Redefining Value for Today's **Exhibitors** & **Sponsors**

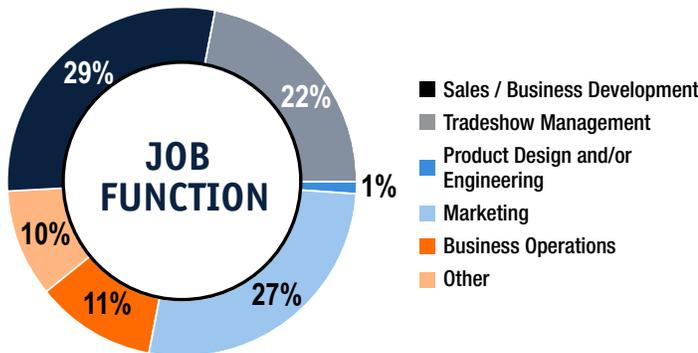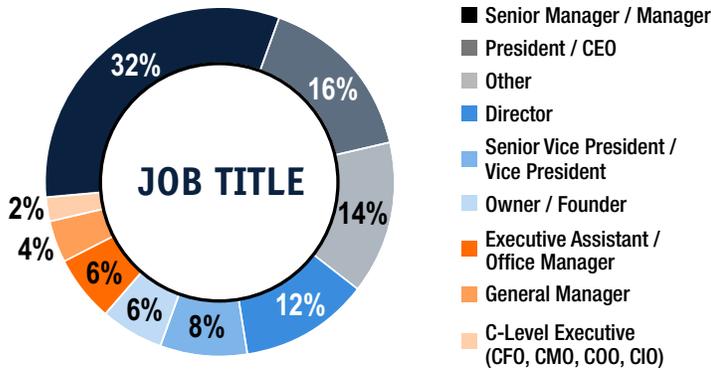June 2020

Tradeshow Logic
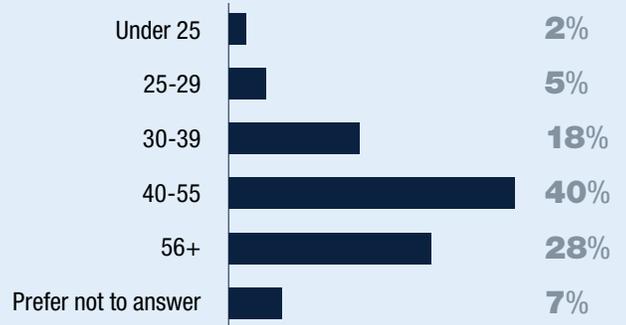smart event solutions

20 YEARS
2000-2020

This survey represents exhibitors' expectations and priorities in this expanding world of digital event technology. It identifies how exhibitors want to connect with customers/prospects, the attributes they deem important in virtual event experiences, and their plans for attending any kind of event in the next 12 months.

Over a 2-week period in May 2020, Tradeshow Logic surveyed 13,435 individuals at companies who exhibit at and sponsor events across diverse industries. The 23-question survey was completed by 345 respondents from 21 shows including heavy participation from medical and manufacturing sectors.
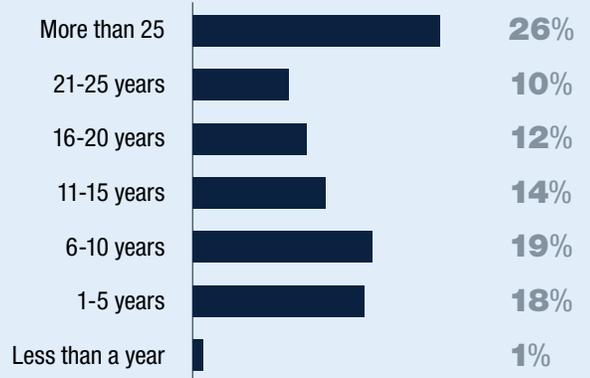
80% of respondents had senior level titles (sr. mgr/mgr or above)

78% of respondents were in relevant job roles in sales, marketing or tradeshow management

89% of respondents had significant or final decision-making authority

JOB TITLE

- Senior Manager / Manager — 32%
- President / CEO — 16%
- Other — 14%
- Director — 12%
- Senior Vice President / Vice President — 8%
- Owner / Founder — 6%
- Executive Assistant / Office Manager — 6%
- General Manager — 4%
- C-Level Executive (CFO, CMO, COO, CIO) — 2%

JOB FUNCTION

- Sales / Business Development — 29%
- Tradeshow Management — 22%
- Product Design and/or Engineering — 1%
- Marketing — 27%
- Business Operations — 11%
- Other — 10%

AGE

Under 25	2%
25-29	5%
30-39	18%
40-55	40%
56+	28%
Prefer not to answer	7%

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

More than 25	26%
21-25 years	10%
16-20 years	12%
11-15 years	14%
6-10 years	19%
1-5 years	18%
Less than a year	1%

INDUSTRY

Healthcare & Medical	32%
Manufacturing	31%
Other*	21%
Education	6%
Information Technology	5%
Pharmaceutical	3%
	2%

*__Other includes:__ agriculture/landscape, business, financial & legal, food & hospitality, law enforcement, natural resources/environmental, safety and transportation.

59%

of respondents are planning to participate in two or fewer virtual conferences or tradeshows in the next 12 months.

77%

of respondents have participated in one or fewer virtual conferences or tradeshows in the past 12 months.

i

Based on this response, it's not a given that your exhibitor / sponsor base will engage in your virtual event. Internal budget restrictions or reduced staffing are indicated barriers. Automatically re-allocating your customers' deposits to your virtual event will alienate a certain segment of your market who are simply unable to participate. The more options you can provide regarding reallocating or refunding exhibitor/sponsor investment will help drive long-term customer loyalty and ensure you have a solution that meets everyone's needs.

Respondents said:

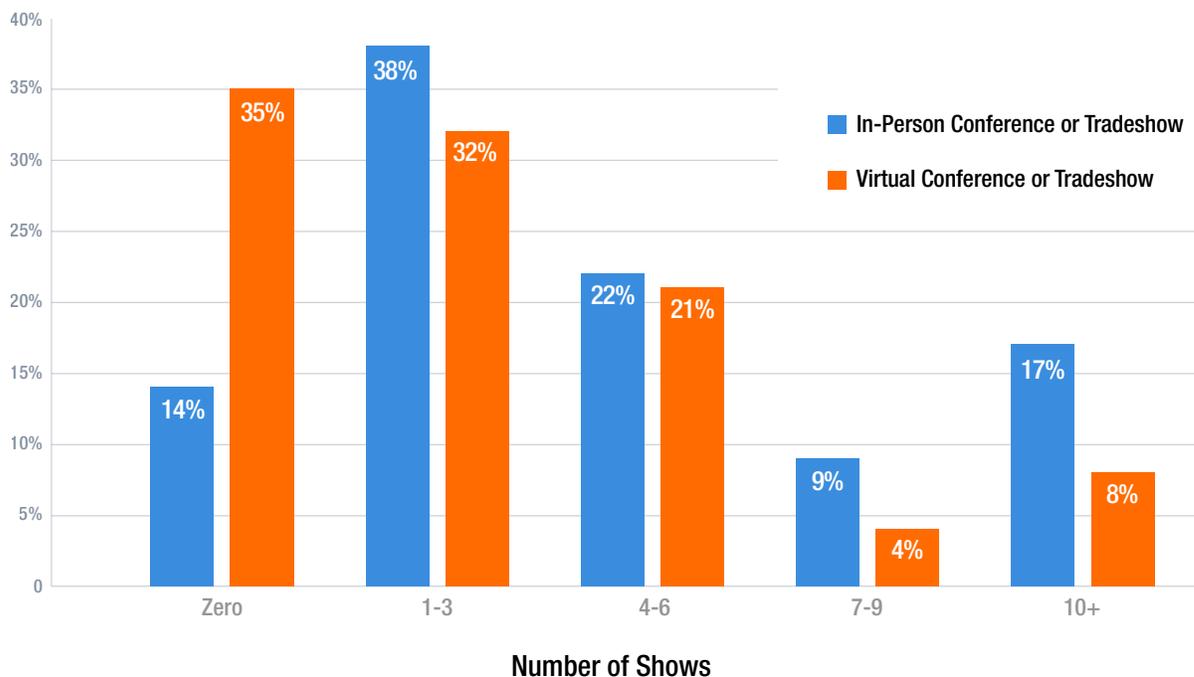*"Will our customers be able to travel per institution guidelines?*

Strategic discussions, marketing plans, advertising, etc. — all of this typically begins months in advance of the conference. It is a difficult decision as to whether we begin investing the resources in planning for an in-person event, knowing the plans may never come to fruition.

Event producers are waiting too long before they announce a cancellation or postponement."

Event Participation Expectations Over the Next 12 Months

Bar chart legend:
- In-Person Conference or Tradeshow
- Virtual Conference or Tradeshow

Number of Shows	In-Person	Virtual
Zero	14%	35%
1-3	38%	32%
4-6	22%	21%
7-9	9%	4%
10+	17%	8%

TL TAKE AWAY Show organizers need to employ the same rigor for developing a virtual event's commercial value propositions as they do for a live event. Develop goals, objectives and a strategic plan before selecting a digital platform. Like venues, not all platforms are created equal and it's important to find one that meets the organization's unique needs.

i Many exhibitors/sponsors are simply not yet convinced that virtual events are a worthy replacement to face-to-face events. Others are concerned about their ability to shift to an online format in a short period of time.

i Lack of experience with virtual shows makes exhibitors and sponsors uncertain about participating. Even though virtual platforms are touted as "turnkey" they still require significant marketing and promotion investment from your exhibitors and sponsors in order to get a worthwhile return.

Respondents asked:

" *Is the spend on virtual worth it?*

Will there be ROI?

How do I navigate through all the noise to be heard?

Will the audience generated by a virtual show match the in-person experience?
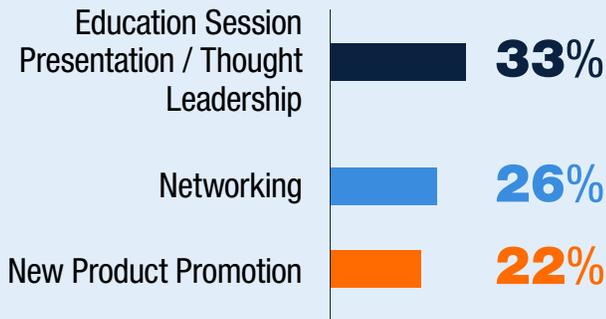
Can an online/virtual experience effectively replace the face-to-face experience?

How do you find value of participation? "

TL TAKE AWAY Even though virtual platforms are touted as "turnkey," they still require significant marketing and promotion investment from your exhibitors and sponsors in order to get a worthwhile return.

Make sure you, your virtual platform provider and/or an external resource are prepared to offer tutorials, webinars and a virtual concierge to assist with the technical aspects of your event.

It will be important to have a vetted list of suppliers who can provide support and execution to help exhibitors/sponsors create multi-faceted sales and marketing strategies to maximize their event ROI.

TL TAKE AWAY Take the lead from companies like Amazon or Netflix and consider the value of predictive intelligence based on recent search or purchase behavior as a way to share new product suggestions with just the right prospects.

Map registration questions to specific product solutions; send a curated list of applicable new products to attendees in an educational session; facilitate a physical delivery of actual product to participants who viewed a product demo. There are simple and powerful ways to connect the data dots.

Most Important Attributes of a Virtual Event Experience

Most important virtual activation/engagement

Education Session Presentation / Thought Leadership — **33**%

Networking — **26**%

New Product Promotion — **22**%

Top three tools most useful for driving traffic

#1 Matchmaking (connecting buyers to sellers)

#2 Education opportunities to share expertise, industry knowledge and thought leadership

#3 Private or group meetings

RESPONDENTS UNDER 25 YEARS OF AGE AND THOSE WORKING LESS THAN 1 YEAR indicated that **product samples, private group meetings** and **roundtable discussions/focus groups** were the most helpful tools to drive traffic.

ALL OTHER AGE GROUPS AND EXPERIENCE LEVELS indicated that either **matchmaking** or **educational opportunities** were the most useful traffic drivers.

Top four tools/technologies most helpful for increasing engagement

#1 Video demonstrations

#2 Video conferencing

#3 Webinars

#4 Video promotion

The most important outcomes

#1 Gain leads

#2 Increase sales

#3 Increase brand awareness

#4 Introduce new products

TL TAKE AWAY

An advantage of a virtual event is that content can be consumed more conveniently over a longer period of time. Don't be constrained by physical dates of an in-person event. Offer engagement over the course of days or weeks.

People consume digital experiences with much shorter attention spans than face-to-face engagement so structure your virtual offering with shorter, more purposeful segments with focused engagements.

It's important that your virtual event allow for as much networking and 'face-to-face' time as possible. Just like a live event, ensure that there are adequate opportunities for attendees to listen to industry education, view product demonstrations or meet in a group or individually with exhibitors and sponsors.

New product promotion and introduction is one of the three most important tools of engagement for exhibitors and sponsors. Comments from respondents made it clear that exhibitors still want to literally see their prospects and engage in conversation. They're concerned about the loss of the physical interaction that allowed customers to see and touch products. Implementing a live demonstration or 3D video component in your virtual event experience is important and will be well received by your exhibitors and sponsors.

TL TAKE AWAY

Seek guidance for building, deploying and attracting the best online engagement experiences that deliver the highest value for exhibitors/sponsors and attendees.

Mine your data and put it to work for you in highly targeted, relevant ways to create meaningful connections that exhibitors can't build with prospects anywhere else.

Approach components of your virtual event with creativity and fun – a virtual fun run, an Instagram contest, a CSR project, or gamification.

Respondents stated:

"I need to interact while demonstrating and showing product. Just running video doesn't work.

It's difficult to introduce our services to attendees. Having Facetime conversations would help them understand how our product can help them.

I'm concerned about the lack of ability for our customers to see our products in person.

We usually draw a crowd of people during our product demos. I'm not sure how that experience will transfer on a screen."

Consistency Across Industries

All industries surveyed indicated the same three most important activation/engagements (education, networking & new product promotion), but in varying orders of importance. Manufacturing ranked networking as most important while Medical ranked education as most important.

Matchmaking ranked #1 or #2 for all industry segments as the most important traffic driver for a virtual event.

All industry segments agreed that gaining leads/lead generation was the #1 outcome of a virtual event.

All industry segments expect to gain fewer leads from a virtual event compared to an in-person event.

Every industry segment agreed that the #1 role of their association partner is to provide leads.

Plans for Execution & Tools for Success

For many exhibitors/sponsors, this will be their first time having to plan a virtual event experience for their organization. The learning curve will be steep and quick, and they won't be employing outside resources or experts to assist their efforts.

25% of the respondents were unsure how they would execute content development, marketing strategies, operations and sales at a virtual event.

Virtual Event

37%
INCREASE

45%
NO CHANGE

In-Person Event

37%
NO CHANGE

DECREASE
57%

Marketing Budgets over the next 12 months

65% of respondents said they would use existing internal resources to execute their content development, marketing strategy, operations and sales for upcoming virtual events.

TL TAKE AWAY

A virtual/digital event should not try to replicate a face-to-face event, but instead act as a new form of engagement that permanently augments the promotion of all future conferences/tradeshows.

A virtual event strategy must be thoughtfully designed to exploit the unique tools offered in a digital environment, and the platform selected must deliver against that specific strategy.

Respondents' concerns:

Finding new ways to engage with new/potential customers.

Learning about technology to use in a virtual conference and the most effective use of contact software to reach our target audience.

Producing video to promote my products/company.

Developing new effective digital tools.

Adapting our strategy.

Understanding the virtual exhibit options.

Finding the right company to help with sales copy and digital messaging.

Lack of internal expertise to produce a virtual presentation and speed at which we can provide options to the team.

Updating digital marketing collateral and digital ad opportunities.

Reallocating marketing budget for exhibit placements, print ads, signage.

Association Relationships

Associations are most helpful for:

#1 | Providing leads

#2 | Finding networking opportunities

#3 | Expanding knowledge on industry topics

#4 | Advocating to government legislators

Exhibitor/sponsor companies continue to rely heavily on their respective associations to foster relationships that grow/sustain their businesses. Associations have an opportunity to strengthen their value by introducing customized online engagement tools to connect attendees and suppliers in more frequent and relevant ways.

In order to secure exhibitor/sponsor investment, you have to clearly articulate how your virtual event will help them gain leads and increase sales – their #1 objective.

74%

of respondents rated association shows as "very important or critical" as they relate to achieving their business goals.

Respondents asked:

How will we connect with the right audience in a virtual event?

How will we get to the right prospects in a sea of online exhibitors?

How do we generate the same leads/engagement that we would have had at an in-person event with a captive audience?

TL TAKE AWAY

Force majeure and insurance are important factors that influence when event cancellations are announced; however, show producers must remember to consider that exhibitors and sponsors require time to pivot and prepare quality sales and marketing initiatives that will deliver a robust and commercially viable virtual experience for your audience.

TL TAKE AWAY

Take the time to enhance the data that you collect from both attendees and exhibitors during registration so that you can facilitate a buyer/ seller connection (matchmaking) or product referral program based on these collective demographics.

A scheduling tool is also critical so people can request, schedule and track one-on-one or group meetings. Your exhibitors/sponsors will rate their success with your event based on their ability to engage with the right audience.

20 YEARS 2000-2020

Tradeshow Logic
smart event solutions

Tradeshow Logic is a full-service show management company dedicated to giving our clients the courage to make bold decisions and drive strategic, sustainable change. We create and implement smart event solutions that drive revenue, reduce cost, and elevate the customer experience.

From beginning to end, we'll help you with:

- Total Event Management
- Customer Insights & Data Analytics
- Event Strategy
- Audience Acquisition & Marketing Strategy

- Exhibit Sales & Sponsorship
- Vendor Strategy
- Event Operations & Logistics
- Attendee & Exhibitor Customer Care

How can we help? Let's get started!

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