



10 data-driven plays for exhibition sales

CROWD CONNECTED'S EXPO SALES FRAMEWORK

crowd**connected**

10 Data Driven Plays for Exhibition Sales

REBOOK

PRIORITISE

Time on site is limited. Who is it worth spending more time with? Use maps, lists and charts of exhibitors to show priorities.

PREPARE

Before engaging in any conversations with an exhibitor, rebook personnel should use data for that exhibitor's stand to understand how they've been doing. And refer to specific data during the conversation to authoritatively illustrate points so that the exhibitor fully understands the performance commentary.

COACH

Some stands can benefit from advice during the event to help them get the most out of the show. Provide performance data if they need convincing of where the problem lies.

UPSELL

Use maps, lists or charts to show candidate upsell stands.

Compare data for the current stand to the proposed stand to show it's worth the extra spend.

REBOOK

Use data for the current stand to demonstrate high performance and ROI to overcome objections and close the rebook deal.

RETAIN

Only if rebook isn't possible, consider retaining the exhibitor on a different stand.

NEW BUSINESS

COMPARE

Sales teams need help to promote the stand they need to sell (e.g. available, or in an unpopular corner of the hall), rather than the one the exhibitor wants.

Compare data across the requested and preferred stand to show it's actually as good or even better.

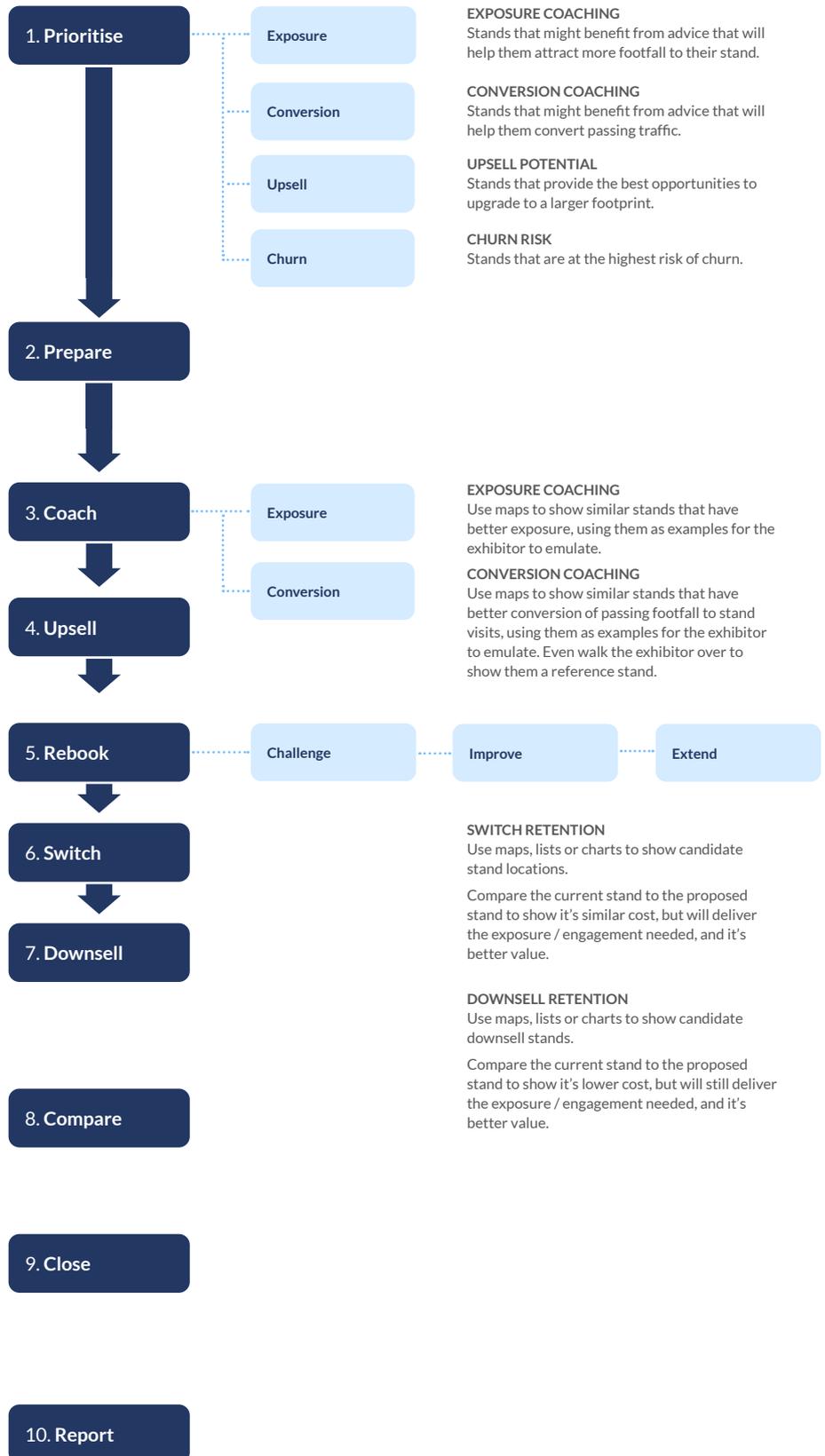
CLOSE

Once a stand location is agreed on, use data for that stand to demonstrate quantified ROI to close the deal.

KEY ACCOUNTS

REPORT

Use every available metric to construct a compelling story for your key accounts.



Introduction

For many businesses, exhibitions are no longer an automatic part of the marketing mix. ROI has to be justified before they'll commit their spend.

Digital marketing provides a great deal of certainty around spend and results. You can know upfront the cost of every impression and click. In contrast exhibitions have historically had little data to inform sales conversations.

But in recent years there has been an increase in the data available. How can it be used to help level the playing field, and demonstrate ROI in the same way as digital channels?

Based on new data sources that are becoming available, here are 10 data-driven plays across the entire exhibition sales cycle.

Data Glossary

Leads data	Data from automated lead capture systems used by exhibitors that is available to the show organisers.
Footfall	A count of the number of people in a particular area.
Exposure	A relative score of the footfall past a particular stand.
Engagement	A relative score of the visitors that spent time engaging with a stand.
Aisle Conversion	The ratio between exposure and footfall. What percentage of passers-by stopped and engaged with the stand?
Exposure to Price Ratio	How much exposure did a stand achieve per unit cost?
Absolute footfall numbers	An estimate of the actual number of visitors that passed by a stand.

1. Prioritise

Some exhibitors are likely to rebook the same stand for next year. They don't need much persuading. And trying to upsell would be a long shot.

Other exhibitors are prime candidates for upsell. Investing more time with them is likely to be time well spent.

And some exhibitors are more likely to churn. Spending time with them is also time well spent. Reducing churn is key to driving revenues.

Rebooking teams face a prioritisation challenge. Where is their time best spent? There are four groups that should be identified early during the show. Exhibitors who have the:

- greatest need of attracting more visitors
- greatest need of improving their aisle conversion
- highest risk of churn
- greatest potential for upsell

All these groups will benefit from early intervention during the show.

DATA SOURCES TO CONSIDER:

- **YEARS AT EVENT:** First time exhibitors will be looking very closely at ROI. Exhibitors in subsequent years are more likely to rebook with less consideration.
- **LEADS:** A good indicator of whether an exhibitor is meeting their goals.
- **ENGAGEMENT:** If you don't have lead data, engagement data is a good alternative.
- **EXPOSURE:** Exhibitors with very low footfall may need help attracting visitors.
- **AISLE CONVERSION:** Can help to identify both the best upsell potential group, and those in need of some sales coaching.

2. Prepare

It's important to start rebook conversations with exhibitors early (on day one) and not leave it until the end of the last day.

When you're about to approach an exhibitor, you want to be prepared—and that means understanding their performance. Are they meeting their goals in terms of generating leads? Is their area of the hall busy or quiet? Are they better or worse than their competitors at converting passing footfall into leads?

You also need to be aware if they're potential candidates for the four interventions described in the prioritisation play.

A quick look at some key metrics can help start these conversations off in the right direction. A combination of lead data and footfall data is required to get a 360 view of the exhibitor's success.

The most fundamental questions to ask are:

ARE THEY GETTING ENOUGH FOOTFALL?

ARE THEY CONVERTING THAT INTO LEADS?

DATA SOURCES TO CONSIDER:

- **EXPOSURE:** The key top of funnel indicator.
- **AISLE CONVERSION:** Are they converting footfall into leads?

3. Coach

Catch exhibitors early who may be going to end the show disappointed. Help them attract visitors to their stand, and better engage with them to drive lead generation.

The starting point is to find out at which stage of the funnel the problem lies. Having done that you can show them areas of the hall, or specific exhibitors, where performance is better. Providing them with examples that they can choose to follow or ignore can be a subtler coaching method than simply telling them where they fall short.

Any exhibitor with poor footfall (measured using exposure metrics) may need the show's help attracting people to their stand.

An exhibitor with good exposure, but poor conversion, may need some tips on how to improve their visitor engagement.

Having identified candidates for coaching, the next step is to identify some better performing exhibitors to use as examples.

For exhibitors struggling to attract sufficient footfall, choose stands of a similar size, in the same zone, that show the best footfall.

For exhibitors struggling to convert their footfall into leads, choose stands of a similar size, in the same zone, that show the best aisle conversion.

DATA SOURCES TO CONSIDER:

- **EXPOSURE** data to find the best performing stands of a similar nature.
- **AISLE CONVERSION** data to find the best performing stands of a similar nature.

4. Upsell

Relocating exhibitors to larger and more expensive stands will increase revenues. But only if those exhibitors are capable of benefiting from the increased opportunity. You can only sell each stand to one exhibitor, and they need to get value from it so they rebook year after year.

There are two requirements for a good upsell candidate. First they need to be happy. Positive bottom-of-funnel lead or engagement data will indicate this. And they need to have some 'spare capacity' to deal with greater footfall. A high aisle conversion score is a good indicator.

Having identified candidates, you need to provide a compelling argument for the upsell.

Any argument that the additional spend is worth it has to focus on the outcome—higher footfall and engagement. So you should be able to demonstrate that any proposed new location has better exposure, engagement or both.

If the data supports it, a really compelling argument is that the cost per visitor will go down.

DATA SOURCES TO CONSIDER:

- **ENGAGEMENT** (current)
- **AISLE CONVERSION** (current)
- **EXPOSURE** (lift from current to proposed)
- **EXPOSURE TO PRICE RATIO** (lift from current to proposed)

5. Rebook

For many shows, more than half of exhibitors will rebook the same stand for next year before the end of the show. That stable core of exhibitors is great for the event. It brings at least some predictability to the floorplan and to revenues.

If upselling isn't the right option, or isn't successful, then rebooking is the goal.

First-time exhibitors are more challenging to rebook than repeat exhibitors. But either way data can help overcome the likely objections.

The most likely objection is lack of leads. Most exhibitors will focus on leads gathered during the show as their key indicator of ROI. So conversations should either focus on challenging a poor view of leads, showing them how lead generation could be improved, or extending the conversation to include other value that the show is providing.

DATA SOURCES TO CONSIDER:

- **LEADS** captured
- **VISITOR NUMBERS** (total at show)
- **ABSOLUTE FOOTFALL** numbers
- **EXPOSURE** data
- **ENGAGEMENT** data
- **AISLE CONVERSION** as a percentage of top performing stands

CHALLENGING

There are always exhibitors who like to moan. “Well there are definitely less people than last year. We haven’t had a single lead yet.” But sometimes the message from the exhibitor may not be completely reflected in the data.

Total visitor numbers might help demonstrate that there isn’t a lack of potential customers at the show. Showing that they score well for exposure can demonstrate that footfall is not the problem. And showing that their engagement scores are high might demonstrate that they are engaging with lots of visitors, even if they’re complaining about a lack of leads.

IMPROVING

If there are improvements that could help increase an exhibitor’s lead generation, better to catch this during the show and give them an opportunity to enhance their performance. But even at the end of the show, pointing out the possible improvement they might see next year could still help with rebooking.

Look at their aisle conversion, and compare this with top performers. If they can lift their conversion to that level, would they meet their ROI goals? If so, the answer is to rebook for next year, and start thinking about how to optimise their stand and staff to get the most value out of the show.

EXTENDING VALUE

Exhibitors will be at the show for a number of reasons. Capturing qualified leads is one. But there is also value in building brand awareness. If it’s the only data available, you can use visitor numbers. But this is a blunt tool, and can backfire. “Well I certainly haven’t seen 20,000 people walk past my stand. Where are they all? Is that number even real?”

Visitor tracking technology can measure stand footfall. Although a smaller number, it’s more realistic, and more likely to be trusted by the exhibitor. And it still quantifies brand exposure that may otherwise be ignored in their ROI evaluation.

6. Switch

If it's just not possible to get an exhibitor to rebook their stand, can the revenue be retained by offering them a stand (at a similar price) that is going to work better for them?

The key is knowing exactly why they haven't been able to meet their ROI goals. And their views on this may not be supported by the data. It's important to gently make sure they have a good understanding of the real reasons that they may not have met their goals.

One tactic is to find an alternative stand that provides a better exposure to price ratio. There may be stands available that are in a lower pricing tier, but sit right at the top of that tier for footfall.

Delivering more footfall for the same money is one of the few plays that could persuade them to stay with the show, and maintain their spend.

DATA SOURCES TO CONSIDER:

- **EXPOSURE** (lift from current to proposed)
- **EXPOSURE TO PRICE RATIO** (lift from current to proposed)

7. Downsell

Moving an exhibitor to a smaller or cheaper stand is not always a bad thing. You can only sell each stand to one exhibitor, and they need to be satisfied with it so they rebook year after year. If an exhibitor isn't able to get value out of a large expensive stand, that doesn't mean they can't achieve good ROI elsewhere on the floor.

Smaller stands and cheaper stands usually have a better exposure to price ratio. Showing this to an unhappy exhibitor could persuade them that a smaller stand reduces their financial exposure and increases the footfall to spend ratio. And of course it keeps them at the show.

“Do you want your customers and competitors to wonder why you're not exhibiting here any more?”

The fear of missing out can be strong.

DATA SOURCES TO CONSIDER:

- **EXPOSURE** (lift from current to proposed)
- **EXPOSURE TO PRICE RATIO** (lift from current to proposed)

8. Compare

Turning now to new business rather than rebooking, some real challenges can be overcome by comparing the data for one stand to another.

Sometimes there are parts of the show floor that are just harder to sell. 80% or 90% of the show is booked. But leads aren't really taken with the block of stands at the back of the hall that are now all you can offer them.

Often the perception that there's a bad neighbourhood is exaggerated. The stands at the back of the hall may get slightly lower footfall than your key accounts. But they're priced lower as a result. The exposure to price ratio may even be better.

These conversations require a comparison between two stands: the one you're offering them and the one they'd prefer. If it's available, data that shows the stand you're offering them is better can be invaluable.

A key metric, if it's available, is the exposure to price ratio. If you can show that for each pound they spend, the

exhibitor can expect more footfall than their preferred stand (or a large key account stand), you're demonstrating value.

Taking the conversation away from absolute cost or size, and towards value is key. You can't sell them the biggest or most expensive stand. So don't try to sell them a stand that's smaller. Instead sell them a stand that's incredible value.

DATA SOURCES TO CONSIDER:

- **EXPOSURE** (lift from current to proposed)
- **ENGAGEMENT** (lift from current to proposed)
- **EXPOSURE TO PRICE RATIO** (lift from current to proposed)

9. Close

Closing new business is always hard. First-time exhibitors face uncertainty. It's impossible for you to guarantee them anything, whether a certain level of attendance or number of leads. In the face of that uncertainty it can be a difficult decision for new exhibitors to commit.

Any arguments that either increase their perception of ROI, or bring greater certainty to it, will help.

The exposure argument can be persuasive. "You're not just buying an uncertain number of leads. You're also putting your brand in front of 20,000 industry decision makers."

As before that exposure can be quantified in terms of the anticipated show attendance. But providing credible data is important, and exhibitors often mistrust the headline visitor numbers they're provided with.

The total number of visitors to a specific zone, or past the stand they're considering, will be smaller. But they may be more meaningful, and more

credible. And therefore in the end may be a more persuasive way of quantifying the value of brand exposure.

Providing some positive metrics from the previous exhibitor on the stand they're considering (or neighbouring stands) can also help bring a little more certainty. "Exhibitors in this area were typically in the top 25% for engagement score." This tells them that companies like them have done well on this stand, and that therefore there's a good chance they will too.

DATA SOURCES TO CONSIDER:

- **EXPOSURE** data
- **ENGAGEMENT** data
- **ABSOLUTE FOOTFALL** numbers

10. Report

Your conversations with key accounts are a little different to rebook or new business conversations. You have more time to craft a message. So any data you have should be considered valuable.

Are they in the top 5 for engagement score across the entire show? Do they show better aisle conversion than all of their direct competitors? Did they get a staggering 90% of the show's visitors circulating near their stand?

- Using data you can demonstrate how well the show performed in providing the right audience. Did you get all of the key decision makers from the industry in the room for them?
- You can demonstrate how well the show and the exhibitor worked together to get those visitors to their stand.
- And finally you can demonstrate how well they performed at converting footfall into engagement, and finally into leads.

You can also make sure your reporting demonstrates not just leads, but also brand exposure. That's a part of ROI that can get ignored by exhibitors, if they focus exclusively on lead capture data.

Good news stories obviously work well when trying to rebook or upsell your key accounts. But beyond just demonstrating great performance (both of the show, and of the exhibitor) you can provide them with data that's incredibly valuable for improving performance next time round.

- Providing charts showing the daily variation in footfall and engagement on their stand can help them schedule staffing.
- Showing them how they compare to competitors for aisle conversion can help them understand whether their stand and staff measure up.

You should consider every piece of data you have at your disposal. There's probably a story that you can tell that will either help evidence the value they achieved, or otherwise help them improve their (already impressive) performance.

The Exhibition Sales Solution

The Exhibition Sales solution from Crowd Connected puts key metrics for every single exhibitor on the show floor into the hands of the entire sales team.

It prioritises conversations, and assists them by providing the right metrics at the right time. It has already helped sales teams achieve double-digit increases in rebook, and retain key accounts.

All of the data needed to power it is gathered using official event apps, and a low-density beacon installation.

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