

Attracting the right attendees and exhibitors using visitor analytics

Presented by **Expo Analytics**

An extremely competitive events marketplace

Events are big business. In the US alone, over \$24 billion is spent annually by 1.5 million exhibitors, reaching 80 million attendees at over 13,000 trade shows, conferences and expositions. Given the opportunities to build market presence, drive sales and gain market feedback, 99% of exhibitors still rely on their unique value (Center for Exhibition Industry Research). Yet, in a world where technical innovation has generated efficiencies across the marketing spectrum, event evaluation has remained static.

Competition to attract the right attendees and exhibitors across an extremely busy calendar is intense. Adding to this, the exhibitor sales cycle is usually long and drawn out, beginning a year before an event. With package tiering currently based on subjective assessment of venue flows, this cycle usually peaks at three months prior to an event. With packages further discounted up until the last minute, events are typically 90% full, with modifications made at the last moment to ensure no gaps remain. This process is even more challenging for small events where exhibitors aren't compelled to attend.

With an industry dependent on their success, event organisers desperately need a way to reliably evaluate their performance. This challenge centres on a need to provide concrete and reliable data to support business decision making. Easily interpretable, any solution should provide actionable recommendations in the run up to, during and after each event.

Investigating event complexity

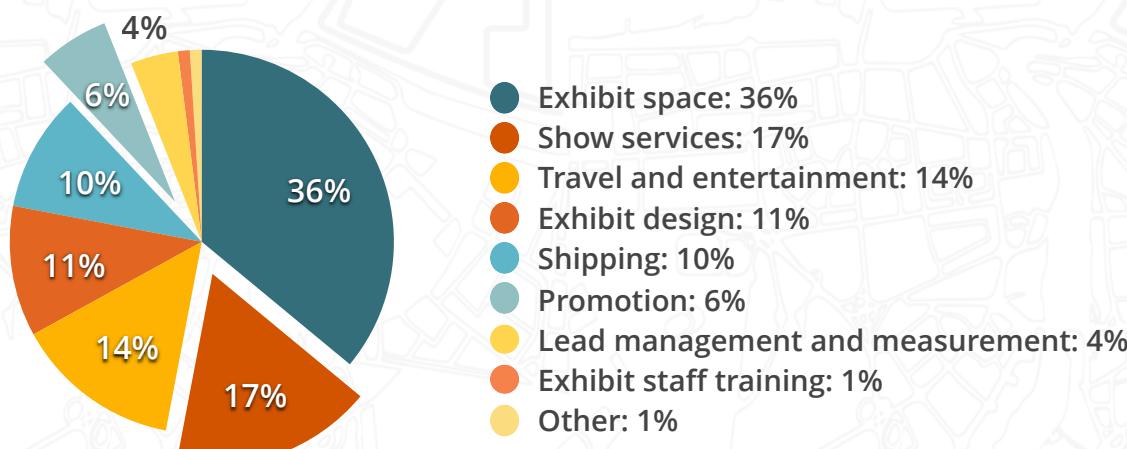
With an ever present need to break down the complexity, any intervention needs to take into account the wealth of factors involved in their organisation:

Events deliver significant benefits for exhibitors

Detailed research by the Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR) identified a list of benefits for exhibitors. 72% of those surveyed believed that they influenced their buying decisions, while 76% asked for quotes and 26% signed purchase orders. Strikingly, the cost of contacting a potential buyer was found to be 22% less than through traditional sales calls.

Events take significant preparation and organisation

Bringing together events is a challenging task, involving significant monetary outlay across a range of expenses. In an in-depth report, the CEIR polled 641 exhibitors to identify 'How the exhibit dollar is spent'. Their findings provided the following cost breakdown:





Events require significant investment from exhibitors

In line with their complexity, events are often the most significant single marketing expense for any business. With so many people to satisfy, both internally and externally, exhibitors need to ensure that they gain value.

According to Tradeshowinstitute.com, the average cost per square foot for an exhibit space is \$22.32. As a result, the typical 20x20 stand would costs \$8,928. Taking this further, for stands that require a customised design, the costs are typically \$100-\$150 per square foot, pushing this cost to between \$40-60,000. These are particularly pertinent given that the average lifetime of a display is five years, while for graphics it is only a year.

Current measures of evaluation are inadequate

Despite their importance, current methods of evaluation are highly rudimentary. The most common ways are through subjective guesswork from stand personnel, badge scanners and clicker counters. Aside from their inaccurate reporting, the administration of badges requires additional personnel at extra cost. A key consideration, these individuals detract from stand design and confuse access to spokespeople dedicated to securing deals.

Sweeping industry generalisations guide event preparation

Because of the measurement inconsistencies it is no surprise that major assumptions are made to guide event evaluation. The CEIR for example provide the following guidelines for exhibitors.

- Only 10% of attendees will be your target market.
- Anywhere from 20-50 percent of their attendees will be other exhibitors and supplier members.
- The number of attendees that are likely to be interested in your stand is about 45 percent.
- Each staffer needs 50 square feet of unoccupied space to work in. So a 10x10 stand would require two people.

10%

Target market

20-50%

Suppliers and other exhibitors

45%

Interested attendees

50

Square feet per staffer

Evaluating the solutions: Measuring touchpoints

With the challenges clearly presented, it is important to stress that they are not new. For years a number of technologies have tried laboriously to answer them. Ranging from optical counters, badge scanners, badge scanning applications, iBeacons and Wi-Fi tracking, their adoption has been fraught with difficulties.

Optical traffic counters

Traffic counters count visitor traffic at venue entrances, exits and main venue thoroughfares. The data captured is then used to provide insights for event organisers. Costly to implement, they don't cover traffic either inside a building or at each exhibitor stand.



Pros	Cons
Cheap	Only track traffic on entrances, exits and main thoroughfares, not across the venue
	Do not measure stand or stand conversion performance

Badge scanners and mobile application badge scanners

Unlike traffic counters, badge scanners also provide valuable stand performance data. Measuring stand visits, in the case of mobile application badge scanners, they can also capture visitor data directly into the sales contact database. Understandably though, they require significant resource to administer and manage. They require additional sales staff and mental perseverance, particularly towards the end of the day.

From a data collection perspective, badge scanners only measure visitors to the stand, and not those moving past. They also cannot be used to evaluate stand quality and stand conversion quality - crucial metrics for event organisers and exhibitors. Given these drawbacks, most events exhibitors prefer to use them to capture leads instead of measuring stand visits.



Pros	Cons
Can capture leads	Expensive and clunky
Can provide limited stand analytics	Requires significant investment in on-stand time and manpower
	Conversion performance cannot be measured

iBeacons

iBeacons work by detecting Bluetooth transmitters at different locations throughout the event venue through a mobile application. A significant cost for the event organiser, the app can then provide stand analytics. They can also serve as a marketing channel to visitors, as promotional messages and notifications can be “pushed” to their phones.

Often seen as a benefit because they are relatively easy to install and require no effort on the part of the event or stand staff, they have a much more significant drawback. They rely totally on the need for visitors to deem them valuable enough to download. Users require time and effort to download them in order to subsequently check in at different locations. The potential marketing channel can also serve as a drawback, with users reticent to receive unwanted promotional messages. The technology is also limited to those with the right smartphone platform, and the captured location data can be less than optimal.



Pros	Cons
Can provide stand analytics	Expensive mobile application
Requires no effort on the part of the event staff	Users must download an application
Reasonably inexpensive deployment	Users must use the application to check-in
iPhones only	

Passive Wi-Fi tracking

To track visitors instantly via their smartphones, there are just two requirements: a Wi-Fi network set up for location tracking, and the Wi-Fi function on the visitors' smartphones to be turned on. This process requires no effort from event organisers, exhibitors or visitors. Aside from its ease of implementation, Wi-Fi also provides the most comprehensive data set as a full record of a visitor journey is captured. It can therefore be used to evaluate stand position quality, visitor flows and stand performance.

Clearly, for Wi-Fi to work, the venue needs to firstly have a network and secondly be optimised for location tracking. However, as Wi-Fi is now considered a standard requirement as part of an event infrastructure, the process is remarkably straightforward. With the addition of a few additional access points the system can be optimised without a large investment or significant disruption. Privacy is a concern for many stakeholders, which is why data is captured passively, regulated by EU privacy laws, and not connected to personally identifiable cues.



Pros	Cons
Can provide stand and venue analytics	Wi-Fi network must be optimised for location analytics.
Requires no effort on the part of the event staff or visitors	

Providing clear business benefit: Expo Analytics

Expo Analytics provides a simple, cost-effective Wi-Fi solution that provides actionable data to support business decisions from more than a third of attendees. Aligned with internal process and without the need for any disruption, stakeholders receive an individually customised report. This takes into account their key drivers for success and provides factual evidence to evaluate their success. At the same time, stakeholders also receive a login to an online portal which provides comprehensive access to the data. This can be used for a deepdive after an event or to guide evaluation during it.

"It usually takes a while for exhibitors to analyse the value of event attendance and decide to attend the next event. Using Expo analytics we were able to prove the value during the event itself, which helped raise our rebooking rates and dramatically shortened our rebooking times."

Sam Cande, Group Commercial Director, Business Travel Show, Centaur

Case study: Business Travel Show

Expo was deployed at Business Travel Show, Europe's largest specialised exhibition and conference for buyers and managers of business travel. The 2016 show was set to break records with exhibitor numbers climbing 5% to 264 and the show's floor space increasing by 27%, and welcoming over 7,500 attendees.

Business Travel Show now had full visibility of visitor movements across the show floor, and the stand performance data provided by Expo had an immediate business impact. Business Travel Show was able to prove the value of attendance to top performing companies, which resulted in a 30% increased rebooking rate. The data also resulted in a more positive event experience, which increased the chance of repeat attendance.

Tracking the popularity of sponsored conference sessions will also have an impact on the sponsorship revenue, and insight into visitor flows will help determine the optimal position and size of features.



30%

increase in rebooking rates among
best performing companies

50%

higher chance to return to the show for
the top performing company

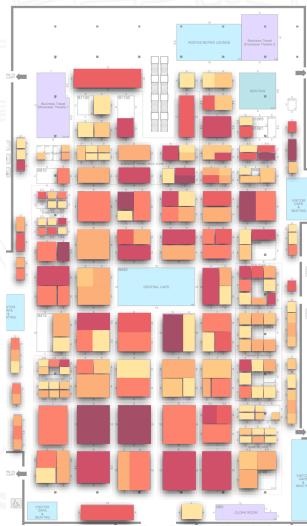
Actionable recommendations

Business Travel Show received actionable insights to demonstrate the event's overwhelming success. This gave sponsors and exhibitors the clear justification for their decision to attend, while rewarding the hard work of the numerous Business Travel Show employees involved in bringing it together. In delivering future events, Business Travel Show also had factual evidence to shorten the sales process and justify exhibitor and sponsor fees.



Understanding the movements of attendees

Adding to existing information about the popularity of the event, Business Travel Show now had full visibility of visitor movements across the show floor. The event attracted 7490 visitors - 3971 on the first day and 3519 on the second, with a typical visitor visiting 12 stands. Highlighting the quality throughout, the disparity between the first and second days was relatively low.



Optimising the event space

As well as understanding the wider movements of visitors across the space, Business Travel Show received in-depth detail on the effectiveness of its chosen event layout. Although the areas near the main thoroughfares and the cafes were most popular, there was a healthy influx of visitors to all the exhibitor booths regardless of the location. As is typical of events, the biggest predictor of the popularity was the size of the booth. That might also be due to more complex engagement strategies employed by the large exhibitors.

"Delivering ROI to the exhibitors is key to a successful event. Traditional measuring methods make it difficult as they are typically dependent on the exhibitors. With Expo analytics delivering a complete event overview we could prove the value of event attendance and are in a great position to help the exhibitors receive even more value from the next event."

Sam Cande, Group Commercial Director, Business Travel Show, Centaur

Validating the attendance for event exhibitors

633

Visitors



8 min

Visit time



13 %

Conversion rate



53 %

Visitor return rate



Visits count



To show the value in selecting each exhibitor package, Business Travel Show was able to clearly document the greater attendance to the selected exhibitors. Conversion rates and dwell times could then help each exhibitor judge the success of their on-stand marketing strategies. Conversion rates that differed in factor of up to 10x clearly showed the value in using methods to engage passers by.

Proving the return on investment

The key to accurately measuring the value of an event presence and the actual ROI lies in the concrete KPIs. However, most of them are very dependant on the stand engagement strategy. For example - the number of captured leads might be low, but that could be due to poor stand position resulting in fewer passers by, poor passer by engagement strategy or simply insufficient booth staff. The detailed results of Expo analytics make it easy to objectively evaluate the event, stand position and engagement strategy, resulting in accurate ROI measurement and concrete suggestions on improving the results at the next event, raising the ROI.

Interested in a free trial?

Expo Analytics has a pricing structure dedicated to providing value for event organisers. At 1% of the typical cost of a stand, Expo Analytics is incredibly cost effective. With minimal disruption, and regulated by EU privacy laws, it also takes less than a few hours to implement. To learn more, receive the full case study, or arrange a free trial, please contact Expo Analytics at sales@expoanalytics.com.