

## EYE ON EXHIBITIONS


 exhibition & event  
association of australasia

## Show and tell

Peek into the strategies and budgets of successful marketing people, and you're bound to find one medium figuring in them all: exhibitions. No other medium brings prospects directly to you, nor harnesses all five senses to make your company's people, products and services come alive.

One would expect most companies to measure their exhibition activities closely, but many fail to do so. It is not as easy as counting business cards, and there is no "one size fits all" solution. Here are a few tips for measuring exhibition performance effectively...

**No goals, no glory**

The three most important elements of any measurement system are goals, goals and goals. You need to be clear about what your company wants to accomplish before you can find out if you've succeeded.

**Goals drive action**

For exhibitions, the best goals are quantified. Even when it comes to "fuzzy", qualitative goals, it is usually possible to measure success and build that metric into the goal itself. Instead of stating the goal as "earning media coverage", you might say, "scoring five articles or product reviews in the top three trade titles over the next two months". This makes it far easier to measure performance.

**Be comprehensive**

Exhibitions can help achieve a range of goals. Rather than stopping at a sales-lead target, try to capture all the value possible from your exhibition activities by listing and pursuing as many goals as apply.

**Where to start**

If you've recorded results from past shows, setting goals for an upcoming event will be easier. But if there is no historical data, talk to the show organisers. They will have a good idea about reasonable targets and can provide data to help. In the absence of any input, just wing it – you have to start somewhere. Your first goal-setting exercise might not be accurate, but if you capture your learning, you'll do better every time you exhibit.

Exhibition & Event Association of Australasia. [www.eeaa.com.au](http://www.eeaa.com.au)

# From challenge, opportunity

By Carol Wallace, President and CEO, San Diego Convention Center Corporation

**While it is common wisdom that with challenges come opportunities, too often it is hard to look beyond a short-term crisis to implement a long-term strategic plan, and so the chance to emerge stronger and poised for greater success is lost.**

At both the national level and in San Diego, however, the current economic challenges have been met with a strategic response to bolster long-term strength. There is no doubt the meeting industry in the US, and across the globe, is experiencing a painful downturn. American industry experts predict attendance to drop by at least 10 per cent this year as companies cut budgets for travel and exhibitions.

For corporate events the drop is particularly noticeable, the impact of the economic slump being compounded by a presidential rebuke that sent a wave of meeting cancellations across the country. President Obama was in the iconic destination of Las Vegas when he told companies in February that those receiving federal could not "take a trip to Las Vegas or go down to the Super Bowl on the taxpayers' dime". For the convention destination known for its marketing line "what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas", the message was clear and immediate. Within weeks, four corporate conventions had been canned and the impact began to be felt across the US.

In a matter of days, the meetings industry, along with the US Travel Association, launched a grassroots effort known as Keep America Meeting ([www.keepamericameeting.org](http://www.keepamericameeting.org)) to both counter negative perceptions of the meeting and travel industry and to push a larger legislative initiative. In the US, business meetings and events generate more than \$100 billion in annual spending, supporting more than a million jobs. It was a quick victory – Obama met with industry leaders in March to talk about the value of the meetings industry. The president was urged to support

the Travel Promotions Act that would establish a promotional marketing campaign to draw international visitors to the US.

Twelve per cent of visitors at events in the San Diego Convention Center in 2007 were residents of other countries, and our strong focus on medical meetings consistently draws visitors from Europe, Asia, Canada and Mexico.

California, where the industry is strong, has also felt the impact. A survey of top convention cities there (Anaheim, Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego) revealed dozens of cancellations representing nearly \$100 million in direct spending.

The San Diego Convention Center has fared well with only two corporate cancellations this year, no doubt thanks to our strong focus on association business, which is more resilient. But revenues from food and beverage and ancillary services have come in under budget.

For the corporation that runs the centre, the focus is on future expansion. Just after the 9/11 attacks of 2001, we opened an expansion that doubled the size of the convention centre. But within two years this has already proved inadequate.

Citing the centre's strong performance over the past 20 years, San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders appointed a task force of community leaders in January to explore the market demand and feasibility for a further expansion. With the global economic slowdown reducing labour and construction costs, the expansion work has benefitted, and jobs have been created by the project. There is no doubt the project will help lead San Diego out of these challenging times while positioning it to capture a larger slice of the meetings market when the rebound comes.

• For further information, contact Marianne de Raay ([marianne.de.raay@aipc.org](mailto:marianne.de.raay@aipc.org)) or visit [www.aipc.org](http://www.aipc.org).

## From our files

## Before erection, join the union...

**There is no doubt trade unions have lost their grip on the Australian workplace over the past two decades, but there was a time when their power was both comprehensive and rigorously imposed. As the September 1976 issue of C&I highlighted, even the fledgling C&I industry was not immune...**

"A top Victorian union official has warned exhibition organisations to tread a careful path over the question of using non-union labour when erecting a show," says a report. "Mr Ken Stone, secretary of the Victorian Trade Hall Council, says organisers who ignore union restrictions could be heading for trouble.

"His call comes after trouble at the *Sun News* Pictorial Home Show at the Exhibition Buildings in Melbourne. About 28 officials representing 11 unions

threatened the show with closure if exhibitors did not join a union to cover them during the work of erecting the exhibition.

"The trouble started before the five-day move-in period of the exhibition. Mr Trevor Riddell, managing director of Riddell Exhibitions Promotions, says he received a hand-delivered letter with a form attached stating that the building site was declared a closed workshop."

While he argued against this, he was told that if there were any trouble, the show would not proceed.

In the end it did go ahead, however, but only after all concerned had to pay a quarterly union membership for what amounted to a couple of days' work.