

What ProMat Attendees Want and Need From Exhibitors

By Jefferson Davis, President, Competitive Edge

Companies attaining industry leadership positions appear to have uncanny insight into what customers want and need. Not only do they understand customer wants and needs, but they focus intense effort on striving to fulfill those wants and needs.

One of the biggest reasons why a company attains a leadership position is simply because they do a better job of understanding and delivering customer wants and needs than their competitors.

The two key words every marketer striving for an industry leadership position must know and respond to are relevance and importance.

If your marketing and exhibiting program quickly establishes relevance, customers will notice you. If your programs quickly establish importance, customers will engage with you. It's really that simple. The two keys that unlock the door to getting noticed by and engaged with your target customers are relevance and importance.

How are tradeshow relevant and important to supply chain industry professionals?

The three primary needs attendees strive to fulfill are learning, shopping, and networking.

Through my company's in-person evaluation of over 11,400 exhibits in action over the last four years, we've observed that most exhibiting companies are doing a reasonable job of trying to fulfill attendees shopping needs.

The single biggest area offering the greatest opportunity for significant and rapid improvement for exhibiting companies is to do a better job of designing the overall exhibit experience to address attendees learning needs.

Supply chain industry professionals come to ProMat to learn about newer, better, faster, cheaper, safer, greener, easier ways to achieve operational efficiency, productivity and profitability. Increased reliability, reduced downtime, improved efficiency are topics of relevance and importance. They are looking to learn about best practices used by industry colleagues, they're looking for next practices... where things are going.

Integrating these key value propositions into your marketing communications and exhibiting experience will make a huge difference in driving more interested and qualified visitors to your ProMat exhibit.

A recent study conducted by the Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR) found the number one way show attendees want to engage with exhibits is to interactive product demonstrations and presentations.

ProMat attendees want to see, touch, feel, engage with your products and services. They want real time, specific, honest answers to their questions. They want multiple ways to interact and engage with

your company's exhibit. In short, they want to do a whole lot more in your booth than they can do on your company's website.

The major question every ProMat exhibitor needs to answer to improve their market position and their exhibiting performance is "how well are we meeting attendees learning needs?"

A powerful way to gain better insight into customers learning needs is simply to ask them. You could use customer surveys, focus groups or interviews to gain the insights necessary to increase your company's relevance and importance to the marketplace.

Another way to gain these insights is to attend the upcoming ShowPro workshop on December 11 in Atlanta. MHI is assembling a panel of key supply chain companies who will discuss what they want and need from exhibitors. You will have the opportunity to bring your questions and get answers directly from power buyers in the supply chain industry. If you're serious about understanding customer wants and needs so your marketing programs will be more relevant and important, this is truly an event you cannot afford to miss.

I will also be presenting the findings from our in person evaluation of over 11,400 exhibits in action. I will take you on a fast-paced, pictorial journey spotlighting best practices and next practices being executed by exhibitors of all types and all sizes in many different industries.

If you're looking to improve your company's position in the supply chain marketplace, the strategy to take is to gain better understanding of your customer's wants and needs, and establish relevance and importance through your marketing and exhibiting programs.

As legendary business management expert Peter Drucker said only two things drive revenue for a company; marketing and innovation. Everything else is an expense.

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