



How to Right-Size Your Exhibit for Maximum Productivity and Profit

By Jefferson Davis, Competitive Edge

How does your company decide how much floor space to rent? Can you say you use a scientific approach that helps you take full advantage of the tradeshow opportunity? Or is it based more on how much space you rented last year or how well business is going right now? The decision process you use can help or hinder your ultimate exhibiting results.

Your exhibit plays many roles in the success of your exhibiting program. It supports branding, image, positioning and messaging objectives. But most importantly, it is the primary place for interacting with show attendees. Please remember that while branding, image, positioning and messaging are important elements of a successful exhibit program, your ultimate exhibiting results will come from the quantity and quality of face-to-face interactions you execute and the resulting actions that follow.

Another thing to remember is that the size of your exhibit determines the number of staffers you can have on duty, and thereby controls the number of attendee interactions your exhibit staff can execute. The exhibit staffing rule of thumb is one staffer per fifty square feet of unoccupied exhibit space. So a 10x10 booth should have a maximum of two exhibit staffers on duty. A 20x20 might have up to eight staffers. Always be sure to consider the total amount of space, less exhibit properties, furnishings and displays. Please take a moment now to see if your exhibit is properly staffed.

So what did you find? Is your exhibit under or over staffed? This is one part of the right sizing formula. The second part is about creating enough in-booth interaction capacity to take full advantage of the tradeshow opportunity.

The rest of this article will present a step-by-step scientific process to right size your exhibit for maximum productivity and profit.

Step 1. Identify your Ideal Visitor Profile.

Your Ideal Visitor Profile is a clear definition of who, out of all the show attendees, you want to visit your exhibit. It is usually a combination of a.) type of company or organization, b.) job function and/or title and c.) geography. Your Ideal Visitor Profile might also include the size of organization by number of employees or annual revenue. Finally, if available from the show organizer, it might also include product interest.

To create your Ideal Visitor Profile simply look at your exhibitor prospectus and look at the show's attendee registration form. This will tell you who is attending and what type of demographic information the show organizer captures from attendees.

Step 2. Analyze show audience to determine the number of attendees matching your Ideal Visitor Profile.

Share your Ideal Visitor Profile with your show account executive or exhibit sales person.

Ask them to give you as accurate of a count as possible of the number of attendees matching the profile you shared with them. This count might be based on last year's show attendance and/or this year's attendee pre-registration data.

Step 3. Calculate your current Exhibit Interaction Capacity.

Exhibit Interaction Capacity is a formula successful exhibitors use to determine their capacity for face-to-face interaction in their exhibit.

Here's the formula:

Number of show hours	18 exhibit hours
Number of exhibit staff on duty	x 6 staff on duty
Number of interactions/hour/staffer	<u>x 4</u> ints/hr/staffer
Exhibit Activity Level capacity	432 interactions

This tells you that if you utilize 100% of your exhibit interaction capacity you can execute 432 face-to-face, one-to-one interactions in your booth.

Step 4. Contrast your current or planned Exhibit Interaction Capacity with the number of attendees matching your Ideal Visitor Profile.

This is the critical step in determining if your exhibit is right sized. Your goal should be to create enough face-to-face interaction capacity to take full advantage of the tradeshow opportunity.

Here's the formula:

Number of attendees matching profile:	2,342
Current Exhibit Activity Level capacity:	<u>- 432</u>
Number of missed opportunities	1,910

This example tells you that if you utilize 100% of your current Exhibit Interaction Capacity, you can only handle 18% of the attendees matching your Ideal Visitor Profile. In other words, you do not have capacity to handle 82% of the attendees who do match your profile.

Are you OK with letting 82% of the attendees who do match your profile pass you by because you do not have capacity to interact with them? If so, you may be right-sized. If not, then please read on.

Step 5. Right-size your exhibit to ultimately create interaction capacity for 45% of the attendees matching your Ideal Visitor Profile.

Ultimately, you will want to create enough interaction capacity to handle 45% of the attendees who match your profile. Why? Because there is an exhibition industry benchmark developed by Exhibit Surveys called Exhibit Attraction Efficiency. In over 30 years of studies, Exhibit Surveys has found that the average exhibitor studied attracts 45% of their profile match to their exhibit. You can use this as a reliable performance benchmark.

Here's the formula:

Number of attendees matching profile:	2,342
Exhibit Attraction Efficiency benchmark:	<u>x .45</u>
Ideal Exhibit Interaction capacity	1,045

This example tells you that ideally, you should create enough interaction capacity to handle 1,045 attendees in your exhibit. So, how do we determine how to right size our exhibit?

Here's the formula:

	CURRENT	IDEAL
# show hours	18	18
# exhibit staff on duty	x 6	x 12
# interactions/hour/staffer	<u>x 4</u>	<u>x 4</u>
Exhibit Activity Level capacity	432 interactions	1,080 interactions

To be right-sized we need enough space and staff to accommodate 1,080 attendees versus 432. This gives us capacity for 648 additional attendee interactions. To accommodate this we will need twelve booth staffers versus six. And three additional 10x10 spaces to accommodate both our additional staff and the additional attendees.

Stop now and ask yourself, "What would it mean to the success of our company and our exhibit program, if we could put our company identity, our products and services, and our exhibit staff face-to-face with an additional 648 of the right attendees?"

If the answer excites you and your team, then let's move on to the financial side or the right sizing program.

Step 6. Cost-justify your right-sizing program.

Obviously, you are going to need to invest more financial and human resources to right-size your exhibit. And justifying the additional investment is important. So let's take a quick look at the additional costs, along with a simple return on investment model.

Here's the formula: Right-sizing Incremental Cost Estimate

Additional Floor Space	(\$2,500 x 3 spaces)	\$7,500
Additional Staff: Travel/Lodging/Meals	(\$400 day x 3 x 6)	\$7,200
Possibly, Additional Exhibit Costs	(talk to exhibit house)	<u>???</u>
Additional Cost Estimate		\$14,700+/-
Divide by number of additional attendee interactions		648
Cost per additional attendee interaction		\$22.68

Ok, so what does all of this mean? It means we have added three units of floor space and six staffers along with the additional costs. We have created capacity to interact with 648 additional attendees. So, how are we going to get a return on this investment?

Here's the formula: Soft Dollar Return on Investment Estimate

Cost of a Field Sales Call	\$596.00
Cost/Additional Interaction	- \$22.68
Savings/additional interaction	\$593.32
Number additional interactions	<u>x 648</u>
Soft Dollar Savings	\$371,511
Incremental Investment	\$14,700 +/-
Soft Dollar ROI	25.3%

Wow, an additional investment of only \$14,700 gives us \$371,511 or a 25.3% soft dollar return investment? Now that's what I call leverage!



Jefferson Davis, President of Competitive Edge is North America's leading exhibiting productivity expert. Since 1991, his results-focused, process-based approach to addressing critical exhibiting success factors has helped clients generate over \$800 million in combined exhibiting results. Jefferson provides highly-intensive exhibit consulting and training services guaranteed to deliver results.

For a no-obligation discovery meeting, [schedule a 30 minute meeting here](#).