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# Shows Work!

## part I

By Barry Siskind



"At trade shows you have an opportunity to meet people who will take your products and services to the end user."

## Although the lines between vertical and horizontal shows are blurring, there are still real results available for the small business owner.

Two thousand years ago, in ancient Babylon, they were called bazaars - a forerunner to the modern general merchandise show where farmers and merchants met to sell their wares. Exhibitions have matured since their humble beginnings. During the last half of this century we have seen a proliferation of highly specialized shows, some focusing on the needs of re-sellers and some on the end user. As we approach the next decade the lines that differentiate these two types of shows are fading. Some trade shows, which profess to cater to re-sellers, agents and distributors, also encourage public attendance. And some shows, which were created for the end user, by their very nature, attract re-sellers. Often the differences between trade and consumer shows can be fuzzy. In order to make sound decisions the astute exhibitor must understand these differences. Should they exhibit in a trade or consumer show and, how should they best spend their marketing budget? These and many other questions must be answered by those charged with the responsibility of choosing exhibiting opportunities for their companies. The right decision can yield well-deserved rewards. The wrong

decision can cause serious fiscal harm. Here are a few of the differences to be aware of.

### Your target audience

At trade shows you have an opportunity to meet people who will take your products and services to the end user. Retailers, wholesales, dealers, and reps all attend trade shows. These shows generally focus on particular market segments giving you an opportunity to target your products and services directly.

The consumer show is targeted to the end user and a particular interest rather than industry. Home shows, boat shows, and automotive shows are a few examples. The interest level of attendees can be multifaceted, more vertical than horizontal.

The solution to which type of show is best suited begins with your customer profiles. There are sophisticated tools at your disposal such as cluster analysis, factor analysis, or latent class analysis, but good profiles can be created with some simple foresight, planning, and a dash of common sense. There are two kinds of customer

profiles. The first is demographic - an analysis of individual persons or businesses based on factors such as age, spending habits, location, type of business etc. The second is psychographic - based on how customers react in certain situations such as how often they order a particular product, what they order, when they order, to which marketing stimuli they respond positively and so on. Both types of analysis are helpful.

So, let's create a meaningful customer profile that includes both demographic and psychographic considerations. The best place to start is with existing customers. This first step gives you an understanding of why they buy your product or service. Participation in a commercial exchange is not what defines a customer. Defining a customer originates from a basic understanding of how he or she perceives the features and benefits of what you have to offer.

Rarely will you have a product or service that appeals to 100% of an audience. At a show be careful about over-generalizing your message. Some exhibitors assume that because they are the only game in

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town, everyone is interested in their product or service. made.

Demographics answer the question, who is my customer? It is an analysis of all the pertinent data that defines the characteristics of your customer. Demographics enable you to segment your overall customer base into helpful categories.

In a business-to-customer (B2C) example you may define your customer demographics in the following terms: age, income, gender, geography, profession, education, wealth, family make up, nationality, homeowner/renter, etc. For a business-to-business (B2B) interaction the demographic qualifiers may include: size of company, type of products sold, revenue, budget, number of employees, number of branches, ownership, industry sector, years in business, and so on.

Psychographics answer the question, what do they do? This is a chance to examine your target audience's attitudes, beliefs, and emotions. The following are psychographic variables in the B2C marketplace: family stage, hobbies, status awareness, outside interests, leisure time, social responsibility, lifestyle, charitable affiliations, etc. In the B2B marketplace, psychographics elements include: social responsibility, environmental conscience, business style, position within an industry, innovations, affiliations, employee relations, workforce type, management style, employee remuneration, shareholder relations and so on. By adding the psychographic to the demographic information you increase the richness of your customer understanding.

A behavioral analysis answers the question how do they do it? This is an in-depth look at customer demographics and psychographics in action. Here whether you are in a B2C or B2B marketplace you can analyze your customers according to their habits in terms of: number of times they purchase, how often, at what frequency, amount of product, decision making cycle and where the purchase was

Causation analysis answers the question, why do they do what they do? Causation is the sum total of all the demographic, psychographic, and behavioral data you have accumulated. It matches up your features and benefits with your customer's perception of their importance. Consider consulting your customers. Ask them how they rank your features in order of importance. Their views are helpful for you not only in choosing the right show but, it will also give your valuable insights into the correct signage, product placement, etc. that you should use. If, for example, you find your customer's primary need is price then offering a "show special" at your booth might be helpful. If you find that status ranks high on your customer's wish list then participating in a show that attracts the cream of the crop will make a lot of sense.

By understanding demographic, psychographic, and behavioral data as well as causation you have painted a clear picture of your customer profile. This exercise may reveal more than one customer profile, which is helpful. Creating profiles is a crucial step in focusing your marketing effort and ensuring that you are indeed in the right show.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barry Siskind is one of North America's foremost trade and consumer show experts. He is the President of International Training and Management Company, the only full service exhibitor education company providing a wide range of products and services to help exhibitors improve their performance on and off the trade show floor. He is also the author of *The Power of Exhibit Marketing*, *Making Contact*, *The Art of Business Networking*, *Bumblebees Can't Fly: Seven Strategies for Making the Impossible Possible*, and *Eagles Must Soar*. For more information, please visit <http://www.siskindtraining.com> or call 1800-358-6079.

