

Exhibitor Lead marketing program

Introduction

VNU Exhibitions Europe (VNU-EE) enables meetings between people and businesses, resulting in valuable contacts. With a portfolio encompassing over 80 events, both nationally and abroad, we develop and exploit large national trade shows and consumer exhibitions, but also regional events and exclusive invitation-only meetings for top managers. Every year, more than 3,200 of our exhibitors will attend trade shows and exhibitions, visited by more than 400,000 visitors.

A live event is one of the most challenging decisions in a company's marketing mix. It is an instrument that requires a lot from an organization, in terms of preparation, support, time, vision and sometimes budget. When executed well, it can also yield the best results for a company interested in lead generation and branding.

For more than 10 years, we have been convinced that we need to coach and facilitate our exhibitors to help them make their trade show participation a success. For this philosophy and this approach, we won the UFI Marketing Award in 2002. With our VNU Lead marketing program, started early 2012, VNU has been trying to achieve more (high-quality) leads for exhibitors. VNU is investing in a higher ROI for exhibitors all the while aiming for a higher exhibitor retention rate itself. The 2002 program has gone through a development process in which we started focusing on visitors needs instead of the product. Research has shown that visitors are more likely to accept an invitation if it is sent by an exhibitor instead of VNU/the trade show. Exhibitors who, in their preparation, listen to what visitors need, are assured of higher ROI. The realization that our exhibitors differ greatly with regard to skills and resources has also improved the program. In stead of offering one generic program, we have developed a segmented approach, based on experience with trade shows, database size, available budget and company size. The program went live in May 2012, the figures in this document go up to March 2013. Up to now, we have evaluated 9 trade shows. The program encompasses 21 titles, with a total of 2,021 exhibitors. Research shows that 19% of the exhibitors is already active and wants to remain so, while 66% would like to be more active, but lacks the means. An active exhibitor has carried out an active campaign in previous editions of the trade show and invited relations. 2% has the means but not the motivation, and 13% has no means and is not interested. Non-active exhibitors can potentially achieve great results if we activate them in the right way; this group of 90 exhibitors has a total database of 500,000.

Four customer types: four methods

Willing/able	Willing/not able	Not willing/able	Not willing/not able
Reward (19%)	Support (66%)	Motivate (13%)	Let go (2%)
Basic service level: VNU Lead marketing (100%)			

Everyone: VNU Lead marketing©

All exhibitors of VNU Exhibitions Europe can profit from VNU Lead marketing. It offers exhibitors tools to achieve an optimum match between supply and demand. These tools are:

- A separate trade show (campaign) cockpit; in the Client Portal
- Free attendance of the Workshop Marathon.
- VNU Lead marketing© website, with information, tips, cases and checklists for a successful event
- Business profile in ExpoMatch
- Publication of press releases in the Press Room (digital and at the trade show)
- Publication of news items on the trade show website
- Digital invitations; professional e-mail invitations
- Printed invitations: both standard and made to measure
- A registration button with a link for the company website
- Visitor registration at the stand (if selected)
- VNU Event Partners, specialists who can offer helpful services

Willing/able: Reward

Successful exhibitors who are active and show results, will be rewarded for their efforts and be even more inspired to improve their ROI – to get them from Good to Better. They will be exclusively invited to attend a Master Class. Experts teach them the tricks of the marketing trade and show them how they can set up an even better campaign. Subjects being discussed are: branding, event strategy and social media.

We also present the Visitor Marketing Award to those exhibitors who managed to attract the absolute or relative most visitors to the trade show. These exhibitors are celebrated during an impressive award ceremony and their company logo is printed in the thank-you mail sent out to visitors. The award winners are also mentioned on the website and will be visible for other exhibitors in the Top 10 in the Client Portal. This way, we offer exhibitors an image boost in the market and more leads (via extra exposure), with an extra chance of higher sales.

Willing/not able: Support

Exhibitors who indicate they want to be more active, but don't have the means or experience to do so, will be contacted by e-mail and telephone to attend the Workshop Marathons. The workshops are interactive training sessions, where exhibitors learn about: Campaigns, organization, writing, sales in the run-up and during the trade show, lead follow-up and stand construction. The sessions are led by six independent experts from the VNU Event Partners network. Quote from a Workshop Marathon participant: "For my group, it was a great discovery that what is important is what you have to offer, especially what you have to offer your customer."

Not willing/able: Motivate

The trade show campaign manager will contact exhibitors who, for whatever reason, are not willing to actively invite their own customers, but who do have the means to. The campaign manager will carry out a free analysis of the approach as marketing communication, with the promise of a set of at least five tips and recommendations to increase the returns of their participation. They will discuss the participation and campaign following a fixed inventory model. This is all meant to motivate and convince them of the advantages of setting up a campaign, and to offer, based on the targets the exhibitor has, relevant tips and pointers.

Targets

VNU-EE's targets, which we aspire to with this marketing campaign, are aimed at three groups:

- The exhibitor: The approach stimulates exhibitors on an individual basis to deploy a more active approach towards the trade show. This will result in more leads, and in more orders.
- The visitor: Active exhibitors create a better, more interesting trade show for the visitor. Satisfied visitors result in a higher retention rate in a declining market.
- VNU Exhibitions: Satisfied exhibitors and visitors who both profit from live events are the future of our company and our branch as a whole, and stimulate economic growth.

Results; Targets achieved

Exhibitors who attended the Workshop Marathon rate the event with an average score of 8/10. Exhibitors who attended the workshop are 16% more active and have a higher show rate (1%).

The Master Class was rated with a 7.4/10. The show rate for this participant type is 1% lower, but participating exhibitors score 8% higher on trade show activity.

Active exhibitors give a higher than average rating after the trade show. In 2012, active exhibitors rated the trade show with an average 6.84/10, and non-active exhibitors scored it a 6.58/10. The chances of participation at future trade shows is higher among active exhibitors. In 2012, 54% of active exhibitors indicated they would (very likely) participate again, compared to 41% of non-active exhibitors.

Exhibitor rating	Rating 2012	Repeat participation 2012
Active exhibitors	6.84	54%
Non-active exhibitors	6.58	41%

Visitor satisfaction and retention

For the first 9 trade shows we looked at, the visitor rating is high, both in 2011 and in 2012 the trade show got an average rating of 7.2/10. The good rating by visitors has been retained. The retention rate also shows an increase of 1%. Despite a drop in visitor numbers of 2.1%, this is a huge step forward compared the drop of 5.3% in 2011. In the long term, this effect should be strengthened by adding the other 12 trade shows to the program, resulting in positive figures.

Conclusion

By efficiently deploying our own efforts and and effectively attuning the message to segmented exhibitor groups, a €200,000 investment will result in more active exhibitors and a maximum number of visitors. Efforts for the benefit of communication with exhibitors mainly consist of budget and time/staff. The program also ensures a higher rating by exhibitors and satisfied visitors. A situation in which supply and demand are in perfect balance, ensuring a meaningful participation.