . .	103
<b>4</b>	<b>Pre-show Planning</b> . . . . .	109
4.1	Planning the Budget . . . . .	114
4.2	Pre-planning of Sales Promotion and Public Relations . . . . .	115
4.3	Pre-planning for Staff . . . . .	118
<b>5</b>	<b>Post-show Follow-up</b> . . . . .	123
5.1	The Sales Call . . . . .	125
5.2	The Post-show Evaluation . . . . .	126

<b>6 Trade Show Intelligence</b> . . . . .	127
6.1 Using Focus Groups in Trade Show Intelligence . . . . .	129
6.2 Trade Show Benchmarking . . . . .	133
6.3 Trend Analysis and Forecasting for Trade Shows . . . . .	133
6.4 Questionnaires for Trade Shows . . . . .	134
6.5 Intelligence on Trade Shows . . . . .	136
<b>Concluding Remarks on the Future of Trade Shows</b> . . . . .	137
<b>Bibliography</b> . . . . .	139
<b>Index</b> . . . . .	145

---

## Introduction

What is a *trade show*? In this introduction, we set out to offer the reader a relatively complete historical answer to that question. Let us just start by saying that the purpose and essence of trade shows is person-to-person information exchange and selling (Chapman 1993: 36–38). Information exchange covers both distribution and gathering of information. If trade shows are viewed as a means of information exchange between exhibitors and visitors (in the form of advertising and PR), no category of marketing activity is more expensive to undertake. When they are viewed as personal selling, no form of selling is more effective. But that is looking at the short run. In the long run, an information edge leads to increased sales, and hence to greater profits. So the question quickly becomes, how do you gather information effectively in connection with a trade show – before the show opens and after it is over, but in particular while the show is under way? If we can learn to use trade shows to gather information not only from our visitors, but also from our competitors and stakeholders, then we are beginning to exploit the full potential of a trade show for making a worthwhile return on our marketing investment. That is the core message of this book, a message we shall describe from different angles and in much more detail in the chapters to come.

According to a report from the Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR), it costs US\$233 to acquire a sales lead at a trade show, versus \$303 in the sales field (CEIR 2003: #sm17). This is despite the substantial cost of building and transporting an exhibit around to various shows. If these figures are correct, our marketing money can hardly be put to better use in any other category of sales activity. We may not make the sales during the show, but we might get an order later from someone who saw us and visited our booth at the show.<sup>2</sup>

What are the other reasons for attending a trade show? The commonest reasons quoted, apart from the fact that attending leads to more sales, is that a trade show

---

<sup>2</sup>There are different terms for the structure which a particular exhibiting company or organization erects on a specific area of floor space at a trade show: British writers would commonly call it a *stand*, Americans a *booth*. This book will use the latter term.