



How to Cost-Justify Your Exhibiting Investment... Even If You're Not Writing Orders

By *Jefferson Davis, Competitive Edge*

Exhibiting at a trade show requires a significant investment of financial and human capital. Many marketing and exhibit managers are under pressure today to cost-justify the exhibiting investment to senior management, or maybe just to themselves.

If your company exhibits to generate sales, it's fairly easy to cost-justify the investment by dividing the total sales revenue you can trace – at the show and after the show - by the investment in the show.

But how do you cost-justify the investment when you are not exhibiting for direct sales orders? Here are 8 ways:

1. Cost Per Exhibit Interaction: Estimate the total number of people that visit your exhibit and divide by Total Exhibit Investment. Compare your Cost per Exhibit Interaction to the average cost of a face-to-face sales call in the field, which according to CEIR industry research is \$1,113. Then deduct your Cost Per Exhibit Interaction from the average cost of a field sales call to estimate how much money you saved your company for each interaction.
2. Cost Per Customer Meeting: Track the number of **customers** you interact with during the show and divide by Total Exhibit Investment. If possible, determine what it costs your company to generate a customer meeting outside of a trade show.
3. Cost Per Prospect Meeting: Track the number of **prospects** in the sales pipeline your staff meets with during the show and divide by Total Exhibit Investment. If possible, determine what it costs your company to generate a prospect meeting outside of a trade show.
4. Cost Per Demonstration: Track the number of attendees that participate in product demonstrations and divide it by the cost of producing the demonstration. If possible, determine what it costs your company to generate a product demonstration outside of a trade show.
5. Cost Per Lead: Track the total number of leads you captured during the show and divide it by the Total Exhibit Investment. Compare this Cost Per Lead to your other methods of lead generation.
6. Potential Revenue Value of Leads: Estimate the potential revenue value of each lead (or just the higher quality A/B leads) you capture. Add them all together to calculate the

potential revenue your exhibit investment generated. Divide this number by your Total Exhibit Investment to estimate Soft Dollar Return On Investment.

7. Cost Per Attendee with Interest: Determine the total number of attendees at the show, multiply it by the Audience Interest Factor benchmark of 16% to estimate the number of attendees likely to be interested in your product, and then divide that number by your Total Exhibit Investment.
8. Cost Per Social Media Engagement: Track the number of views, likes, comments, and click-throughs on your event related social media channels and activity. Then divide your total cost of the social media marketing campaign by the amount of social media activity.

As you can see from these cost justification metrics, there are many values that a well-executed trade show program delivers for your company. And it does not always have to be direct sales revenue to be able to cost justify the investment!



Jefferson Davis, President of Competitive Edge is North America's leading exhibiting productivity expert. Since 1991, his results-focused, process-based approach to addressing critical exhibiting success factors has helped clients generate over \$800 million in combined exhibiting results. Jefferson provides highly-intensive exhibit consulting and staff training services guaranteed to deliver results. For a no-obligation discovery meeting, [schedule a 30 minute meeting here](#).