Marketing & Sales Client Portal

Introduction

VNU Exhibitions Europe (VNU EE) combines the expertise of organising exhibitions and the marketing of integrated information groups. The result is an organisation that profiles itself in the world of trade shows & exhibitions by its innovative and ROI driven marketing communication. It is not about square metres, it is about added value for our clients before, during and after our Tradeshows. In December 2008 VNU Exhibitions has changed its mission statement to better reflect this role.

From
"VNU Exhibitions is an innovative and inspiring exhibition specialist that is committed to organise creative and profitable platforms that connect people and markets".

To
"We aim to be the best in creating inspiring and profitable engagements between people by offering an effective mix of personal and virtual information, communication and transaction platforms in all markets we serve".

The focus points for VNU EE are to create added value by manipulating the interactions between supply and demand both online and offline. By playing an active role in aggregating and distributing relevant information to relevant persons at the right time in order to facilitate contact both face to face and online. The ultimate goal is to assist our clients in their sales & marketing efforts by helping them generate and qualify leads 365 days a year.

These ambitions require extensive investments in our information infrastructure. Over the years VNU EE has already developed many online tools that assist our exhibitors in their preparation for and follow up after an event. But to accomplish the aforementioned mission and goals a new system has been developed that integrates all online tools and relevant data both from VNU and from our event partners in a single sign on environment, *'The Client Portal'.* With the Client Portal we strive to make event participation and lead follow up as transparent and easy as possible for our clients, with a continuous focus on the exhibitor's ROI.

What is it?

The Client Portal is one central spot for marketing, sales and organisation. The Client Portal is the internet tool where marketing information, promotions, statistics and follow up actions come together. With one username and password you have access to all services offered. There is a single point of entry for all VNU EE clients. When you log in you will see an overview of all fairs in which you participated or which you plan to attend in the future.

Use of the Client portal is divided into 2 phases. Before the tradeshow the client starts at the *preparation overview page*. From here they can fill in their personal registration links, send email invites etc. After the show the client automatically starts at the Results page where they can find the post show results, distribute leads etc. For a more comprehensive en visual description of the Client Portal see Appendix 1& 2.

The objectives

There are quite a few objectives for offering this tool to clients and integrating it in our organization. We have divided the objectives in two categories: Operational and Tactical & Strategic

1. Operational Objectives

The Client Portal aims to integrate all online tools and relevant data both from VNU and from our event partners such as venues, registrations companies etc. in a single sign on environment. The Client Portal functions as a point of departure for our clients on which they can find all the different tools that VNU EE and partners have to offer. Some functionalities that have been integrated are:

- Email tool with templates for pre-show marketing and post show follow up including reporting tools.
- The visitor and staff registration pages that allow the exhibitor to make personalized and traceable registration links for use on their websites and emails.
- An exhibitor Content Management System for updating directory profiles, uploading marketing materials and managing press releases.
- Management of personal visitor pre-registration pages.
- Vendorseminar registration.
- Venue + catering online ordering.
- Deep links to promotion items and / or checklists managed by the Tradeshow teams.
- View and print individual visitor profiles.
- … Any links that are relevant for a specific Tradeshow.

Through this we aim to make it easier, more conveniently arranged and extra stimulating for the exhibitors to use all the communication and marketing tools of VNU EE.

Secondly, the Client Portal streamlines the supply of data and information by presenting information from different sources in a uniform manner. Through this it is possible to collect all the data from the different systems in one record and subsequently strain the overlapping data.

In addition, the Client Portal allows exhibitors to manage their event participation from this single platform and provides real time and actionable data to exhibitors about their communication campaign, pre-registrations, lead retrieval, and follow up. It does this across all VNU products and across different editions of the same event enabling our loyal exhibitors to build up a comprehensive prospect database and valuable benchmarks about their event performance over time.

2. Tactical & Stategic Objectives

As mentioned before, VNU EE changed its mission statement in 2008. Our Client Portal proves an effective way to focus our staff (and their conversations with clients) on the added value of information based services and products and provides a frame of reference for the development of new products and services.

The Client Portal is initially set up integrating external data sources. In 2009 / 2010 VNU Exhibitions is setting up a Datawarehouse / BI environment which will integrate visitor profiles across all exhibitions and web-based products and email in one internal source. This will enable us to create a single view of each person in the database across all products. Because VNU EE has different touch points (other than a visit to an exhibition) with individuals we will be able to enrich profiles and ensure a qualitative, de-duplicated, prospect database for our clients.

- Providing traceability of sales & marketing efforts and contacts generated from these efforts to our clients.
- Create client lock in by providing an excellent lead and prospect database including tools to monitor sales & marketing efforts through time.

- Generate an additional 10% revenue for VNU EE by 2011 through data products and services (f.e. data-quality / data-cleaning services, subscription based Online CRM tools for use separate from Exhibition participation, lead generation products such a 'Exporoute'*).

* "Exporoute was the 2008 winner of the UFI ICT Award

The portal already allows VNU to automatically suggest additional products and services to relevant exhibitors within a Tradeshow environment. For example an exhibitor login into the portal that has not opted for a vendor seminar will be shown 0 on the number of vendor seminar registration prior to the event and will automatically be suggested the opportunity to rent a timeslot in the seminar theatre. At the Portal homepage suggestions can be made for additional Tradeshows or Online products that might be of interest to the Exhibitor.

How did we get there?

Several actions were taken in the process of achieving this new successful Client Portal. First of all, our online platforms were developed over a number of years and by different suppliers. Most of the data and functionality is hosted externally. In order to integrate all of these platforms both authentication protocols to allow single sign on and XML feeds to provide data to the Client Portal needed to be developed.

For this project to succeed we needed to work in close cooperation from a number of preferred suppliers such as VNU's visitor registration companies, our email marketing provider and the developers of our current Content Management System and Exhibitor Directory plus of course the developer of the portal software.

In order to manage risk on this elaborate project we worked closely with a consultancy firm (DNV – CIBIT) in order to formulate a very specific set of technical, functional and data requirements based on our overall Information Architecture.

Obviously the exhibitor needs were taken into account in the development process of the Client Portal. We performed about 20 face to face interviews with clients across a whole range of markets. In order to identify their needs versus the then current offering of online tools.

The detailed specs helped vendors to give very targeted quotes and helped us to simply pick the best (cheapest) offer as there was very little margin within the requirements. After the vendor selection process we worked with the software developer again detailing every single screen and all of the interaction design of the application before writing the first bit of code. This eventually resulted in the final application doing exactly what it was expected to do.

The aforementioned (and for VNU EE completely novel) approach allowed us to work through the entire project (specs to delivery) in little over 6 months. We started in March 2008 with a hard launch to a group of over 500 exhibitors across 4 Tradeshows held in September 2008 and kept within budget.

Results

Besides implementing a set of web analytics within the Portal itself we monitor client satisfaction with several dedicated surveys and as part of our regular client surveys. Around this feedback (internal and external) we organized a process for Change Requests to the Portal. If needed we release an updated version every quarter. Currently the Portal is in version 1.3 this process proves very useful as it creates buy-in from users who can see the results of their feedback quite soon and improves the product.

Cumulative results to date:

In the period September 2008 – May 2009

- The site was logged into 15.488 times
- By the 2.980 exhibitors that were given a login in that period
- Average time spent per visit is 6 minutes and 39 seconds

- 77% of exhibitors indicate that they find the Client Portal of added value to their event participation.
- 83% give the application and 8 out of 10 or higher for user friendliness
- 70% judges completeness and quality of data with an 8 or higher

Quotes from exhibitors that make use of the Client Portal:

- *'Benchmarking tool is very useful'* (Ms van den Broek).

- *'This Portal offers a direct overview of your clients, it helps to update the address database and it also illustrates the noshow of clients'* (Mr Leprich).

- *'Very detailed information and great opportunities to analyze the received information'* (Mr. Waldhober).

- *'We recognized a higher conversion rate due to the Client Portal, especially the first time that we made use of the Client Portal' & 'The fully commitment of visitors and for ourselves all round an exhibition is a lot higher. It is easier for us to approach a client for during and after the exhibition thanks to the Client Portal. Also, non-attendees are still readily approachable, this is a big advantage'* (Marc Dubach, European Marketing Manager of Avnet).

Conclusion

With the launch of our Marketing & Sales Clientportal we have set an important first step in transforming VNU EE's Information Architecture and in creating a focus on a new line of commercial opportunities and value added services. The website offers some direct and obvious usability and communication advantages over the decentralized offering of tools and information. More importantly the platform helps us to position VNU EE as a marketing & sales partner to our clients and gives credibility to our new mission.

UFI ICT award 2009
Utrecht, June 2009

Appendix 1

Guideline for the online evaluation

We have asked two of our clients (Avnet and Nicomax) to make use of their log in to better demonstrate the Client Portal to you, the UFI jury. You can find a live demonstration of their actions with the help of the Client Portal by following this link:
http://www.clientportal.vnuexhibitions.com

Please login by using the following user id and password:

Avnet:	167163	/	wg7860
Nicomax:	286868	/	vv2225

Some general remarks before starting the online evaluation:

You are entering a 'live' client environment please take note this when evaluating the tool

- Login to the Exhibitors manual and Catering has been blocked for evaluation purposes as these are live e-commerce environments.

- The summer months is the low season period for the fair-trade industry and consequently for VNU EE. The first coming exhibition for VNU EE will be held in September (Nicomax is participating at this fair). Most of the time our clients start actively with their preparations only 2 or 3 months in advance of an exhibition, therefore the preparation pages are not yet filled with numbers. In addition, some of our tools are not available until three month before the fair (press module etc.).

- Depending on the timing in the Tradeshow cycle certain links and tools are opened or closed

- See Appendix 2 for a first impression and some visual explanations about the Client Portal without having to login.

- See Appendix 3 for the leaflet that we sent together with the login id and passwords to our clients.

- For an exhibitors judgment and/or experience about the Client Portal, please call or email Marc Dubach (European marketing manager) at Avnet. Call +31(0)402502747 or email: marc.dubach@avnet.com

- For questions regarding this case or the Clientportal in general please call or email Mr Fedde van der Woude (Business Unit Manager) at VNU Exhibitions Europe. Call +31(0)302952839 or email fedde.van.der.woude@vnuexhibitions.com

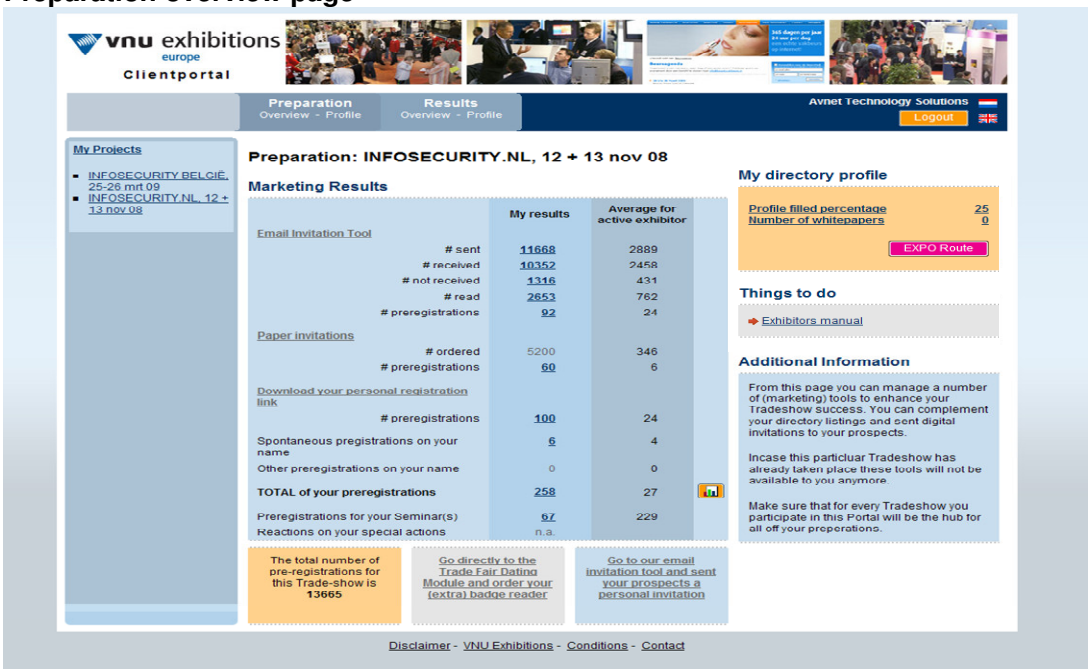
Appendix 2

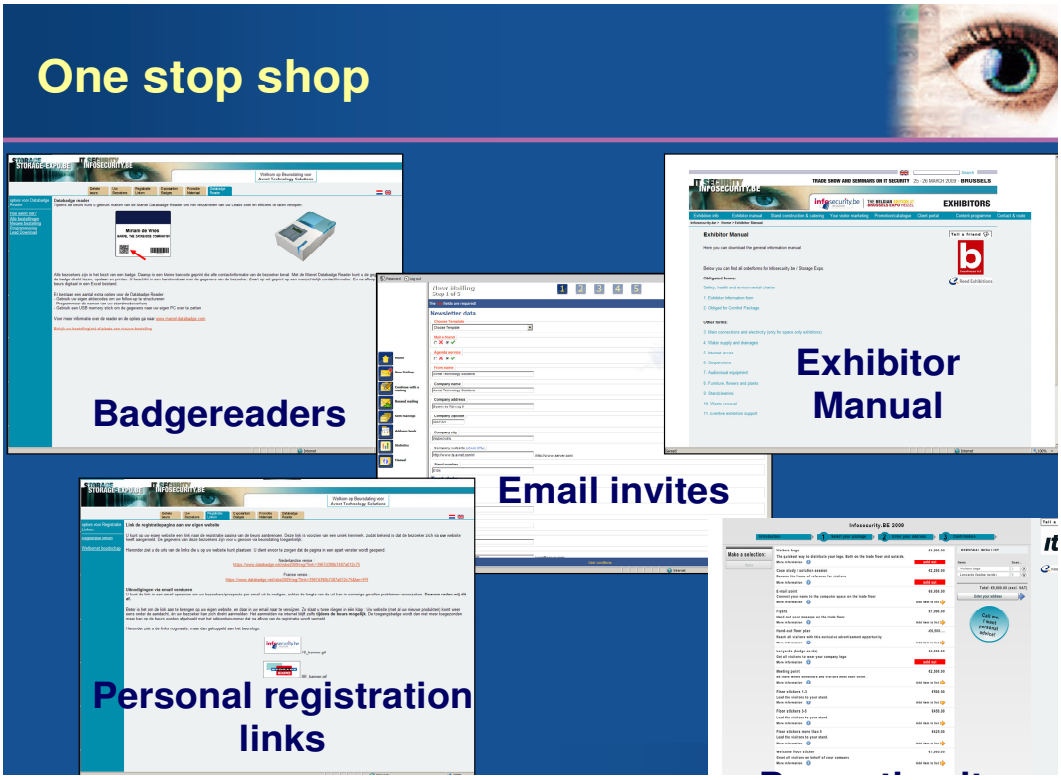
Visual description of the Client Portal

Single point of entry for all VNU EE clients across different events:

Before the tradeshow:

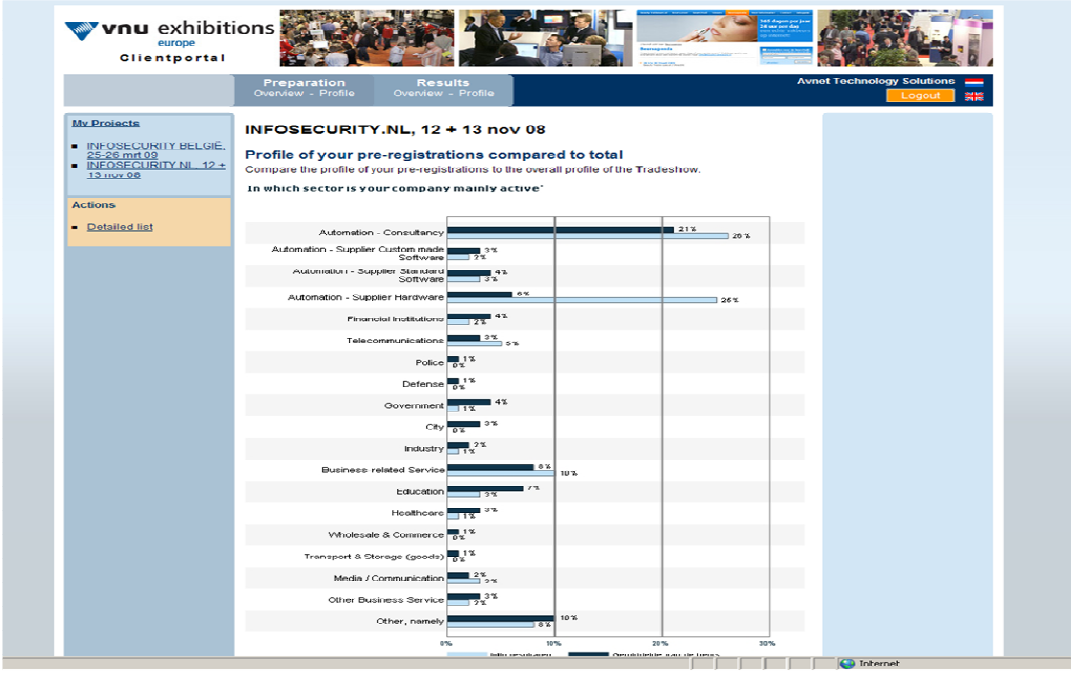
Preparation overview page



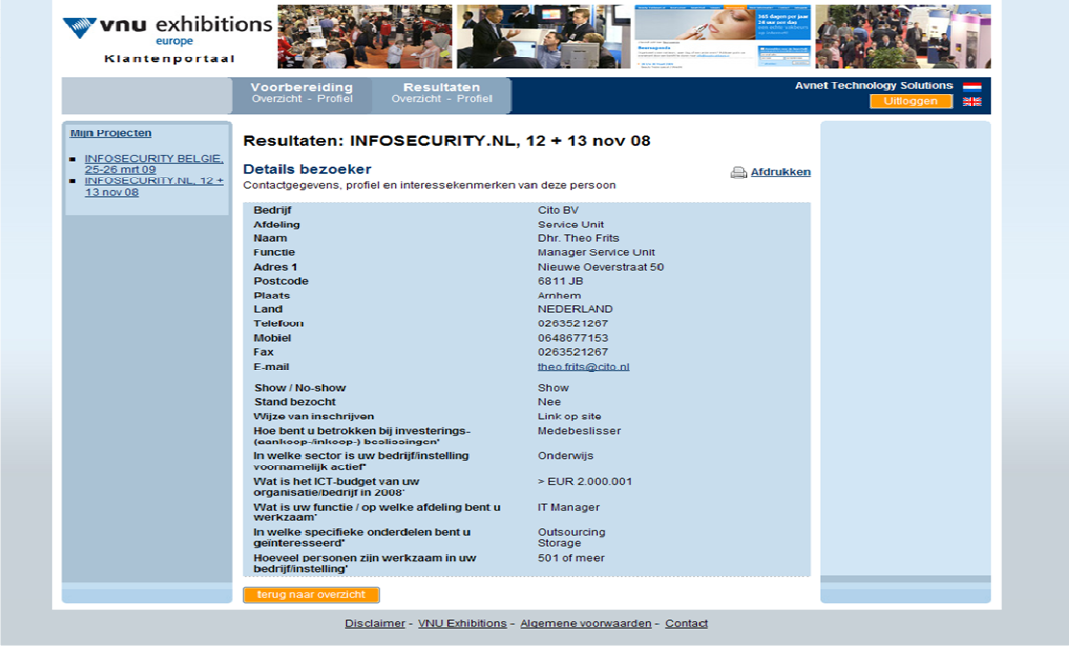


Overview list

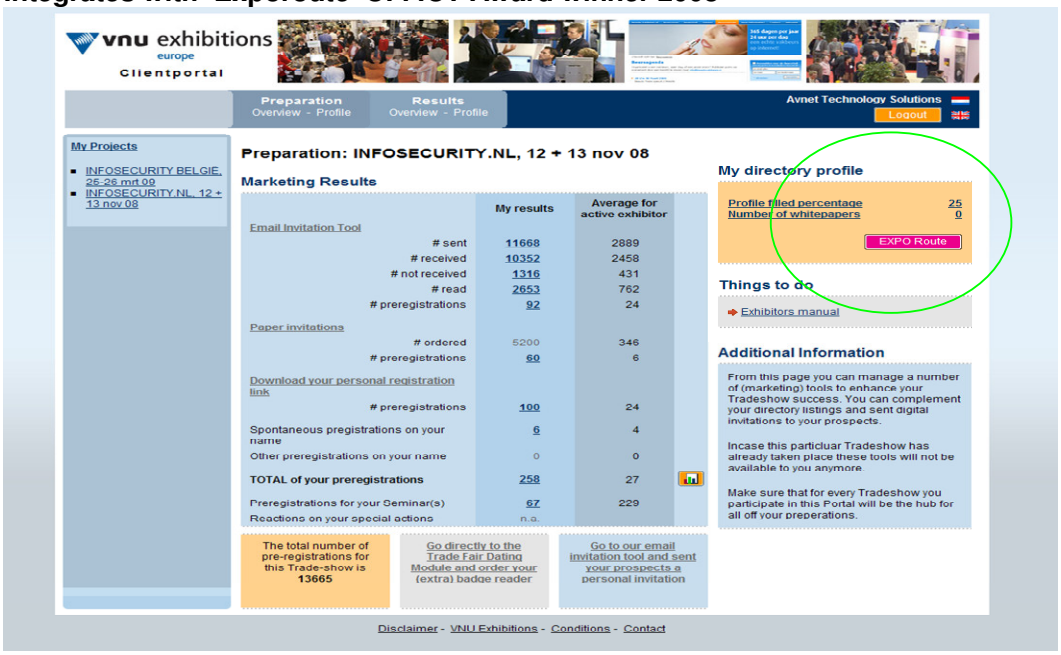
Monitor specific progress



View detailed prospect information

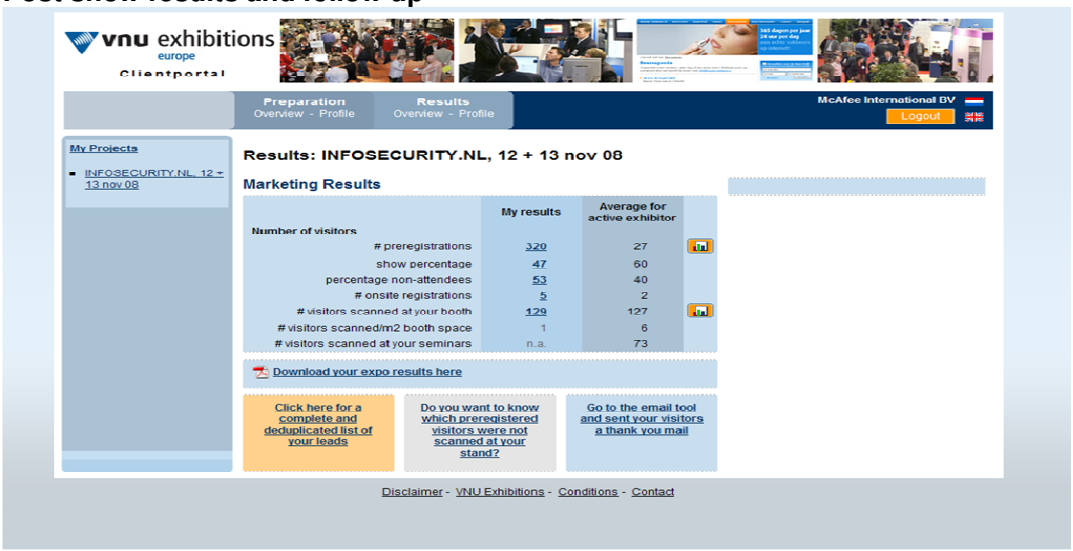


Integrates with ‘Exporoute’ UFI ICT Award winner 2008

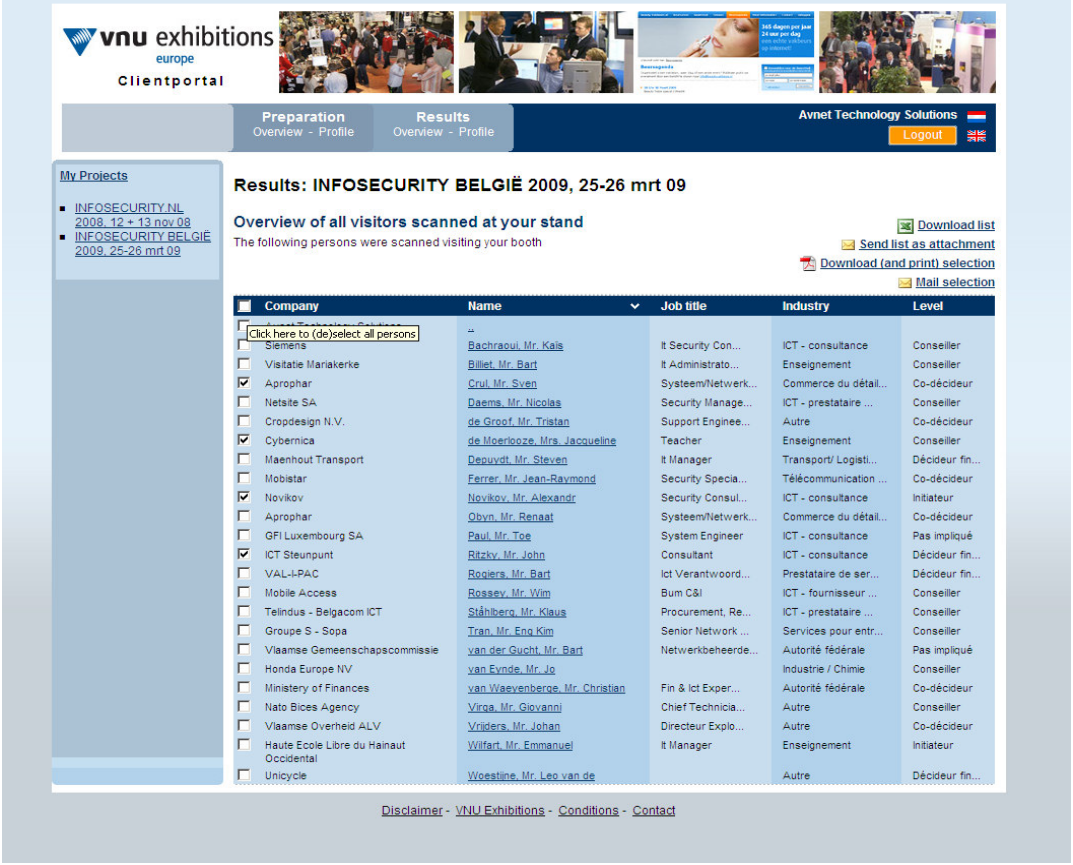


After the trade show:

Post show results and follow up

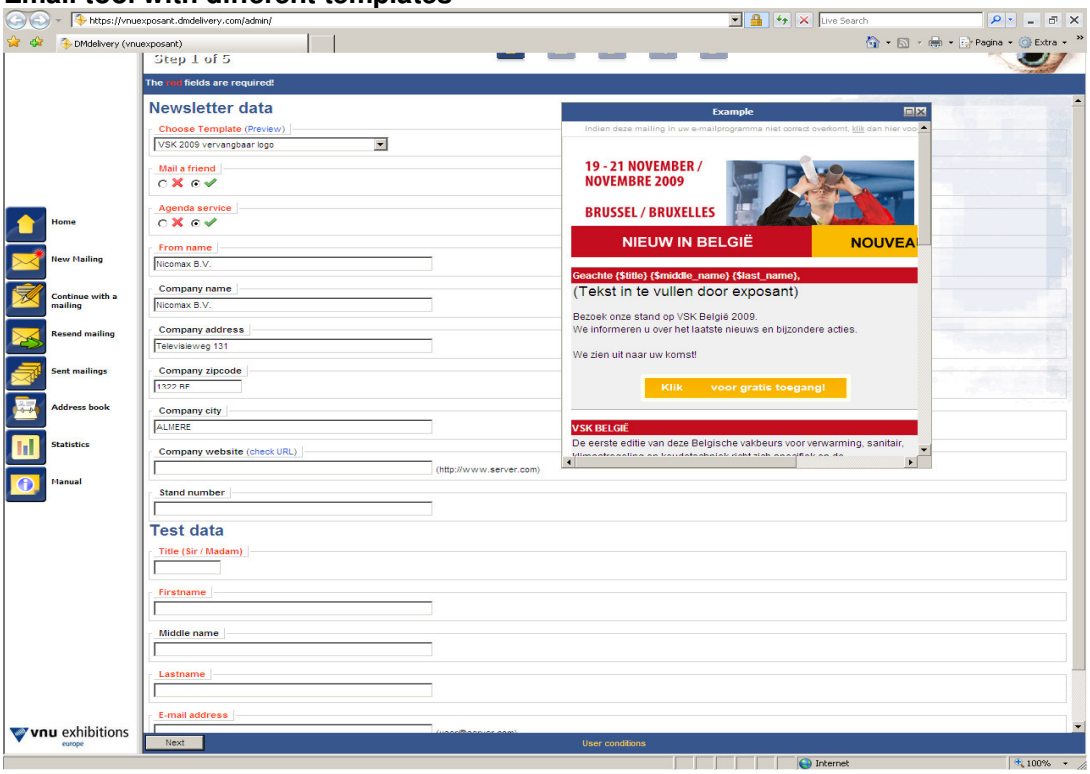


Manage your results



Distribute leads

Email tool with different templates



To experience the portal yourself:

www.clientportal.vnuexhibitions.com

Please login by using the following id and password:

Avnet	Nicomax
Username: 167163	286868
Password: wg7860	vv2225

Appendix 3

Exhibitor Leaflet Client Portal

Front page

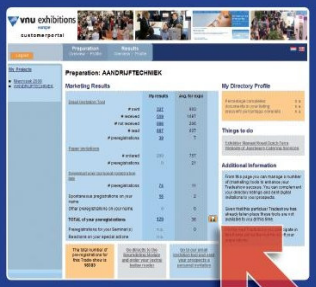
Backside

Like to get started immediately?

Visit www.clientportal.vnuexhibitions.com

Everything neatly arranged in one Client Portal

Log in using your user name and the password you received from VNU Exhibitions. If you no longer have them, please call the Exhibitors' line on +31 (0)30 295 2999.

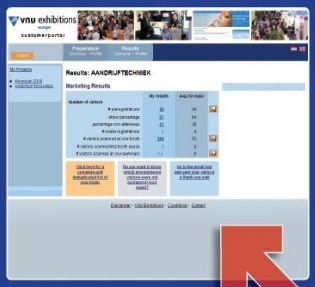


Preparation

- Consult history of fairs in which you participated
- Compare your results to those of your colleagues
- Visit the catalogue service centre to supplement your profile
- Send your digital client card directly from the system
- Find out how many digital client cards were opened
- Download the registration link for your own website
- Find out about your personal pre-registration score
- Download visitors pre-registering under your name or who for instance registered for a specific activity you intend to organise at the fair.

Detail

- View at detail level the profile of your visitors, including position fields of interests and investment potential.
- Print out detail information
- Return to the total overview and download for example all names pre-registering under your name or who visited one of your seminars.



Results

- Compare the results of your marketing promotions to those of your colleagues
- Download the data of prospects who intended to visit your stand but did not.
- Download the deduplicated file
- Send a thank-you e-mail including a handy 'Contact me' button directly from the system.

Questions? Call VNU Exhibitions Exhibitors' Line on +31 (0)30 295 2999

vnu exhibitions europe

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