

31 August 2022 MATSO Meets – Exhibitor Sentiment and ROI

Presented by Travis Stanton, Editor in Chief, EXHIBITOR Magazine

Key Tips and Takeaways

Although the live exhibition and events industry was decimated by COVID, trade shows are finally back, but to what degree and how do we move forward and what will it look like in 2023?

Two and a half years after COVID began ravaging the trade show and live events industry, trade shows are finally back. But how long will it be before we return to pre-COVID levels? And what do face-to-face marketers have planned for 2023? The MATSO presentation was based on information from the EXHIBITOR Insight Report that showcases the latest data on everything from budgets and booth sizes to corporate travel bans and audience quality. Get an inside look at where the industry is at now – and where it will be headed in the year to come.

Exhibitor Participation:

- During COVID, many theorized that smaller, regional events would incur less of a hit to COVID due to the fact that smaller attendance rates may allow shows to skirt mass gathering requirements. Post-COVID data shows this to be true and #'s are above pre-covid rates.
- National shows have not yet returned to pre-COVID levels but are moving in the right direction.
- International shows took the biggest hit from COVID and are still struggling to get exhibitors back.
- Virtual shows have dwindled significantly – exhibitors are hesitant to continue in a virtual capacity.
- Overall, 41% of companies are still exhibiting at fewer events than before COVID
 - This is mostly due to:
 - ✓ Budget limitations and reductions
 - ✓ Lower anticipated attendance
 - ✓ Reallocated funds
 - ✓ Staffing and bandwidth challenges
- 9 out of 10 exhibiting companies plan to return to pre-COVID exhibiting levels by the end of 2023

Exhibitor Sentiment:

- Exhibitors are struggling with costs, lower attendance at shows, and lower expectations being met, however the attendees they do meet are of higher quality but OVERALL, ROI is lower for most exhibitors.

- Exhibitor sentiment is that organizers need to do more to get exhibitors back in the game and to assist with costs such as:
 - Reduce exhibit-related expenses such as booth costs, material and handling fees
 - Drive attendance to the exhibit hall
 - Ensure dedicated exhibit hall hours
 - Provide audited attendance data
 - Comp educational offerings for exhibitors
 - Allow more free passes for exhibiting companies
- Most exhibiting budgets have returned and are spending about the same amount as pre-COVID but where are they heading for in the future if they need to cut costs?
 - Some exhibitors may exhibit at fewer shows due to cost
 - Some may reduce or eliminate event sponsorships
 - Some may send fewer staffers to work booth
 - Reduced booth space
- Most travel bans have been eliminated.
- Exhibitor companies are starting to commit earlier.
- Sponsorships are still not meeting expectations for exhibitors, but exhibitors are still optimistic with attendance numbers being the biggest factor for them.

To Gain More Insights on the Industry Report from ExhibitorOnline

Register for their Industry Update webinar. Attendees to that session will receive a deck of the complete and final data. www.ExhibitorOnline.com/Insight

EXHIBITOR Insight Series

The EXHIBITORInsight Series is an online-learning initiative comprising chats, panels, sessions, and reports on topics of interest to the exhibit-marketing community. Through Zoom, Facebook Live, and other digital platforms, we bring you face to face with the data you need, the education you crave, and the subject-matter experts who can help you make informed decisions during this uncertain time.

www.exhibitoronline.com