



How to Prepare to Re-Enter Live Exhibiting Better Than Before

By Jefferson Davis, *Competitive Edge*

If the last year of our lives could be defined in one word, I think that word would be ADVERSITY. All of us have dealt with more adversity on every level of our lives than possibly ever before.

I was blessed in my early 20's to read an incredible book titled *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill. This book changed the trajectory of my life. One of many valuable lessons I learned was this:

“Every adversity carries within it the seed of an equivalent or greater benefit.”

So you may be asking *“What could possibly be a benefit from all this adversity?”*

Since we're talking tradeshows, I believe our time away from the hustle and bustle of running from show to show, doing similar things and expecting different results, may be a BIG blessing in disguise.

I say this because my core definition of exhibiting success is:

“Every hour and every dollar you invest in exhibit marketing should visibly and directly support your core business objectives and deliver measurable, financial value beyond cost.”

With live expositions getting ready to re-open, now is the perfect time to look back at how you exhibited prior to the pandemic and ask yourself:

“How well was your exhibit program delivering on these two primary outcomes?”

Go ahead score yourself on a 1 to 10 scale with a 10 being extremely satisfied. *How did you do?*

If you scored less than 10 on either of these success factors, why not take these next few months to carefully analyze your exhibiting program's strengths and weaknesses? Why not invest the downtime now to make adjustments that will help your company re-enter the live exhibiting arena better than ever before?

Here are some specific areas you should take a very close look at and make the necessary adjustments. Please understand you do not have to address them all right now. Sometimes, just one or two improvements from the list can make a huge difference!

1. Did you have vague, general reasons for exhibiting or did you have specific, measurable actionable, realistic and time-bound written goals backed up with written action plans?

2. Did your goals address the 3 big areas of exhibiting; marketing, sales, and customer relationship management?
3. Did you have an effective cost control system?
4. Did you clearly define your ideal visitor profile in terms of the type of people you wanted to attract and interact with in your exhibit or did you just rely on whoever happened to fall in from the aisles?
5. If you have multiple products and services, did you carefully analyze which solutions were the best to feature in your exhibit?
6. Did you carefully analyze your products and services in terms of the specific customer problems they solve and opportunities they create?
7. Did you develop a highly-interactive, in-booth presentation or demonstration that effectively educated visitors about your key features and benefits?
8. Did you clearly define what differentiated your products or services?
9. Did you develop a crystal clear value proposition to give attendees a compelling reason to visit your exhibit?
10. Did you execute a well-designed integrated pre-and at show marketing program to drive qualified traffic?
11. Did your exhibit really stand out in the crowd? Did it demand visual attention? Do you quickly answer the primary questions in the mind of an attendee as they walk up and down the aisles?
12. Was your exhibit easy to enter, easy to navigate, easy to find what they were looking for?
13. Did your in-booth demonstration/presentation integrate multi-sensory visitor engagement (images, words, and touch) to effectively deliver your core messages?
14. Did you train your booth staff on how to adapt their behaviors and communication skills for the challenging exhibiting environment?
15. Did you set clear and firm lead goals and hold your staff accountable for achievement of these goals?
16. Was your lead qualifying process thorough enough to capture high quality sales leads?
17. Did you have specific metrics to measure how well you executed your exhibit and where and how your exhibit program delivered financial value?
18. Did you have a closed-loop lead management system in place that could effectively track post event actions and conversion of leads?
19. Did you have a process to measure exhibiting return on investment?
20. Were you able to quickly capture the key lessons from each exhibit to continually make the incremental improvements to improve your exhibiting performance and ROI?

After reading these 20 questions, how are you feeling? Excited or overwhelmed?

I promise you this, if you effectively execute around these 20 questions, you have a world-class exhibiting program that is visibly supporting your core business objectives and delivering measurable value FAR beyond cost.

However, if you struggled to answer many of these questions, don't panic. I purposefully organized these questions in linear or sequential order.

Start your process to a better exhibiting tomorrow by asking, *“If I could only improve 1 or 2 of these areas that I believe would produce the biggest impact on my exhibiting program, which would they be?”*

Then, start gathering the knowledge resources and developing your action plans to make the improvements. Once you've done that, take a few more areas and do the same thing. If you do, there will come a day in the very near future when your exhibiting program is performing in the top 10% at every show you do. You will blow your competitors away and you will be a rock star in your company! Now go get busy, there's never been a better time than right now.



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](#).