

[Table of Contents](#)[Print This Article](#)[Archives](#)[Buy This Issue](#)[Subscribe!](#)

EXHIBITOR 101

How to Write a Post-Show Report

A trade show isn't over until you evaluate your success and compile a comprehensive report. Here are nine sections to include. *By Candy Adams*



If you're like most exhibit managers, you breathe a big sigh of relief after each show because you survived another one. Then you go back to your office to gear up for the next show.

But do you take time to look objectively at each show after it's over? Can you say your show program has shown consistent improvement? Does your management know what you accomplished at each show?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, it's time to start evaluating your trade show program and compiling trade show reports.

A post-show report should evaluate each element of your trade show program — the highlights that met and exceeded your expectations and the lowlights that you want to improve. After drafting your initial analysis, meet with your trade show team to get feedback on the success of the show and to discuss future improvements. You can also conduct an official post-show staff survey to learn your team's opinions.



[Candy Adams, CTSM, CME, CMM, CMP](#), "The Booth Mom," is an independent exhibit-management consultant, trainer

Your evaluation, the evaluations from staff members, and the metrics you have tracked during the show provide the basis for your post-show report. Here are nine sections you should include in your report.

Section 1: Goals and Objectives

Do your homework before the show by writing measurable, qualitative pre-show objectives that are approved by management. Then, for the first section of your post-show report, review your pre-show objectives after the show and evaluate whether or not you achieved them. Analyze the goals and objectives you did not meet and determine how you will meet them at future shows, or revise them to make them more relevant.

Section 2: Lead Analysis

Next, evaluate your leads. Include the following information:

- ▶ *Quantity and quality of the leads and sales gathered at the show.* Classify leads as A, B, and C leads, based on the decision-making power of the prospects, their interest in your product, their timeframe to buy, their budget, and their desire for follow-up after the show. These criteria contribute to your company's ability to turn a lead into a sale. The rating system helps you prioritize the leads for post-show follow-up.

- ▶ *Number of dealer/distributor contacts.* Not all leads that can generate future sales come from individual buyers. Consider the value of meeting with potential dealers and distributors of your product. One-on-one meetings can increase your rate of finding quality partners for your distribution channel.

- ▶ *Staffers' gut feeling about lead quality.* Include comments from your exhibit staff regarding their perceptions about the quality of their contacts in your exhibit. You can collect this feedback at booth meetings and from a post-show exhibit-staff survey.

- ▶ *Lead-form data.* Based on the questions you've asked on your lead form about buyer demographics, buying influence, plans to purchase, etc., you can extrapolate information about the overall quality of the leads you've received. Depending on the length of your sales cycle, it may be a long time before you can calculate and attribute sales to your participation in a specific trade show.

- ▶ *Lead-fulfillment information.* Explain how you followed up on your qualified leads after the show. What did you send to each category (A, B, and C) of leads? How long after the show did they receive the information they requested? What future follow-up is planned and by whom?

- ▶ *Preliminary estimate of cost per lead.* Divide the number of qualified leads by the direct costs of your trade show participation.

Section 3: Exhibit Details

Your report should also include a description and evaluation of your exhibit, including the following components:

- ▶ *Integration with other segments of the marketing program.* Examine how well your show participation reinforced your corporate message and brand. If you had a show theme, determine whether it was consistent with your company's integrated marketing plan. Assess how you can improve the communication of your message(s) at future shows.

► *Location, layout, and traffic flow.* Exhibit location may effect show traffic. Evaluate whether the size and layout of your exhibit was conducive to inviting visitors to enter and remain in your exhibit to talk with your staff or to participate in demonstrations. Did the traffic flow through your exhibit lead visitors where you wanted or did it cause human gridlock?

► *Product displays.* Were your products displayed in an inviting and uncluttered fashion? Could visitors identify your separate products or product lines from a distance?

► *Graphics impact.* Did graphics draw attendees into your booth from both far away and from directly in front of your exhibit? Was your message clear? Were there frequently-asked questions that you could incorporate into future booth graphics for clarification?

► *Booth condition and damage report.* Was the design and condition of your booth consistent with the image your company wants to portray? Keep track of any damage to your exhibit and demo equipment.

► *Security issues.* Record any security issues with your show participation, such as corporate espionage, competitive reconnaissance, or theft of products or equipment during the show. Identify what you can do to avoid these problems.

Section 4: Promotion

Review each of your pre-show, at-show, and post-show promotional programs and sponsorships. This analysis can be both objective, such as measuring the number of attendees who returned your pre-show mailer to your booth for a gift, and subjective, such as feedback from press who attended an invitation-only press event in your exhibit to preview your new product.

Report on the success of "second show" events, such as hospitality suites, customer thank-you dinners, hosted events with entertainment, co-sponsored events with partners, customer or distributor training, sponsored conference sessions, or participation in seminars, panels, or keynotes.

Also include all results from media events. Measure the number of press representatives and financial or industry analysts that attended your event or had meetings with your press liaison or executive management, as well as the number of favorable press mentions within a measurable time after the show. Calculate the cost of equivalent advertising had you not received this press coverage.

Section 5: Booth Staff

Evaluate the effectiveness of your booth staff. Start with staff size. Did you have enough staff during setup and tear down to install, display, and remove your products? Was your show staff adequate to handle the volume of booth visitors?

Then look at your schedule. Were you overstaffed at some times and understaffed at others? How will you modify your schedule to make better use of your staff's time?

Review your exhibit staff's pre-show training in the following areas: strategy, product, boothmanship, and logistics. Was the training effective in enhancing your staff's in-booth behavior? Did the trainer keep your staff's attention? Did the trainer stay to coach your staff during the show? Did your staff find the training worthwhile?

Make sure to record any problems with your staff, such as low productivity, tardiness or absences, or problems with customers. If your exhibit was staffed by business or channel partners, dealers, or distributors, did they attend your staff training? Did the leads they gathered become part of the overall lead count for your exhibit, or were they “pocketing” the leads for themselves?

Last, give kudos to staffers who went above and beyond the call of duty in their performance.

Section 6: Talent

In addition to your internal staff, evaluate any professional staffers, presenters, and demonstrators you used in your exhibit. Did they accurately convey your corporate message? Were they professional and credible in their knowledge of your product? Would you hire them again?

Section 7: Demonstrations

Describe your demonstrations, including the number and length of each. As a general rule, I keep demonstrations to seven minutes or less so attendees don't lose interest.

Then evaluate each demonstration. How many visitors viewed each one? Were the demonstrations interactive? What did visitors learn about your product that would make them want to own it? Did your demonstrations show what makes your product or service superior to those of your competitors?

Section 8: Competition

Include a brief summary about how you stacked up against the competition. If you assigned exhibit staff to report on competitors' show activities, develop an analysis of competitors' products, exhibits, press kits, and events.

Section 9: Budget

Compare your estimated budget to final show costs. Did you meet your budget? If so, where were you able to cut costs? If you had budget overruns, what internal and external influences caused them?

Report Format

Once you've written the comprehensive show report, work with your manager to determine who should get copies of the entire report and who should get an executive brief. Executives are usually interested in the strategy, budget, results, and improvement plan from the 30,000-foot level; your internal and external trade show team need to review the show from 50 feet.

To get executives to read your executive brief, format it in a familiar style and condense it to no more than a page. Find out if they want a hard copy presented in a meeting with time for discussion, an attachment to an e-mail, or a brief e-mail that outlines the show highlights and your future recommendations.

The more you know about your executives' hot buttons, the more likely they are to pay attention to your report and give you the respect your exhibit-management skills deserve. **E**