



**2009 Public Events Council Survey Report:**  
***Public Events in 2009: How They Fared During the Worst Economy in Fifty Years***

To say that 2009 has been a challenge for exhibition and event organizers would be something of an understatement. IAEE’s Public Events Council recently organized a survey of public events organizers across 22 industry sectors to examine overall industry performance to date, and the results within this report will show which industry sectors fared well and which ones have struggled. Public events organizers’ expectations for the future, as well as their thoughts on the three most important issues facing the industry today, were also requested of respondents. Complete survey results are presented throughout this report.

**SURVEY RESULTS OVERVIEW**

INDUSTRY SECTOR	2009 EVENTS	% Met or Exceeded Expectations	% Below Expectations	New Launches 2009	% Met or Exceeded Expectations	% Below Expectations
Agriculture/Farm/Ranch	13	100%	0%	6	50%	50%
Antiques/Collectibles	5	0%	100%	1	0%	100%
Arms/Guns/Knives	0	-	-	0	-	-
Automobile	1	0%	100%	0	-	-
Aviation	0	-	-	0	-	-
Boating/Marine	12	0%	100%	0	-	-
Bridal	0	-	-	0	-	-
Business/Franchise/Entrepreneur	0	-	-	0	-	-
Computer/Electronics	1	0%	100%	0	-	-
Craft/Hobby/Woodworking	2	100%	-	1	100%	0%
Education/College/Career	0	-	-	0	-	-
Fairs/Festivals	1	100%	0%	0	-	-
Food/Beverage	3	100%	0%	1	100%	0%
Gift/Gem/Jewelry	1	100%	0%	0	-	-
Home/Garden	39	80%	20%	2	100%	0%
Kids/Family/Lifestyle/Pets	7	100%	0%	1	100%	0%
Miscellaneous	17	75%	25%	4	100%	0%
RV	21	0%	100%	1	0%	100%
Retirement/Golden Age/Senior	0	-	-	0	-	-
Sportsman/Hunting/Outdoors	5	100%	0%	0	-	-
Travel	2	100%	0%	0	-	-
Women’s	2	100%	0%	1	0%	100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>131</b>			<b>16</b>		

## EVENT REVENUE, EXHIBIT SPACE SALES (NSF), and ATTENDANCE

Organizers were asked if their event Revenue, NSF and Attendance for their most profitable show in 2009 was better, nearly the same or worse as compared to 2008. While revenue and attendance results were generally nearly the same or better, exhibit space sales (NSF) suffered. Of those reporting better revenue in 2009; 60 percent reported an increase in revenue of 1-10 percent while the other 40 percent reported a more than 26 percent increase. Those who reported worse revenue indicated 80 percent at a 1-15 percent decrease and the other 20 percent at a 26+ percent decrease. For the small percentage reporting better NSF, 100 percent of the respondents indicated they had an 11-15 percent increase over 2008, while those who saw a decrease in NSF, 72 percent were at 1-15 percent down and 28 percent of those events were down 16-25 percent. Attendance was steady with nearly 75 percent of respondents indicating increases in visitor attendance anywhere from 1-25 percent. The 25 percent reporting a decrease in attendance indicated they were down 1-15 percent.

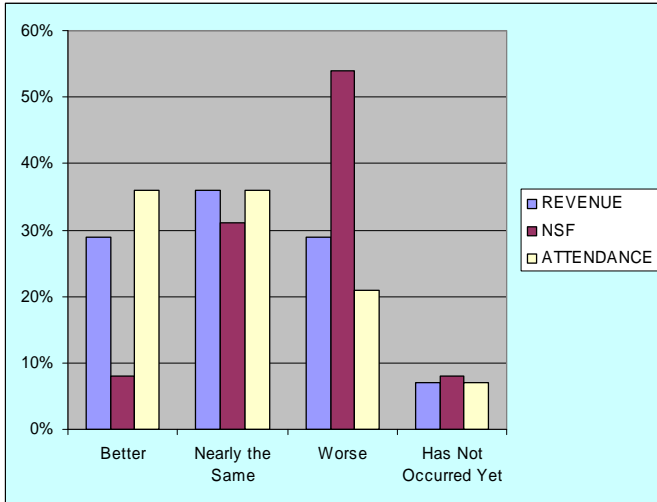


Figure 1

## ARE EXHIBITORS WAITING LONGER TO SECURE EXHIBIT SPACE?

**YES!** An overwhelming **93 percent** of survey respondents indicated that exhibitors are waiting somewhat (31 percent) to substantially (62 percent) longer to secure exhibit space, while 6 percent noted no noticeable difference. With exhibitor confidence in the economy at a low, the lack of willingness to commit to exhibit space until late in the process affects the event, the organizer and potential attendees, causing a vicious circle of instability.

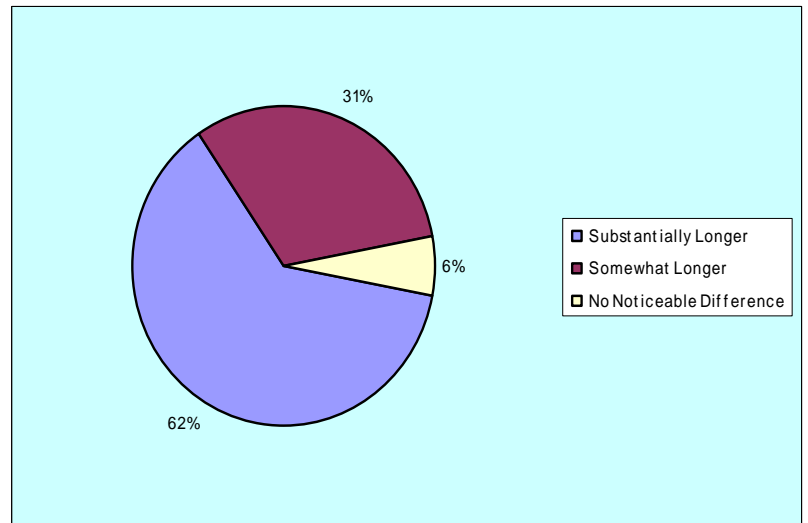


Figure 2

## EVENT CANCELLATIONS AND WORKFORCE REDUCTION

Fifty percent of survey respondents cancelled events in 2009 due to economic circumstances. Nearly three-quarters have no plans to reschedule. When asked if they were forced to lay off any employees during 2009, 44 percent responded “Yes” while 56 percent responded “No.” Of those responding “Yes,” 73 percent reduced their workforce by 1-15 percent and 28 percent reduced it by 16-26+ percent. Eighty-three percent of survey respondents were *unsure* or *not planning* to rehire those laid off employees in 2010.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE—2010

Organizers were asked in general, and based on 2009 events results, what their attitude is towards 2010. Only 7 percent responded that they were pessimistic, while 40 percent were undecided. Fifty-three percent indicated they were optimistic or very optimistic about 2010. In Figure 3, it is interesting to note that 40 percent plan to launch new events in 2010 and 40 percent do not plan to launch new events. As for sponsorship revenue (Figure 4), 40 percent of the respondents anticipate worse revenues in 2010 than in 2009. Thirty-three percent are predicting they will be nearly the same, and the other 27 percent anticipate earning better sponsorship revenue next year.

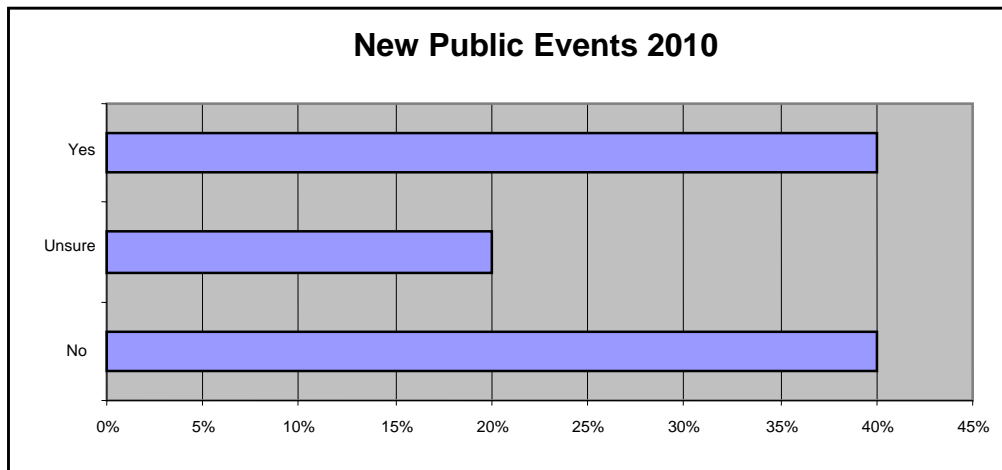


Figure 3

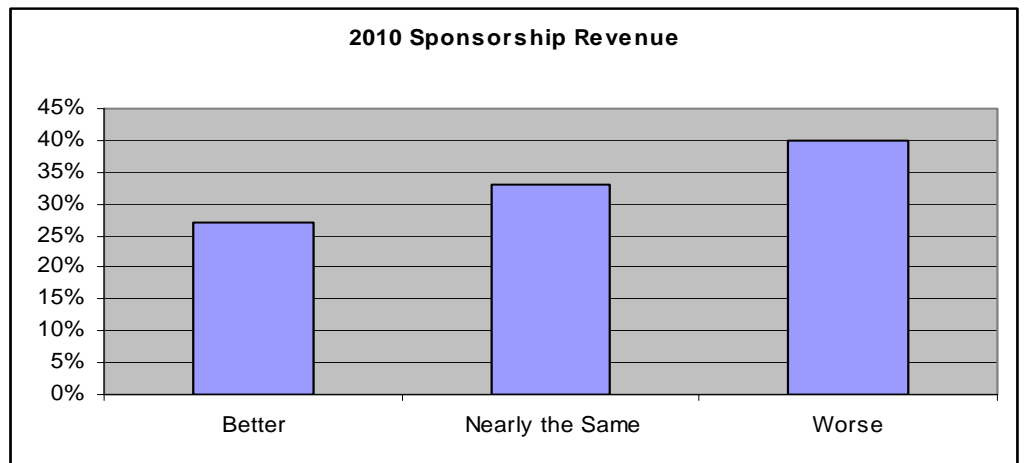


Figure 4

## SIGNS OF RECOVERY

Organizers were asked if they were seeing any signs of recovery as they head into 2010. Most responses fell into the “*Unsure*” and “*No*” categories, but a few industry sectors – agriculture, home & garden, kids/family and RV -- did indicate they were seeing signs of recovery. (See Figure 5 for sector response breakdown.)

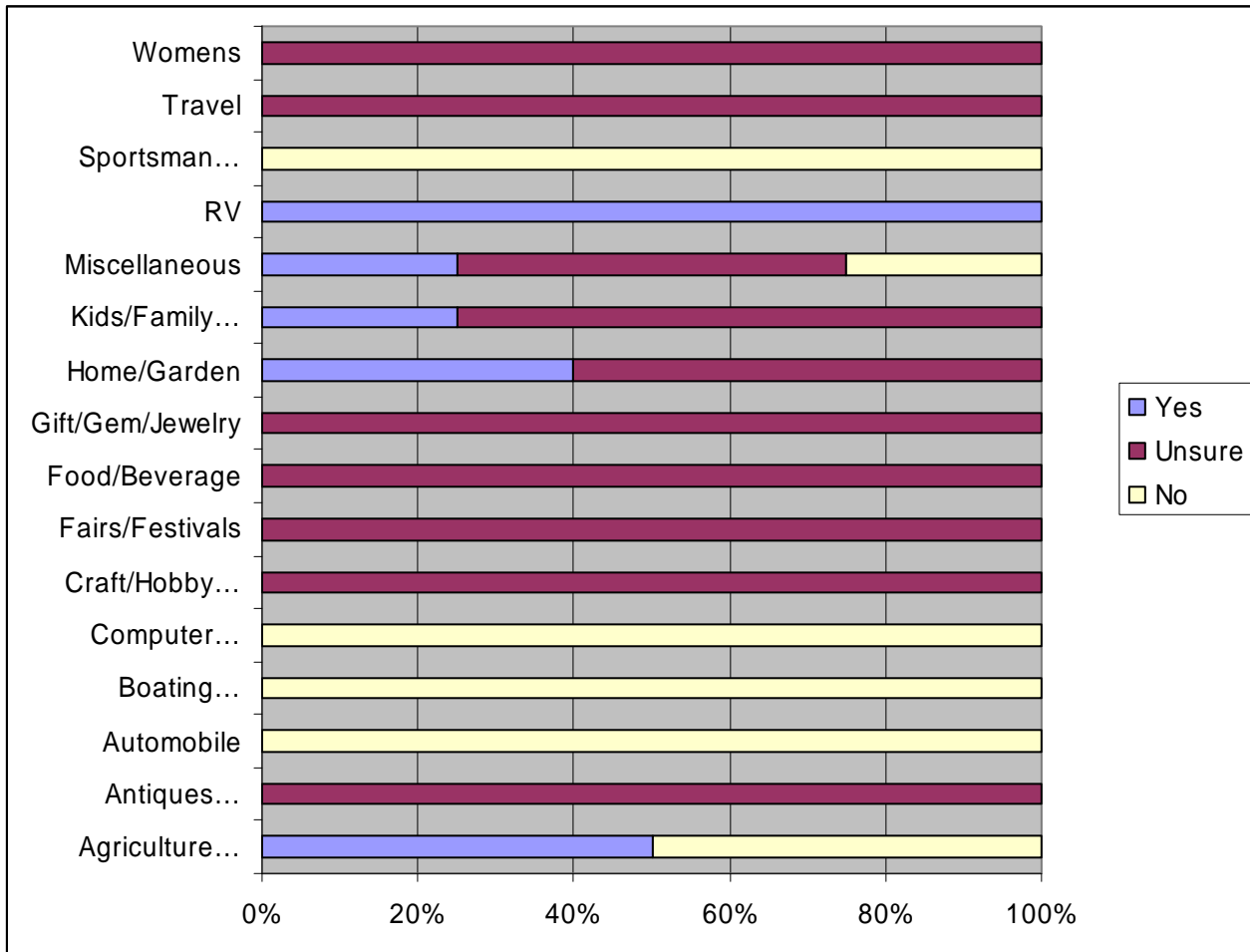


Figure 5

## THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING THE INDUSTRY TODAY

The top three issues identified consistently by the respondents to the survey were:

1. **The Economy**
2. **Decline in Sponsorship Dollars**
3. **Exhibitors Waiting Too Long to Commit**

Most respondents voiced concern about the economy and, in particular, the credit market. Respondents are generally concerned about customers’ ability to secure credit and the

*“Any industry that is reliant on the credit market is suffering, and if that doesn’t loosen up, it will be a tough go in the coming 18 months.”*

impact upon “major purchase” industry sectors such as automobile, boating/marine, computers/electronics and RV. The survey data supports this finding, as most of the “major purchase” industry sectors reported their event(s) outcomes as *below expectations*. The second area of concern for respondents was the decline in sponsorship dollars and the third is exhibitors waiting too long to commit to exhibit space. All three of these issues are directly related to the current economic situation in the U.S., as well as other responses, such as; consumers not spending money, rising costs, meeting historical attendee expectations, falling memberships, reduced square footage, and unemployment concerns.

## IN CONCLUSION...

The economy definitely played a part in the downturn of some of the public events industry sectors, especially the “major purchase” sectors identified earlier. However, overall, the majority of sectors met or exceeded expectations and indicated an optimistic outlook for 2010. Forty percent of the respondents even stated they would be launching “*new*” events in 2010, although sponsorship revenue remains a concern for all. The show organizers responding to this survey know what the issues are and must be proactive and creative in finding new methods to capture sponsors and exhibitors and to reach out to consumers encouraging attendance at events.

**Methodology:** The data for this survey was obtained through a Public Events Survey sent to 167 Public Events Show Organizers. Of those 167 organizers, 16 (10 percent) responded reporting on 131 events in the varying industry sectors.