

Demographics at Trade Shows – Obvious and Hidden

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*It is a common assumption that all visitors to a given B2B trade show will be the target audience for the exhibiting company. After all, most B2B shows are already segmented by specific industries; however, there are actually “targets within targets” at any particular exhibition. For that reason, it is important to “sort” the demographics at shows. For strategic planning purposes, I tend to sort them into three categories: **obvious, less obvious and hidden demographics.***

Obvious Demographics

Breakdowns provided by the show organizer appear in the show prospectus. At minimum in a prospectus, an organizer will include the number of attendees and the number of exhibiting companies. A good prospectus will include further breakdowns relative to types of businesses, professional titles and prior year product category interests. An even better prospectus will separate press and exhibitor personnel numbers from professional visitor numbers so you can calculate the net audience. The “net audience” is the total number of reported attendance minus exhibitor personnel, press and other non-related buying visitor groups.

Net audience numbers can be used to plan booth size and staffing numbers. Other demographics can be used for tighter planning. For example, if you know the audience includes a high number of technical types, you would want to ensure that your staff includes enough technical personnel to be able to speak the same language as the visitors.

Less Obvious Demographics

Exhibit Surveys, Inc., an industry research group, says that 82 percent of all show visitors have product interest. This is the percentage of the audience that has an interest in the product or service that you are offering. They also say that about half of that group intends to stop at your exhibit to acquire information.

I like to start with the net audience calculation and then apply the visitor interest factors shown above to help determine a more likely number of visitors who would stop at my booth.

Target numbers are also useful when planning booth activities, number of media kits needed, giveaways and so on.

Hidden Demographics

One of the things exhibiting companies often overlook is the impact of gender and age on communication with attendees. A key reason this is overlooked is because most show producers do not include these demographics into the prospectus information.

The exhibition industry has reached a stage where the attendee age span at these events has broadened, and the

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