



The Evolved Tradeshow Presentation: Take a New Look - Part I

BY MICHAEL HAMILTON – PRINCIPAL - GETSYNCHRONICITY

Q: Our tradeshow programs need to have a greater impact and cause more disruption on the show floor. What can we do?

A: You may want to consider a tried-and-true strategy that engages, educates, and connects with **LARGE** numbers of attendees; the evolved tradeshow presentation.

You need to understand the market, know how you can differentiate yourself in it, and grasp the price and the functional differentiation competitive points that are going to allow you to be disruptive.

Audrey MacLean

"... increasingly, the mass market is turning into a mass of niches."

Anyone in business today can attest to the truth of this statement. In fact, Chris Anderson, in his book **The Long Tail**, asserts that, "increasingly, the mass market is turning into a mass of niches." This makes disrupting the preconceptions of these "masses of niches" more challenging than ever.

But let's assume that you *do* understand the market, your differentiators, and your price and functional competitive points, and that you've created a disruptive product or service with accompanying disruptive messaging; an enormous challenge remains ... being disruptive on a tradeshow floor.

The tradeshow marketplace is unique; you may have an exciting, new, and truly innovative story to tell, but if you aren't cutting through the clutter and educating the masses with your unique solution story, you're left with little to show for your significant tradeshow investment.

Many exhibitors try to solve this by leveraging "cool" technology in their exhibits, e.g. interactive tablet games, virtual and augmented reality, enormous touchscreen

If the attendee does not have this information, it doesn't matter how disruptive your product or message is ... they'll pass right on by.

walls, etc. These are great tools; I often recommend, design, code, and implement them for our clients.

However, interactive technology has its limitations, and often does not have the reach, nor the level of “disruption,” exhibitors crave.

What can exhibitors do to reach more people and truly “disrupt” current viewpoints and attitudes?

Answer: They can utilize an engagement strategy that has withstood the test of time and, when properly implemented, delivers HUGE results ... the Evolved Tradeshow Presentation.

Part I of this series will outline the strengths of the Evolved Tradeshow Presentation, and the business/communication challenges it can solve.

Part II (out July 27, 2016) will outline the most effective way to mount this presentation strategy, as well as several different styles presentations take to solve specific challenges.

The Anatomy of a Disruptive Presentation. To the attendee, an in-booth presentation is extremely valuable. Why? Because, when an attendee encounters a new (or established) company on the show floor, they want to immediately know:

- Who is this company?
- What do they do?
- What can they do for me?

If the answers to these questions appeal, they'll step in. If not, they'll move on.

One-on-one, or one-to-a-few, interactive media engagements **can** deliver this information, but considering the sizable investment most companies make in their tradeshow programs, the goal of “a few attendees at a time” appears anemic.

An Evolved Tradeshow Presentation strategy, however, can reach hundreds, and often thousands, of attendees over the course of a three- or four-day show, thoroughly “disrupt” their current way of thinking, and position your product or service as the better choice.

Let's get more specific about the types of challenges a tradeshow presentation program can solve.

New Product Launch: When a company launches a new product, there is generally a great deal to talk about; current industry challenges; current solutions available; how they are insufficient; how your NEW product solves these challenges better, faster, cheaper, etc. In short, you need to change their way of thinking.

That's a lot to accomplish in one interactive iPad game.

An in-booth presentation, however, delivers a great deal of valuable messaging. The audience can be invited to participate in the conversation, e.g. audience response systems, simple hand raising, or

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organized talk-back. Presentations also build community, and create an atmosphere of excitement around the new solution.

Complex messaging: In many cases, a company’s solution story can be deeply complex, and we’ve discovered that reps are often not equipped to communicate this complex information quickly and succinctly on a noisy, chaotic show floor. It’s tough enough for experienced business communicators to do this, let alone engineering types.

In fact, product information for one of our client’s solutions was so dense that reps were taking over 20 minutes to explain it to attendees ... and even then, many attendees were still unclear about what the product did, and what value it delivered.

The in-booth education program we created, however, transformed their complex message into a short, clear, and persuasive solution story, and in literally a few minutes, attendees had the “a-ha!” moment our client craved; large groups of people were able to quickly understand not only WHAT the product did, but also its VALUE to them and their current challenges. The best part was that when reps connected with attendees *after* the presentation, their conversations consisted of answering *specific* questions, and not taking 20 minutes to deliver complex messaging one-on-one.

Overwhelmed Staff: Identifying sales-ready leads has always been, and will always be, the #1 challenge for booth staff on a tradeshow floor. Talking with unqualified attendees is a monumental waste of your rep’s time.

An in-booth presentation is an effective way to manage traffic flow and accomplish a great deal of pre-qualification and education BEFORE attendees are guided to connect with sales reps.

And since the presentation helps attendees learn if a company has something to offer them, they will be more amenable to being connected with a rep. This means that reps are no longer *overwhelmed* with scores of raw attendees who need to be brought up to speed on all aspects of the message. Our client’s routinely praise this system, and their reps now look forward to working in the booth (!) because now they spend the majority of their time talking with qualified, educated, and curious attendees, and they don’t have to work the aisles, meeting, greeting, and qualifying random attendees.

Conclusion. The list of specific in-booth presentation benefits is long. However, many of you reading this article may now be thinking that an in-booth presentation *may* help you achieve the “disruptive” goals you’ve set for your next tradeshow.

So what now? Do you erect a flat screen monitor in your booth, set some chairs in front of it, and then point to your most talkative rep and say, “*Susan! You know about our new products. Tell everyone about them!*”

In a word ... no. The title of this article is, “The Evolved Tradeshow Presentation” ... for a reason.

Part II of this series will offer a detailed exploration of how years of experience has defined the essential elements needed to properly create, implement, and support an in-booth presentation strategy ... one that appeals to today's demographics and can succeed in the current tradeshow marketplace.

It will also detail several different styles these presentations that maximize throughput and appeal to specific vertical markets (Pharma, Hi-Tech, Clinical, Industrial, etc.)

In the meantime, take a good look at your goals for your next tradeshow exhibit, and identify the unique challenges you face when trying to find your niche target audience and deliver your disruptive message.

When you do, I think you'll begin to see how an Evolved Tradeshow Presentation can solve them, and make your exhibit the most "disruptive" booth on the show floor.