

# Are Trade Shows Really Worth It?

The answer is a resounding YES. Exhibit Survey's latest audience trends data demonstrate that trade shows continue to attract real buyers. Here are the numbers.

-- Ian Sequeira and Nancy L. Gordon --

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### **Are Trade Shows Really Worth It?**

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---

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---

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### **From Palace to Sewer**

Conference centers aren't the only choices for your next event.

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# Are Trade Shows Really Worth It?

**The answer is a resounding YES. Exhibit Survey's latest audience trends data demonstrate that trade shows continue to attract real buyers. Here are the numbers.**

By Ian Sequeira and Nancy L. Gordon

**B**usiness analysts have for years been fond of predicting the imminent death of trade shows. "They're not worth the expense!" or "Nobody buys at shows!" these doom-sayers expound.

Guess what? They're as wrong now as they've ever been. And now you've got the data to prove it.

Every year, Exhibit Surveys Inc., a market research firm in Red Bank, NJ, collects and analyzes the most current data available on trade show audiences. Its findings from the 2002 report — based on 47 bellwether events — demonstrate that trade shows continue to attract real buy-

ers — those who directly influence their organization's purchase of goods and services. Even better, the average exhibitor is doing quite well at pulling in a large crop of entirely new customers. The first half of the report offers data about the overall effectiveness of trade show marketing. The second half provides industry-standard benchmarks against which to measure your own exhibiting performance.

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*By Ian Sequeira and Nancy L. Gordon. Questions or comments? E-mail [editorial@exhibitormagazine.com](mailto:editorial@exhibitormagazine.com).*

## Trade Show Buyers

# 8.4 HOURS

### How much time do buyers spend in an exhibit hall?

The best way to measure this factor is by computing the **Average Hours** spent by attendees at shows. In 2002, the average attendee spent 8.4 hours visiting exhibits at a typical trade show. That leaves little time for you to attract prospects.

#### Average Hours

HiTech	8.6
Retail	7.7
Medical	6.3
Mfg/Industrial	8.9
All Shows	8.4

### Do trade shows attract real buyers?

A show's **Net Buying Influences** refers to the percentage of attendees who can recommend, specify, or make a final purchasing decision for one or more products exhibited at a show. In 2002, the average Net Buying Influences across all industries was 83 percent.

#### Net Buying Influences

HiTech	84%	Mfg/Industrial	83%
Retail	86%	All Shows	83%
Medical	78%		

Better than 8 out of 10 attendees either have the clout to say, "I'll buy your widget," or have the ear of someone who does.



# 54%

### Do trade show exhibits influence peoples' buying decisions?

**Total Buying Plans** refers to the percentage of attendees who plan to purchase one or more exhibited products within 12 months of the show. In 2002, 54 percent of a typical audience intended to buy one or more of the products exhibited.

#### Total Buying Plans

HiTech	56%
Retail	57%
Medical	57%
Mfg/Industrial	42%
All Shows	54%

## What qualifies as a "busy" trade show?

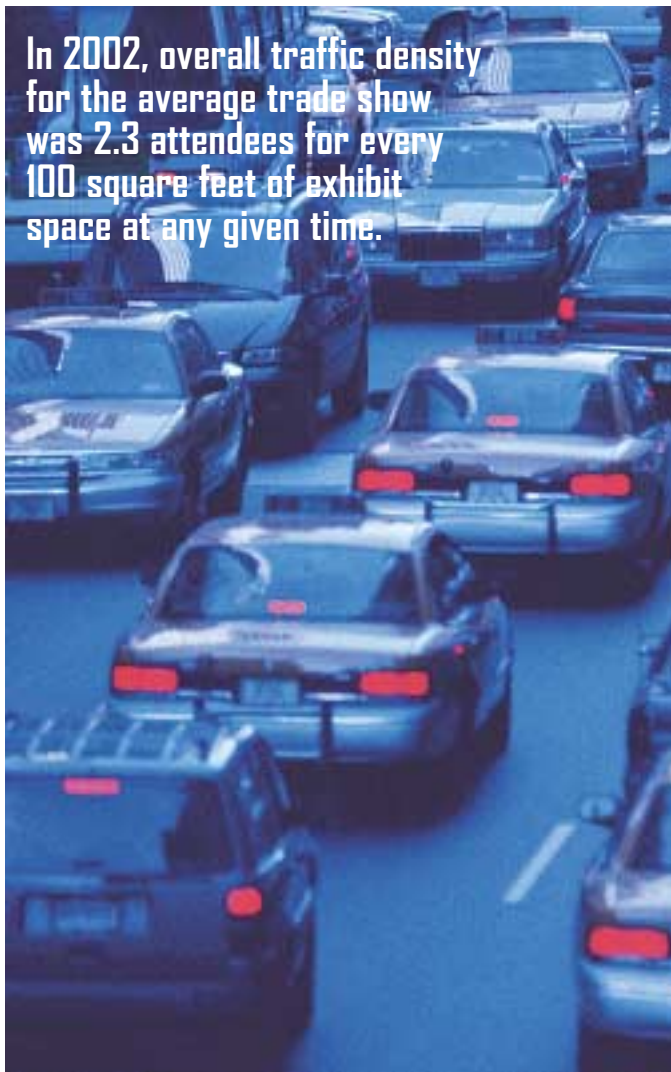
A solid way to measure this factor is by looking at **Traffic Density**, which is a measure of the number of attendees occupying every 100 square feet of exhibit space (excluding aisle space), throughout the show's run.

The average 10-by-10-foot booth could expect to have a minimum of two or more visitors in its booth throughout the show. In 2002, overall traffic density for the average trade show was 2.3 attendees for every 100 square feet of exhibit space.

### Traffic Density

HiTech	2.8
Retail	1.6
Medical	2.1
Mfg/Industrial	2.1
All Shows	2.3

In 2002, overall traffic density for the average trade show was 2.3 attendees for every 100 square feet of exhibit space at any given time.



## How many new customers will visit your exhibit?

The **Potential for New Contacts** refers to the percentage of the average exhibit's visitors who have had no contact with that company within the previous 12 months.

### Potential For New Contacts

HiTech	86%
Retail	93%
Medical	88%
Mfg/Industrial	79%
All Shows	87%

# 87%

Nearly nine out of 10 people who walk into your booth represent potential new business.

## Top Ten Trade Shows, 2002

The following top-10 lists were compiled from results of surveys at 47 bellwether trade shows in 2002.

### Shows With the Highest Net Buying Influence

NACS Retailer (National Association of Convenience Stores Annual Meeting)	97%
NAB (National Association of Broadcasters)	95%
Infocomm	95%
Exhibitor Show	93%
Natural Products West	92%
ALA (American Library Association Annual Conf.)	92%

HIMSS (Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society Annual Conf.)	91%
CES (International Consumer Electronics Show)	90%
ACS (American Chemical Society National Meeting)	90%
DAC (Design Automation Conf.)	90%

### Shows With the Highest Total Buying Plans

MacWorld	82%
NACS Retailer (National Association of Convenience Stores Annual Meeting)	80%
HIMSS (Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society Annual Conf.)	77%

NAB (National Association of Broadcasters)	77%
CES (International Consumer Electronics Show)	73%
RSNA (Radiological Society of North America Annual Meeting)	73%
Natural Products West	72%
KBIS (Kitchen and Bath Industry Show + Multihousing World)	70%
IBS (International Builders Show)	70%
Infocomm	70%

### Shows With the Highest Traffic Density

N+I Spring (NetWorld+ Interop Spring)	4.4
Seybold San Francisco	3.8

MacWorld	3.7
Call Center	3.3
AHA (American Heart Association Scientific Sessions)	3.2
IBS (International Builders Show)	3.2
Xplor (Global Electronic Document Systems Conf.)	3.1
CES (International Consumer Electronics Show)	3.1
OTC (Offshore Technology Conf.)	3.0
KBIS (Kitchen and Bath Industry Show)	2.9
NRA (National Restaurant Association Hotel-Motel Show)	2.9

## Performance Benchmarks

**B**y surveying visitors to individual exhibits, the Trade Show Trends Report is able to offer benchmarks for measuring an exhibit's performance against industry norms.

### How good are you at attracting and engaging target customers?

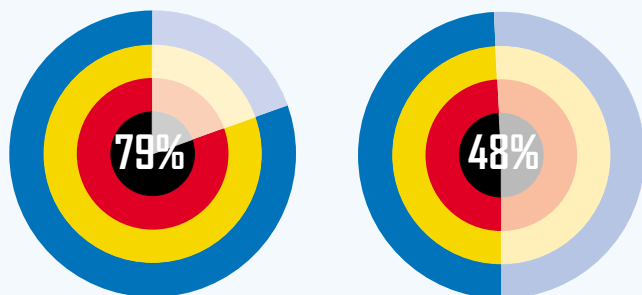


Exhibit Attraction Rate

Exhibit Efficiency Rate

Two measures can help you answer this question:

**Exhibit Attraction:** Represents the percentage of an exhibitor's potential audience\* that visits the booth.

**Exhibit Efficiency:** Represents the percentage of the potential audience\* that actually speaks with a staff member or formally requests information.

\*Note: "Potential audience" includes only attendees who express interest in an exhibitor's type of product and with whom the company has a good chance of making contact.



### Does your exhibit attract the right people?

There are three main measures that help create a view of **Visitor Quality**. These are:

**Buying Influences:**

The percentage of visitors who influence buying decisions for an exhibitor's products or have final purchasing authority.

**Product Interest:**

The percentage of booth visitors indicating an interest in the type of product or service displayed.

**Buying Plans:**

The percentage of visitors planning to buy an exhibitor's type of product within the next 12 months.

**About the Research:** The Trade Show Trends Report is based on results of audience surveys conducted by Exhibit Surveys Inc. of Red Bank, NJ, for 47 trade shows held in 2002. Each survey was administered by mail or the Internet shortly after the show. In most cases, exhibit personnel are excluded from the sample. Surveys typically obtain response rates of 10 to 35 percent. Deana Parker assisted with data collection for this report.

# 79%

In 2002, the average booth earned a Memorability rating of 79 percent.

### Do you make a lasting impression?

To determine this factor, exhibits were given a rating of **Memorability**, the percentage of visitors to specific booths who could remember that exhibit eight to 10 weeks after the show.

### How much are you spending to attract and reach visitors?

Two measures can help you determine the answer:

**Cost Per Attraction:**

An exhibit's total direct cost divided by the number of potential audience\* members who stop, look, or take literature at the booth.

**Cost Per Visitor Reached:**

An exhibit's total direct cost divided by the number of potential audience\* members who actually speak to a staff member.



### How does your staff stack up?

Booth visitors were asked to rate **Personnel Performance** in the exhibits with six levels of helpfulness. Here's how exhibit staff people ranked in 2002:

25%	Excellent
32%	Very Good
26%	Good
11%	Fair
3%	Poor
3%	Unavailable