

7 Action Items for Selling Booths in a Recession

In this recession, exhibitors are taking a harder look at their expenses and reallocating funds to those sales and marketing investments that have immediate returns. Face-to-face marketing is one of the most difficult marketing vehicles to calculate ROI but it remains one of the most viable. As show managers are now increasingly focusing on deepening the relationships that they have with their customers, we have put together a list of proven strategies to help show managers retain, grow and better serve their existing exhibitors:

1. **Maximize cash position:** Sell booths for the next show **onsite** at this year's show and collect deposit using real-time payment processing to accelerate your cash flow and put money in the bank up to 6 weeks sooner.
2. **Reduce costs and increase efficiency:** **Automate** labor-intensive processes like booth space application and exhibitor communications to free up your staff from administrative tasks so they can focus more on strategic customer care, exhibitor retention, and more sales-oriented tasks.
3. **Aggressively manage top line:** Consider more generous financial terms in return for higher prices or longer-term contracts. Assess trade-offs between credit risks and marginal sales. Consider allowing strategic exhibitors to pay in installments if you face price objections. As a last resort, encourage exhibitors to downsize booth instead of dropping out of the show altogether.
4. **Revitalize customer-retention initiatives:** Give your exhibitors the reports and **tools** they need to project exhibiting costs, expected number of leads, and calculate their ROI from participation in order to better justify participation in your event(s) in face of budget cuts.
5. **Offer more value:** Allow exhibitors to offer pre-show specials online to start building buyer interest, leads and sales before the show as well as during and after your show. Extend online booths into year-long buyers' guides on your website after the show.
6. **Rethink product mix:** Offer a la carte pricing that lets small to medium exhibitors pick and choose from booth upgrades, banner ads, show services and sponsorship opportunities to dramatically improve upsell revenue.
7. **Form a dedicated SWAT team:** The chances of one or more of your major exhibitors pulling out or scaling back their participation is very high. Your organization's leadership will need to be more involved in customer care and revenue protection than ever before.

The point: Trade shows remain the most effective, high quality lead-generation medium for businesses. By realigning product-mix to meet changing demands, maximizing cash position and pursuing opportunities, show organizers can make strategic moves to come out ahead when the recession ends.

Recommended Resources:

EXPO Magazine's free on-demand Webinar [Selling Booths in an Economic Crisis](#)

Center for Exhibitions Industry Research's report [Effect of Economic Recessions on Exhibitions](#)

Tradeshaw Week's article [The Big Issues](#)

The Expo Group's white paper [The Invisible Exhibitor](#)

[The ROI Toolkit](#) developed by Exhibit Surveys, Inc.

Case studies:

American Optometric Association [Improves Cash Flow](#)

J. Spargo & Associates [Automate Processes to Improve Productivity](#)

New Hope Natural Media Finds [-Booth Sales Efficiency](#)

National Wood Flooring Association [Automates Booth Selection](#)

National Defense Industry Association [Increases Show Floor Revenues](#)

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