

## Selling Power— The Lost Metric

If you were exhibiting at a trade show to an audience that re-sells your product to others, what would you consider to be the key measurement of the value of that trade show?

The raw number of re-sellers attending the show is a useful statistic, giving an exhibitor a sense of the popularity or convenience of the show among the universe of re-sellers. The names of the companies for which the attendees work is good information because it helps you identify whether those re-sellers are existing customers or prospects. The state or region of the country from which the attendees hail may be helpful to exhibitors targeting specific geographic regions of the country. Even knowing how many attendees hold an industry certification is helpful as it reveals the general level of training of those walking the aisles.

All of the above are metrics service providers traditionally give exhibitors to help them measure the value of a trade show. But in a network like the promotional products marketplace, a network in which companies target re-sellers (distributors), the missing metric suppliers need for measuring a trade show's fullest potential is the selling power of attendees—and this is rarely measured. On those rare occasions when it is measured and published by service providers for marketing purposes, the number is never independently verified.

Selling power is a relevant metric for rating trade shows. Industry trade publications tout the number of readers in their circulation base, the geographic distribution of that base, and the description of the type of company in which their readers are employed—promotional products distributor, embroiderer, sales promotion agency, etc. (Occasionally, a publication will use the metric of whether a reader is an owner and/or manager.)

This is all good information, but what is the selling power of that circula-

tion base? If I am a supplier and a trade magazine claims to reach my audience of targeted re-sellers (e.g., distributor salespeople), I want to know how much those people sell. I want to know the average sales per reader and the median sales figure. And I want those numbers independently verified.

Service providers must realize that it is not enough for suppliers to know how many people read your magazine or walk the aisles of your show. It is not enough to know their title or where they live. It is not enough to know at what company they work or whether they have an industry designation. This information is necessary, but it is not sufficient to allow suppliers to make fully educated marketing decisions.

The days of suppliers casually spending marketing dollars based on service provider hype, politics or force of habit are waning. As the distribution network becomes more transparent and suppliers increasingly look to influence the buying decision at the point of the ultimate transaction (distributor salesperson/buyer), supplier marketing dollars will move to those service providers who can prove, through a process of independent verification, that their magazine or trade show attracts an audience with selling power.

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*PPAI Director of Expositions and Meetings Darel Cook responds: "This is a request that has been around trade shows for quite some time, and there are a number of issues with the metric—specifically, how the information is collected and confirmed. In areas where it is an individual membership or individual ownership, it is reasonable to request this information. But when it involves company membership, it is too difficult to acquire such detailed and correct information. To date, all PPAI asks of a member is the company's*