



ROO is your friend

Stephan Murtagh, The Exhibition Guy, on the difference between return on investment and return on objective

The whole concept of ROI in exhibitions has been really overplayed. I believe the term is fundamentally flawed because it focuses purely on sales made from shows, when there is so much more to it than that.

Enter stage left: ROO – Return On Objectives!

Yes, I totally agree that monitoring the return on investment from doing an exhibition is difficult, and very often this is one of the reasons why shows are dismissed as a waste of time. I get that, but I also get that there are numerous ways to evaluate its success and not purely on the number of leads you get.

“Exhibitions are the only marketing channel that offer everything at one time in one place”

In reality, it takes some time after the event is over to really make a true and realistic evaluation and just because it's not immediately seen as a success doesn't mean it isn't. I would also say the converse can be true also, where a company gets lots of leads but these don't turn into real business. In this short article I want to highlight a few things that may let you look at exhibitions in a different way and also change the perception of ROI, which will offer you ROO as a better yardstick of success.

Yes I appreciate solid sales are one of the key markers but they are not the only ones, and to dismiss the others is to dismiss future business possibilities. Exhibitions for example are one of the only marketing channels where you can get first-hand marketing research with a quantity of people in one place at one time on why people don't buy your product. This may seem like a strange one but this information arms you with how

you can develop your product to where they will buy it. You simply don't get this from magazines, articles or other forms of promotion.

Back to the main focus of this article. Let's consider ROI: what return are you looking for and what can an exhibition provide? All of these have a value, and while it may not be an immediate value it is most certainly future value. Your business is not solely about today, but rather a pipeline for the future.

So take a fictitious company – furniture manufacturer YSC Ltd – selling a new range of high end domestic units, their ROI could look something like this:

1. ROI – actual sales. Sell 15 units (five per day), ROO – got 15 new clients who will buy again
2. ROI – Post show appointments (three per day per rep. Four reps = 12 appts), ROO – Time saving for reps trying to get appointments on the phone
3. ROI – qualified leads (six per day per rep, three of which end up with business), ROO – quality leads saves time
4. ROI – meeting with current customers (target meeting 10 existing customers for a non sales chat), ROO – increased our company profile and re-assured our current clients
5. ROI – meeting with new customers (target to meet total of 25 new customers), ROO – increased our profile directly
6. ROI – amount of time saving (reps time in office getting the above!), ROO – more time for other projects
7. ROI – meeting new distributors (met three possible distributors. Two no and one very exciting), ROO – built a longer term relationship
8. ROI – hiring new team members (met four people looking for jobs. Three not a fit and one a really

strong fit), ROO – potential saving on recruitment agency fee

9. ROI – conducting marketing research (Got strong feedback that clients wanted a version in blue), ROO – got immediate feedback positive and negative

The real point here is that the ROI of any exhibition can be judged on many other things rather than cold hard sales. There are many facets and advantages to exhibiting over traditional promotions and ROI is not solely about money but also the return you get from having more time. More time to develop other facets and parts of your business.

Exhibitions in reality are the only marketing channel that offer all of these in one time in one place, with buyers who are interested in that market sector. To focus success on ROI just omits all the other objectives and possibilities of what exhibiting can do for your business. So, next time you are looking at ROI, maybe adopt the ROO model and let it expand on what you really can and really have achieved.

ROI is good and has been your friend... but maybe it's time to meet your best mate.

