



2009

WHAT'S WORKING IN EXHIBITING

An Exclusive Industry Analysis by **Skyline Exhibits & Tradeshow Week**

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Executive Summary	4
What's Working in Exhibiting Survey Results	7
Increasing Results	7
Stretching Budgets	9
Show Selection	11
Budgeting	12
Measuring Results	13
Lead Management	17
Exhibit Design	20
Booth Staffing	23
Promotions	26
Methodology and Respondent Profiles	30

Introduction

Skyline Exhibits and *Tradeshow Week* Magazine have teamed to provide this exclusive report on what works best in exhibit marketing. The report digs into core themes endemic to event marketing to find the best approach and latest strategies.

The key themes covered include:

- Show Selection
- Budgeting
- Measuring Results
- Lead Management
- Exhibit Design
- Booth Staffing
- Promotions

The data and exhibitor comments featured in this industry report have been culled from a proprietary study of event marketers conducted in 2009. In this time of economic uncertainty and dedication to the bottom line, this report provides an inside look at the current practices of successful exhibitors.



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Executive Summary

- Overall, exhibitors indicated that in the past two years show selection has been the major factor that both improved results and lowered costs.
- The primary methods to increase trade show results include improved pre-show marketing and an enhanced show selection process.
- Exhibitors have primarily stretched their budgets in the past two years by selectively exhibiting at targeted shows that match their marketing objectives. Other initiatives include booth staff savings and saving on booth shipments.

Show Selection

- Exhibitors are having more success getting to their target audience at “smaller regional shows” (39%) and “big national shows” (37%) than they are at “vertical market shows” (13%) or “at their own private events” (4%).
- On the whole exhibitors are cutting an average of 2.2 shows from their schedules. On average that’s a 15.2% pull back in exhibitor’s event schedules.
- The largest cluster of exhibitors would rather cut shows than booth size (47%).

Budgeting

- Overall, exhibitors who have seen their budgets cut outnumber those receiving an increase by 4 to 1 (Increase 11%; Decrease 45%; Stay the same 44%).
- The overall change in the 2009 exhibit budget is minus 9.2%.
- The largest cluster of exhibitors who are expecting a budget cut (37%) plan to cut “Booth staffer travel, lodging, meals, and entertainment.”

Measuring Results

- Exhibitors who are cutting budgets are also measuring their results more closely. The primary metrics used to measure results are:
 - Lead counts: 58%
 - Sales revenue generated: 44%
 - Return on Investment (ROI): 40%
 - Client contacts: 40%
 - Booth traffic: 40%
 - Brand awareness: 26%
- Exhibitors most often selected “Awareness” (30%) as their means to justify their trade show marketing program. However, a closer look at budget change indicates that marketers who justify their program with “sales” are more likely to see their budgets increase.
- The largest cluster of exhibitors (70%) at least collected rough measurements of their results to have some idea of how they are doing overall.



Lead Management

- The top methods selected by exhibitors to manage their leads include:
 - Rent each shows' electronic lead machines: 40%
 - Get attendees business cards: 30%
 - Bring our own printed paper lead cards: 13%
- For exhibitors who have created a new or specific "Approach to follow up" they are also seeing an increase in their budget.

Exhibit Design

- Based on exhibitor's write-in responses, the primary ways to change exhibit design that improved trade show results include effective graphics, signs and improved booth layout.

Graphics are:

- Brighter
- Clear / Straight to the point
- Simple / Less clutter

Changing booth layout typically includes:

- More open space
- More entry points
- Less clutter
- Greater focus on specific products

- Exhibit design strategies favored most by event marketers include:
 - Going for more flexibility to easily change graphics and booth configurations: 57%
 - Made it more open and inviting to draw in leads: 52%
 - Going more lightweight: 50%

Booth Staffing

- More than half the exhibitors indicated that "salespeople" make the best booth staffers.
- Companies that are expecting a budget increase were also more likely to indicate "top management" makes the best booth staffers.
- Exhibitors who have changed their approach to picking or training booth staffers to get better results primarily fall into these large categories: "Improved personnel selection" (16%) and "Communicate goals prior to the show" (14%).

Promotions

- Pre-Show: Primary pre-show marketing tactics are Direct Mail and Email.
- At-Show: Giveaways and Drawings are mentioned by the largest cluster of exhibitors as the at-show promotions that are working well. Discounts and Demonstrations are secondary.

Respondent Overview

- About nine out of ten participants are the primary decision maker or influence budget decisions for their organization:
 - Yes, I am the primary decision-maker: 28%
 - No, I influence budget decisions: 61%
 - No, I have no impact on budget decisions: 10%
- The largest booth size used by study participants represents a rounded mix of small, mid-sized and large exhibitors:

	Exhibitors
100 square feet (10 foot x 10 foot)	25%
200 to 300 square feet (10 x 20 or 10 x 30)	37%
400 to 600 square feet (20 x 20 to 20 x 30, or 10 x 40)	24%
700 to 900 square feet (20 x 40 or 30 x 30)	8%
1,000 square feet and larger	5%



What's Working in Exhibiting - Survey Results

Survey results presented in this section are pulled from a February 2009 exhibitor study conducted by Skyline Exhibits and Tradeshow Week. The analysis is a summary of the key themes and opinions expressed by over 170 event exhibitors who took part in the survey.

The goal of this analysis is to spotlight the tactics used by exhibitors to achieve success in event marketing.

SURVEY QUESTION: *How did you increase your trade show results in the last two years?*

Exhibitors indicated that they improved their results with pre-show marketing and a more stringent show selection process.

The exhibitors who have focused on “planning” are also more likely to increase their spending and earn greater value from trade shows.

In the table below the exhibitor’s write-in responses are grouped by themes and cross tabulated by whether their budget increased or decreased in 2009.

Methods To Increase Trade Show Results

	All Respondents	Respondents whose 2009 Trade Show Marketing Budgets:		
		Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
Pre-Show Marketing	26%	32%	28%	22%
Selecting Shows and Spaces	23%	21%	24%	22%
Exhibit Design	14%	11%	14%	15%
Lead Management	12%	11%	17%	8%
Planning	9%	16%	7%	8%
Promotions	5%	0%	4%	7%
Booth Staffing	4%	5%	4%	4%
New Products / Enhanced Merchandise	3%	0%	0%	6%
Measurement	1%	0%	0%	1%
Other	4%	5%	3%	6%



Below in their own words are selected write-in responses that best exemplify the methods used by exhibitors to increase their trade show results:

Themes	Question: How did you increase your trade show results in the last two years?
Pre-Show Marketing	Selecting the top prospects and inviting them to the booth with personal emails.
Pre-Show Marketing	Pre-show mailers announcing our booth number, cold calling to targets inviting to visit us at our booth and changing the booth graphic to be more eye-appealing.
Pre-Show Marketing	Targeted pre-show campaigns that included print media advertising, HTML campaigns leading up to the show, promotion for registration in a drawing for an XBOX system, and an in-booth gift when the booth visitor presented the coupon from the HTML campaign.
Pre-Show Marketing	Identified targets and reached out to key attendees before the show. Invited key prospects to lunch/dinner meetings to have more in-depth conversations off the show floor. Invited internal representation with a strategic plan in mind.
Pre-Show Marketing	We stopped using the provided postcard mailers from the promoter, and designed our own flyer with pictures of our product line as our pre-show mailer. This also allowed us to include a show-special coupon when desired.
Selecting Shows and Spaces	We did fewer shows, but with a greater presence.
Selecting Shows and Spaces	Stopped attending “must be seen at” shows and went to ones with a better likelihood of potential clients.
Selecting Shows and Spaces	Dropped two shows where we see the same attendees.
Selecting Shows and Spaces	We have added several shows, including small venues and street fairs, where we find less competition and a cleaner lead source.
Exhibit Design	We went with booth graphics that didn’t focus so much on our name rather focusing on what we did. We are a small company so name recognition is secondary. People want to know what you do and why they should stop.
Exhibit Design	More focused displays so not to overload/over-stimulate our visitors.
Lead Management	We became more focused on following-up on leads generated from the show and expressing more interest in each customer.
Planning	By setting goals and focusing on an agenda. Being prepared to capitalize on unexpected opportunities.
Planning	Preparing a better business solution for participants based on the specific show focus.
Planning	Developed themes that match our show objectives and used this theme in pre-show, at-show and post-show promotions.
Booth Staffing	Involved both sales and technical in matched teams for booth manning. Held pre-show meetings to create team work and “operational” guidelines.
Booth Staffing	By having a clean, tidy and inviting booth with friendly, knowledgeable people managing the booth.
Measurement	Tracking results with detailed post-show reports are key for us to document what worked and didn’t work; we then use this information to adjust for future shows.
New Products / Enhanced Merchandise	We have included packages of our best selling items. This makes it easy for the customer to say yes.

SURVEY QUESTION: *How did you stretch your exhibiting budget in the last two years?*

Most exhibitors indicated that show selection had the greatest impact on their budgets. Show selection was mentioned as the major factor in both improving results and lowering costs.

Exhibitors with shrinking budgets were also more likely to mention they paid less with pop-up or reduced booth size and cut costs by doing it themselves.

Methods To Stretch Exhibiting Budget Total

	All Respondents	Respondents whose 2009 Trade Show Marketing Budgets:		
		Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
Exhibit at only the right shows	29%	32%	24%	34%
Booth staffing savings	12%	11%	11%	14%
Save on shipping	9%	11%	7%	10%
Reused booth display / materials	8%	5%	8%	9%
Save on Travel and Entertainment	7%	11%	8%	6%
Pay less with pop-up or reduced booth size	6%	0%	8%	6%
Share with partners	5%	11%	5%	3%
Cut back booth accessories	4%	5%	4%	4%
Do it yourself	3%	0%	5%	1%
Plan ahead and order early	3%	0%	1%	6%
Buy your own instead of renting from the show	1%	5%	0%	1%
Other	12%	11%	18%	6%



The exhibitor's write-in responses are categorized in the table below.

Themes	Question: How did you stretch your exhibiting budget in the last two years?
Exhibit at only the right shows	Dropped shows that overlapped geographically.
Exhibit at only the right shows	Cut back on shows that don't result in orders and invested more resources (signage, mailings, etc.) in the ones we attend.
Exhibit at only the right shows	By adding the smaller venues, we find the cost in both booth space and in staffing to be much less. Many of the small venues we have added are shorter show runs which saves us on staffing and associated costs.
Exhibit at only the right shows	We evaluated each show last year and dropped the shows where the rate of return was limited compared to our costs. We have also started doing smaller shows, where you can spend more time with participants.
Exhibit at only the right shows	Measure cost vs. attendees (for example, some events cost \$5K with 200 attendees, others \$8k with 800 - guess which one we attended!).
Exhibit at only the right shows	We have moved from a participation model where we would participate in many shows doing very little targeted campaign management, to a model where we do fewer shows with full and strategic campaign management; this helps to increase the value of each dollar.
Booth staffing savings	We examined the number of people attending each show on our company's behalf, decreased the size of some of our booth displays, and modified our marketing materials and how we distribute them, resulting in less waste.
Save on shipping	By going to new Inliten® booths we reduced our freight and material handling with less weight. Our local sales managers now take over all installation/dismantle, saving additional show services. Working closely with our freight carrier also was a plus.
Save on shipping	We have shopped around more and used local vendors so that we can pick up the exhibit items ourselves to cut down on shipping costs.
Save on Travel and Entertainment	Fewer but better-focused attendees; stayed at lower cost hotels; had attendees drive to show covering customer enroute.
Save on Travel and Entertainment	We did shows closer to home, and cut down on travel costs.
Cut back booth accessories	Less paper printouts only take what we need and then if we run out get names and email addresses of people to send them info, cut back on minor costs like extra furniture in booth that is not needed, less sponsorships of over-the-top items like lunches.
Cut back booth accessories	Cut booth accessories to bare minimum. Reduce the clutter; improve the look, save money!!
Pay less with pop-up or reduced booth size	We turned our old, heavy, custom build booth into a show room and purchased two pop-up booths that we do not need to hire someone to set up. We reduced shipping and labor costs significantly.
Buy your own instead of renting from the show	Ask for reductions on space rental, equipment rental, buying our own equipment.

SHOW SELECTION

SURVEY QUESTION: *Are you having more success getting to your target audience at:*

	Reaching Target Audience			
	All Respondents	Respondents whose 2009 Trade Show Marketing Budgets:		
		Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
Smaller regional shows	39%	47%	37%	38%
Big national shows	37%	42%	38%	36%
Vertical market shows	13%	11%	15%	12%
At your own private events	4%	0%	3%	6%
Other	7%	0%	8%	8%

This question was also studied by booth size. It may seem intuitive, but the data confirms that exhibitors with smaller booths, 300 square feet or less, have more success at smaller regional shows. At the same time, larger exhibitors with 400 to 600 square feet of exhibit space or more see their best results at big national shows.

	Reaching Target Audience					
	All Respondents	BOOTH SIZE:				
		100 sqft (10FT X 10FT)	200-300 sqft (10 X 20 OR 10 X 30)	400-600 sqft (20 X 20 OR 20 X 30, OR 10 X 40)	700-900 sqft (20 X 40 OR 30 X 30)	1000 sqft and larger
Big national shows	38%	24%	31%	55%	46%	56%
Smaller regional shows	38%	55%	43%	20%	15%	44%
Vertical market shows	12%	7%	16%	13%	15%	0%
At your own private events	4%	2%	3%	5%	15%	0%
Other	8%	12%	7%	8%	8%	0%

SURVEY QUESTION: *How many shows did you exhibit in 2008?*

AVERAGE: 14.5

MEDIAN: 8.0

HIGH: 100

LOW: 0

SURVEY QUESTION: *How many shows do you plan to exhibit at in 2009?*

AVERAGE: 12.3

MEDIAN: 7.5

HIGH: 85

LOW: 0

- Overall average percentage change in the number of shows from 2008: -15.2%
- Overall average difference in the number of shows from 2008: -2.2 shows.

SURVEY QUESTION: *If you have to cut shows or booth spaces, would you rather?*

The largest cluster of exhibitors would rather cut shows than booth size (47%). Exhibitors pressed by decreasing budgets were more likely to suggest they will both drop shows and decrease booth sizes at the shows they keep.

Cut Shows or Booth Space				
	All Respondents	Respondents whose 2009 Trade Show Marketing Budgets:		
		Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
Go to fewer shows but maintain our booth sizes at the shows we keep	47%	50%	40%	55%
Go to the same number of shows but decrease our booth sizes	32%	39%	33%	30%
Drop some shows and decrease booth sizes at the shows we keep	21%	11%	27%	16%

BUDGETING

Overall, exhibitors who have seen their budgets cut outnumber those receiving an increase by 4 to 1 (Increase 11%; Decrease 45%; Stay the same 44%).

SURVEY QUESTION: *How did your overall budget for trade show marketing change in 2009 over 2008?*

	Percentage of Exhibitors	2009 Average Budget Increase/Decrease
Increase	11.4%	18.7%
Decrease	44.6%	-25.4%
Stayed the same	44.0%	0.0%
Overall % Change		-9.2%

SURVEY QUESTION: *If your overall budget for trade show marketing “Decreased,” what areas of your budget do you plan to cut most?*



	Exhibitors
Booth staffer travel, lodging, meals, and entertainment	37%
Equal cuts to all areas	27%
Booth space	14%
Exhibit properties and graphics	9%
Shipping	6%
Promotions	6%
Show Services	1%

MEASURING RESULTS

SURVEY QUESTION: *What metrics is your management asking you to measure and report on? (Check all that apply):*

Exhibitors who are cutting budgets are also measuring their results more closely. Many metrics are used to measure results by a good portion of exhibitors, including lead counts, sales revenue, ROI, client contact, and booth traffic.

Measurement and Reporting

	All Respondents	Respondents whose 2009 Trade Show Marketing Budgets:		
		Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
Lead counts	58%	37%	64%	58%
Sales revenue generated	44%	37%	44%	47%
Return on Investment (ROI)	40%	37%	44%	35%
Client contacts	40%	26%	42%	41%
Booth traffic	40%	11%	40%	47%
Brand awareness	26%	16%	28%	27%
New product presentations	19%	21%	19%	18%
Return on Objectives (ROO)	15%	21%	8%	20%
Impressions	12%	21%	11%	10%
None	7%	5%	7%	7%
Other	2%	0%	3%	1%

SURVEY QUESTION: *How have you overcome obstacles to measuring your trade show marketing program?*

The largest cluster of exhibitors indicated that they have not overcome obstacles to measuring their trade show marketing.

Overcoming Obstacles to Measuring Results

	All Respondents	Respondents whose 2009 Trade Show Marketing Budgets:		
		Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
Have not overcome obstacles	25%	28%	30%	21%
Better reporting	18%	6%	17%	23%
Created formula	15%	11%	15%	17%
Lead tracking / Follow up	15%	17%	21%	9%
Education	3%	0%	4%	2%
No Answer / No attempt	11%	11%	4%	17%
Other	13%	28%	9%	11%

Below are select write-in responses that explain how exhibitors have overcome obstacles to measuring their trade show marketing program:

Themes	Question: How have you overcome obstacles to measuring your trade show marketing program?
Better reporting	Better reporting post-show of leads turned into clients.
Better reporting	By tracking incremental sales generated from show leads.
Better reporting	Ongoing spreadsheets over several years show trends and performance.
Better reporting	Tie leads to sales.
Created formula	We primarily measure by revenue.
Created formula	Quantifiable leads, having client meetings on site.
Created formula	Working on creating metrics and getting leads in our database with the show associated with them so we can determine ROI.
Created formula	We now capture total costs per show and can track sales to those shows.
Lead tracking /Follow up	By creating a consistent follow-up process.

SURVEY QUESTION: *How have you successfully justified your trade show marketing program?*

Exhibitors most often selected “Awareness” as their means to justify their trade show marketing program. However, a closer look at budget change indicates that marketers who justify their program with sales are more likely to see their budgets increase.

Ultimately, “Awareness” and “Leads” may be viewed as fluff and not enough to justify budgets. Exhibitors with decreasing budgets tend to rely too heavily on these factors. Measuring and proving “Sales” had the highest incidence of increased budgets.

Also, while leads are often a core reason to exhibit, not as many exhibitors use leads to justify the marketing program, and even fewer use ROI as justification.

In the table below exhibitor write-in responses are grouped by theme and cross-tabulated by whether their budget increased or decreased in 2009.

	All Respondents	Respondents whose 2009 Trade Show Marketing Budgets:		
		Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
Awareness	30%	17%	25%	38%
Sales	20%	39%	17%	18%
Leads	16%	11%	20%	13%
Have not justified results	7%	6%	9%	7%
Return on investment	6%	0%	10%	3%
Detailed reporting	4%	0%	9%	2%
Reducing costs	1%	0%	2%	2%
No answer / Not specific	8%	17%	3%	10%
Other	7%	11%	5%	8%



Below are select write-in responses that explain how exhibitors successfully justified their trade show marketing programs:

Themes	Question: How have you successfully justified your trade show marketing program?
Awareness	By getting feedback from the sales reps. Also, by realizing the importance of being where our competitors are, and knowing that during a bad economy, it is vital to still be seen and let people know they can still count on us.
Awareness	Our current customers look for us at these trade shows, if we're not there and our competitors are, they look to them for advice while at the show.
Awareness	Yes, because it's still cheaper than visiting a few customers on separate trips.
Awareness	Name recognition and touches are important to us, having on-site meetings/ presentations.
Awareness	By pointing out to management the connection between product/company awareness and customer recognition and the fact that return may not be immediate.
Awareness	With several of our competitors eliminating or cutting back shows we will take advantage by being visible in the market.
Sales	Tracking revenues which are show related.
Sales	Since we have improved our marketing and image, we have sold more machines... bottom line.
Sales	We are able to track our marketing results and find that 30% of jobs sold are obtained through contact at shows.
Sales	We keep a close eye on leads turning into sales and that is the main justification for returning to a show.
Sales	The only successful justification is sales revenue. One good sale will pay for a full show's marketing.
Leads	By increased number of qualified leads and "warm" calling worked better for our sales team
Leads	We generate lots of interest i.e.: web traffic, demo requests, sales quotes following trade shows. It also reinforces our place in the market.
Leads	By tracking booth traffic and determining cost per lead, as well as linking sales back to specific events.
Reducing Costs	By reducing costs, including more of the organization in the exhibit, setting expectations prior to attendance.
Return on Investment	Look at our ROI--calculate how much we spend vs. how many new clients we obtain from the show and how much money we receive from their contract.

SURVEY QUESTION: *Which best describes your measurement level?*

The largest cluster of exhibitors collected at least rough measurements of their results to have some idea of how they are doing overall. There is little variance in the measurement levels between exhibitors with increasing budgets vs. those with decreasing budgets. Fully 90% of exhibitors do some sort of measurement.

	Measurement Level			
	All Respondents	Respondents whose 2009 Trade Show Marketing Budgets:		
		Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
We get rough measurements of our results that give us some idea of how we are doing overall	70%	68%	68%	73%
We get detailed measurements of our results, and make targeted changes based on our measurements	20%	26%	24%	14%
We do not measure our results	10%	5%	9%	13%

LEAD MANAGEMENT

SURVEY QUESTION: *How do you manage your leads?*

	Lead Management Tactics			
	All Respondents	Respondents whose 2009 Trade Show Marketing Budgets:		
		Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
Rent each shows' electronic lead machines	40%	37%	42%	39%
Get attendees business cards	30%	32%	21%	39%
Bring our own printed paper lead cards	13%	16%	8%	16%
Enter data right into our computers at show	5%	5%	7%	3%
Bring our own electronic lead machines	1%	0%	3%	0%
Other	11%	11%	19%	3%



SURVEY QUESTION: *How have you recently improved your lead management?*

For most exhibitors improved lead management has simply meant a renewed focus on following up, i.e. “Dedicated follow up plan.” This often translates to quick or persistent follow up, using CRM computer/database or having one person entering leads to a database and distributing them to the right salespeople.

For exhibitors who have created a new or specific “Approach to follow up” they are also seeing an increase in their budget.

In the table below exhibitor write-in responses are grouped by theme and cross-tabulated by whether their budget increased or decreased in 2009.

Methods To Improve Lead Management

	All Respondents	Respondents whose 2009 Trade Show Marketing Budgets:		
		Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
Dedicated follow-up plan	29%	28%	26%	32%
Have not improved	21%	28%	26%	14%
Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	17%	11%	17%	18%
Approach to follow up	10%	17%	12%	5%
Thorough data entry	6%	11%	0%	11%
Badge scanner	5%	0%	7%	5%
One person manages leads process	5%	6%	5%	4%
Lead capture	1%	0%	2%	0%
No answer	2%	0%	0%	5%
Other	5%	0%	5%	7%

Below are select write-in responses that detail various methods to lead management:

Themes	Question: How have you recently improved your lead management?
Dedicated Follow Up Plan	Follow up with regional sales managers, RE: specific leads in their territories.
Dedicated Follow Up Plan	Doing a better job following up after shows with the lead cards.
Approach to Follow Up	We have improved our lead management by focusing on the most important segments of our business that result in the biggest bang for the buck.
Approach to Follow Up	We only gather qualified leads instead of anyone that stops by the booth.
Approach to Follow Up	Personal touches, hand written notes and actual mail rather than phone calls or emails.
Customer Relationship Management	When the leads are entered into our system a follow-up request is automatically scheduled for the sales people, ensuring the leads are followed up with.
Customer Relationship Management	Improved CRM and follow up
One Person Manages Leads Process	Have one person responsible for lead distribution to sales area, add to our data base.
One Person Manages Leads Process	One person is responsible for getting leads to proper departments.



EXHIBIT DESIGN

SURVEY QUESTION: *How have you changed your exhibit design in ways that improved your trade show results?*

Based on exhibitor's write-in responses, the primary ways to change exhibit design that improved trade show results include effective graphics, signs and improved booth layout.

Graphics are:

- Brighter
- Clear / Straight to the point
- Simple / Less clutter

Changing booth layout typically includes:

- More open space
- More entry points
- Less clutter
- Greater focus on specific products

Changed Exhibit Design to Improve Trade Show Results

	All Respondents	Respondents whose 2009 Trade Show Marketing Budgets:		
		Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
Effective graphics/ signs	29%	26%	33%	26%
Improved booth layout	21%	16%	21%	23%
No change	14%	16%	8%	19%
Enhanced merchandising	11%	11%	13%	10%
Lightweight	8%	5%	12%	5%
Banner stands	4%	0%	0%	10%
Better technology	4%	11%	3%	2%
New staff / goals	1%	5%	2%	0%
Other	6%	11%	5%	5%
No answer	2%	0%	3%	2%

Below are select write-in responses that detail how exhibitors changed their exhibit design in ways that improved their trade show results:

Themes	Question: How have you changed your exhibit design in ways that improved your trade show results?
Effective Graphics/ Signs	The artwork is simple, elegant and straight to the point. Our display can be configured to fit in a 3-foot wide space up to 10-foot wide (or more) space. Only essential keywords appear on the backwall display.
Effective Graphics/ Signs	New, brighter signs, monitor with presentations running promoting specific products.
Effective Graphics/ Signs	Purchased new booth and booth graphics. Graphics are in line with our overall advertising and promotional activities to show one face to the customer to increase our brand awareness.
Effective Graphics/ Signs	Yes, totally new graphics, cleaner - the message pops.
Effective Graphics/ Signs	We put our logos and maintain consistency throughout all of our materials. We achieve a cohesive and understandable initiative that is designed to trigger memory. Our immediate follow-up solidifies impressions and accelerates long-term recall of the brand.
Effective Graphics/ Signs	Brighter, cleaner graphics.
Improved Booth Layout	Less clutter to better focus attendees on exactly what we are selling.
Improved Booth Layout	Our island booth is much more open and inviting.
Improved Booth Layout	More entry points from all sides to help flow.
Improved Booth Layout	Yes, clean, clear booth display focusing on only a few products in our line up.
Enhanced Merchandising	By displaying the top selling products.
Enhanced Merchandising	Added more product samples.
Enhanced Merchandising	We display less, rather than more.
Enhanced Merchandising	Made the booth cleaner...less product, better graphics. Keep it simple. Feature new products.
Lightweight	Moving from a mammoth-sized exhibit display that was heavy and took a long time to set up to several banner stands instead.
Lightweight	Our old booth was a very large custom booth. While it looked good, it was heavy and expensive to ship. For each show we create a new banner for our pop-up booths. It is not a significant cost, especially compared to what we are saving versus using the old.
Lightweight	We have gone with pop-up banners that have reduced our shipping costs and set up time.
Lightweight	We've modified our existing booth by eliminating a hardwood floor and a ceiling. This reduced the freight, drayage and I&D costs.

SURVEY QUESTION: *Which of the following strategies are you doing more of in your exhibit design?*

The leading strategies in exhibit design are: going for more flexibility to easily change graphics and booth configurations, and to create a more open and inviting experience to draw in leads. Also, half the exhibitors said they were going for more lightweight exhibit designs.

Exhibitors who indicated they are “Going more custom” are twice as likely to increase their budget as decrease.

Current Strategies in Exhibit Design

	All Respondents	Respondents whose 2009 Trade Show Marketing Budgets:		
		Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
Going for more flexibility to easily change graphics and booth configurations	57%	47%	65%	51%
Made it more open and inviting to draw in leads	52%	42%	49%	57%
Going more lightweight	50%	58%	57%	40%
Featuring product more	38%	42%	35%	40%
Using more video and technology	33%	26%	33%	34%
Creating bigger branding graphics	27%	26%	25%	30%
Going more custom	24%	37%	17%	27%
Creating more presentation areas	12%	5%	12%	15%
Made it with more private meeting spaces for longer conversations	5%	11%	4%	5%



BOOTH STAFFING

SURVEY QUESTION: *Who makes your best booth staffers?*

When top management is involved, exhibit budgets are more likely to increase.

Makes the Best Booth Staffers

	All Respondents	Respondents whose 2009 Trade Show Marketing Budgets:		
		Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
Salespeople	55%	58%	51%	59%
Top management	14%	21%	14%	13%
Customer Service	8%	0%	11%	7%
Product Marketing	8%	11%	4%	11%
Marketing Communications	6%	5%	8%	3%
Dealer partners	1%	0%	1%	1%
Engineering	1%	0%	3%	0%
Hired professional booth staffers	1%	5%	1%	0%
Other	6%	0%	7%	6%



SURVEY QUESTION: *How have you changed your approach to picking or training booth staffers that can get better results?*

In the table below exhibitor write-in responses are grouped by theme and cross-tabulated by whether their budget increased or decreased in 2009.

Approach to Picking or Training Booth Staffers

	All Respondents	Respondents whose 2009 Trade Show Marketing Budgets:		
		Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
No change	29%	33%	27%	31%
Improved personnel selection	16%	22%	14%	17%
Communicate goals prior to show	14%	6%	13%	19%
Booth staff training	11%	17%	14%	7%
Friendly / Enthusiastic staff	5%	0%	6%	5%
Salespeople	5%	11%	3%	5%
Specific approach in booth	4%	6%	3%	5%
Staff with customer or product knowledge	4%	0%	6%	3%
Senior managers	4%	6%	5%	2%
Mix of sales and operations	2%	0%	0%	5%
Sales and operations mix	2%	0%	5%	0%
Based on region	1%	0%	3%	0%
Other	1%	0%	2%	0%



Below are select write-in responses that detail the exhibitors' approach to picking or training booth staffers that can get better results:

Themes	Question: How have you changed your approach to picking or training booth staffers that can get better results?
Improved Personnel Selection	Using more HQ employees and management - less dependence on manufacturer's reps.
Improved Personnel Selection	We have a limited pool of who to choose to attend shows. I have adapted a rating scale for each person with their trade show skills, assistance, adherence to booth policies, submission of complete/legible leads.
Improved Personnel Selection	We have cut back on the number of people we have sent, both for cost reasons, and booth size reasons. We used to have a lot of technical people attend, but we have cut that back, and just send our sales/marketing team.
Improved Personnel Selection	We pick the ones that have proven track records and set high expectations for any newcomers.
Communicate Goals prior to show	Have meeting within week prior to show to set expectations, answer questions.
Communicate Goals prior to show	Honing message and providing company (logo) shirts for consistency in appearance.
Communicate Goals prior to show	Pre-show meeting to discuss objectives and post-show follow up.
Communicate Goals prior to show	We do a pre-show meeting every morning of the show to outline our objectives.
Communicate Goals prior to show	We set measurable goals and have specific approaches that we train booth staffers on.
Booth Staff Training	We have streamlined our processes to offer as much information to each booth staffer prior to the show, as well as offer booth staff training to everyone, no matter how many shows they have worked.
Specific Approach in Booth	Let the customer talk; listen to what they are saying. Remain attentive i.e.: no email, texting or cell phones. No chairs in booth. Ask open-ended questions.
Staff with Customer or Product Knowledge	We have started staffing with people that know the specific products best that we are trying to represent for that specific show.

PROMOTIONS

SURVEY QUESTION: *What ways are you doing pre-show promotions that are increasing attendance in your booth?*

Primary pre-show promotion tactics are Direct Mail and Email. A closer examination of budget change reveals Direct Mail users are more likely to see their budgets increase.

One way to interpret this finding is that direct mail leads to better trade show results. Though this may be true, exhibitors should also be cautioned that budgets may be increasing simply because direct mail costs more.

In the table below exhibitor write-in responses are grouped by theme and cross tabulated by whether their budget increased or decreased in 2009.

Pre-Show Promotion To Increase Booth Attendance

	All Respondents	Respondents whose 2009 Trade Show Marketing Budgets:		
		Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
Direct Mail	21%	37%	15%	23%
Email blast	20%	16%	18%	25%
Contact current buyers	9%	5%	8%	10%
Unique marketing	6%	5%	7%	7%
Drawings / Giveaways / Discounts	6%	5%	7%	5%
Print ads	5%	0%	7%	5%
Mail to attendee list	4%	5%	5%	3%
Newsletter	4%	11%	3%	3%
Targeted contacts	4%	0%	5%	5%
Personal invites	4%	0%	5%	3%
Website ad	4%	5%	3%	3%
Book meetings pre-show	2%	0%	5%	0%
No promotion	7%	5%	10%	5%
Other	4%	5%	5%	3%



Below are select write-in responses that detail pre-show promotion methods that reportedly impact booth attendance:

Theme	Question: What ways are you doing pre-show promotions that are increasing attendance in your booth?
Direct Mail	Mailings and participating in “new product” announcements.
Direct Mail	We send out mailers followed up with phone calls inviting them to a product demo and contest entry.
Direct Mail	We do unusual pre-show mailers when possible. This usually gets the attendees attention.
Email Blast	We do email blasts to our database in the surrounding countries of the conference place announcing our presence at these shows and inviting them to come and visit us.
Email Blast	Informing - usually through e-mail - of our intent to exhibit and setting up appointments/dinners.
Contact Current Buyers	Inviting clients we know who will be on-site to visit us, set-up meetings at our booth, etc.
Unique Marketing	We send show planners, thumb drives loaded with company information and letter from the owner.
Unique Marketing	Scratch-off mailers in which attendees don’t scratch until they get to the booth. They win product discounts and various other prizes.
Unique Marketing	Advertising that product will be demonstrated in exhibit. We do this in national publications, on trade show website, and in trade show program. We also send this information in emails to targeted attendees.
Drawings / Giveaways / Discounts	Pre-show coupons and e-mail blasts promoting our show specials.
Personal Invites	Call large specific potential customers to invite to stop by.
Personal Invites	We try to personally contact leads that we feel are a good fit for each show.
Book Meetings Pre-Show	By setting up meetings in advance of the show and using any technology that the show organizers make available.

SURVEY QUESTION: *What at-show promotions are working well?*

Giveaways and Drawings are mentioned by the largest cluster of exhibitors as the at-show promotion that's working well. Discounts and Demonstrations are secondary. Very few exhibitors indicate that they are not doing any at-show promotions.

In the table below exhibitor write-in responses are grouped by theme and cross-tabulated by whether their budget increased or decreased in 2009.

At-Show Promotions That Work Well

	All Respondents	Respondents whose 2009 Trade Show Marketing Budgets:		
		Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
Free Giveaways / Drawings	37%	22%	37%	42%
Discounts	12%	22%	11%	10%
Demonstrations	11%	11%	11%	10%
Pre-Show Marketing	5%	0%	9%	2%
Education	4%	0%	6%	3%
No Show Promotion	4%	0%	4%	5%
Signs / Fliers/ Graphics	4%	11%	0%	5%
Food / Candy	3%	6%	0%	5%
Sponsorships	3%	0%	6%	2%
Friendly Staff	2%	0%	4%	0%
Don't know / No Answer	8%	6%	6%	12%
Other	8%	22%	7%	5%



Below are select write-in responses that detail at-show promotion methods that exhibitors mentioned work well:

Theme	Question: What at-show promotions are working well?
Free Giveaways /Drawings	Well-branded giveaways at the booth.
Free Giveaways /Drawings	Drawings for technology items and gas cards.
Free Giveaways /Drawings	We have done a drawing for a Trek bicycle -- which fits the target lifestyle of our attendees and is also a great example of Wisconsin technology and workmanship.
Free Giveaways /Drawings	Our giveaway items are popular and we think work by having the recipient visit our website.
Free Giveaways /Drawings	Displaying or raffling something unrelated to our business that many folks relate to in order to get their attention. Sometimes it is a technology belonging to a current or past client. We are a service business so we don't have physical products of our own to display otherwise.
Discounts	We have been packing our products in sets at a slightly lower price so that it encourages the buyers to try the products and have lowered the minimum quantity for the first trial order.
Discounts	We give a show special discount through the pre-show flyer.
Discounts	We sell our products at large discounts and offer informational presentations.
Discounts	Special day pricing, show-only deals, special giveaways.
Demonstrations	Live demonstrations of technical courses with equipment and knowledgeable staff.
Demonstrations	New product launches.
Education	Education session - hourly presentation in an education theater.

Methodology and Respondent Profile

In February 2009 Skyline Exhibits invited a wide range of exhibitors to participate in a research survey designed to assess what's working best for exhibitors in today's convention and exhibition market. The survey was announced in Skyline's monthly newsletter and a total of 173 exhibitors responded.

About nine out of ten participants are the primary decision maker or influence budget decisions for their organization:

- Yes, I am the primary decision-maker: 28%
- No, I influence budget decisions: 61%
- No, I have no impact on budget decisions: 10%

Participants indicated that their primary job function within their organization is:

- Chairman/CEO/President: 8%
- Senior Executive – Non-Marketing: 2%
- Vice President, Marketing (EVP, SVP): 7%
- Director of Marketing: 10%
- Marketing Manager: 17%
- Exhibit or Event Marketing Director: 2%
- Exhibit or Event Marketing Manager: 9%
- Sales Director or Manager: 12%
- Marketing Coordinator: 17%
- Other: 16%

The largest booth size used by study participants represents a rounded mix of small, mid-sized and large exhibitors:

	Exhibitors
100 square feet (10 foot x 10 foot)	25%
200 to 300 square feet (10 x 20 or 10 x 30)	37%
400 to 600 square feet (20 x 20 to 20 x 30, or 10 x 40)	24%
700 to 900 square feet (20 x 40 or 30 x 30)	8%
1,000 square feet and larger	5%

Exhibitors are split into almost two equal groups based on gross sales - one group with exhibitors whose gross sales are under \$25 Million and a second group reporting gross sales over \$25 Million. Overall, exhibitors estimated that their organization's total gross sales in 2008 or the most recent fiscal year fall into the following ranges:

- Less than \$25 Million: 53%
- \$25 to \$49 Million: 15%
- \$50 to \$99 Million: 9%
- \$100 to \$499 Million: 12%
- \$500 to \$749 Million: 2%
- \$750 to \$999 Million: 4%
- \$1 Billion or more: 5%

Survey participants represent a diverse mix of industries including:

	Exhibitors
Advertising & Marketing	4%
Apparel	1%
Automotive & Trucking	2%
Aviation & Aerospace	1%
Building & Construction	4%
Education	5%
Engineering	2%
Environmental & Public Works	2%
Financial Services/Legal	2%
Food Service & Processing	2%
Health Care & Pharmaceutical	9%
Hospitality, Hotels & Resorts	1%
Manufacturing & Industrial	23%
Packaging	1%
Printing & Photography	1%
Publishing	2%
Restaurants	1%
Retail	1%
Security	2%
Sporting Goods & Recreation	2%
Technology & Telecomm	8%
Transportation	2%
Other	22%

Skyline Exhibits and *Tradeshow Week* developed the survey and analysis in this unique industry report. The data reflects the input of over 170 corporate exhibitors surveyed in 2009. The research-based report was designed to assist exhibitors with their overall event marketing approach. In addition to studying what's working in exhibit marketing, Skyline Exhibits and *Tradeshow Week* have co-authored industry reports on "The Trend to Custom Modular Exhibits", "International Exhibiting: Trends & Outlook", as well as a series of reports on specific industries: Manufacturing & Industrial, Medical & Healthcare, Information Technology, and Professional & Business Service. To access these reports, please go to www.skyline.com/whitepapers.



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