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Proving the Value of your Expo

April 2023

Last month, I attended the SISO CEO Summit in Las Vegas. With over 300+ for-profit trade show industry executives and supplier counterparts, one reoccurring theme kept coming up: Proving the value of live, in-person exhibitions to our stakeholders.

This is the BIG PROBLEM most organizers are trying to solve. Companies and entire industries survived COVID without in-person b2b events, and some may never come back. And, as costs rise to exhibit along with travel to show site across the country (or the world), proving the value of expos to all stakeholders has never been a higher priority.

As we've seen with the NAMM Show in recent days, former stalwart and anchor exhibitors like [Fender](#) *no longer see the value in exhibiting*. They adapted and found a way to deepen relationships with retail outlets and end users (musicians). E3 didn't modernize along with their industry, and now it's gone. (Truthfully, that show had many issues through the years and never fully recovered from its glory days.)

Where to start?

**Begin offering what your exhibitors, visitors and sponsors
CANNOT GET online. Experiences.**

Not everything has to be an expensive "activation." Many I've seen on show floors are useless! They don't correlate to who the sponsor and what they are selling. It's like [this cat herding commercial](#) that aired during the US Superbowl during the tech boom. The commercial was memorable. The advertiser? Not.

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Encourage your exhibitors to have fun with their booths and displays. Ease up on stupid display rules that don't work. Teach them how to better interact with and educate visitors.

Other ideas include sponsoring regional competitions and paying for the winners to compete at the big show for prizes and bragging rights. Or stage a production line on your show floor highlighting the latest in technology and sell sponsorships for product inclusion. Challenge your teams to get creative and greenlight new ideas that will bring buyers and sellers together that add energy to the show floor. If new initiatives or program succeed right out of the box, awesome! If they fail, perhaps they can be tweaked for success in the next edition.

Invest in good matchmaking tech and designate an area on the show floor to hold meetings, besides exhibitors' stands. Purposefully design digital offerings (webinars, round tables) to drive in-person attendance. Offer the disruptors in your industry a place to share. Put them on stage. Strategically orchestrate those "can't miss moments."

Create FOMO. Create Connections. Provide an Engaging Business Environment.

Stop using the same old boring and useless statistics from shows gone by. Instead of the number of visitors, use the number of engagements. Instead of how many exhibitors or square feet/meters, share the variety of products, equipment, and services on your show floor – especially the new ones. Use social media strategically to entice and engage your audience.

Change your show hours. If you have a heavy educational program on site (as many associations do), hold them at different times than the exhibit floor. Find out what success looks like to your stakeholders, then help them achieve it.

Prove your show's value by staying invaluable to its ecosystem.

If you liked this edition of the Global Glimpse, please share it with others! The first 1000 [subscribers to this newsletter](#) will be entered into a drawing for a 2-hour International 101 Training Session for their team (on-line or in-person depending on location) or a 1-hour international one-on-one update with Stephanie.

Thanks for reading!