



The Exhibition World after Corona - the Exhibitor Perspective

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Executive Summary

Numerous surveys are currently being conducted to predict the impacts of the Corona pandemic on the exhibition industry. This is a very important issue, as crises always initiate a reorientation of the economy. However, most of the surveys are performed from the viewpoint of 'experts'; these are most commonly qualified personalities from organizers, associations or comparable institutions. Yet, the customer side, especially the perspective of the exhibitors is missing.

The results presented in this paper are based on 702 fully completed online questionnaires. Single questions were also answered by up to 826 survey participants. In this survey, exhibitors from **54 countries and nine economic areas** were surveyed.

The objective of this study is to make the impacts visible caused by the Corona crisis on the trade fair industry. It is the intention to gradually reduce the uncertainties for those involved. For this purpose, the statements of the exhibitors are used and supplemented by further arguments from external studies and experts. The results are meaningful enough to allow us to derive theses on the further development of the trade fair industry. In addition, the findings can help, in comparison with one's own company data, to review one's own economic status and make appropriate strategic decisions. **The report is supplemented by a comprehensive set of practical recommendations.**

Recovery

A central question is; when will the particular economies recover and return to the pre-Corona level. The majority (50.4%) expect that the turnaround will come after 2023, only 11.5% of the exhibitors believe that the revival will be reached in 2021.

Nonetheless, it must be understood that the recovery process will depend crucially on when the vaccination coverage can be achieved nationally and internationally. On a regional/national basis, this will take at least until approximately the end of 2021 or most likely beyond.

Remaining factors

The Corona crisis has significantly impacted how we go about our business. As such, it is of high interest to get know which factors will remain after the pandemic has come to an end. The outcomes are clear and appropriate:

- Hygiene standards for events: 65 % of the respondents declare that this factor will remain on a permanent basis



- State interventions in case of infections (41.7% remain; 42.6% during a transition period)
- Fear of getting infected (33.1%; 49.0%)
- After all, around a quarter of those surveyed believe that the following measures will remain as a lasting effect: danger of travel restrictions, compulsory wearing of masks, social distancing, tracking and tracing of customer contacts.

As a consequence of these transformations, mass events and among those, trade shows will change their character or – more operationally expressed - will have to consider these kinds of behavior changes when setting up new exhibition formats.

Reorientation of market strategies

'Trade show participation' will remain the most important tool for the exhibitors. Social media marketing will become the second most important tool, followed by the company's sales force. There is no surprise, the **digital revolution** is visible in the ranking of the marketing tools that will be substantially or somewhat increase in the coming years. 'Social media marketing' (78.2%) is by far the most important marketing instrument, which will be intensively applied in the post-Corona period (here: 2021/22). Other digital tools are the following: 'online events' (75.9%), 'web conferencing' (74.7%), 'hybrid events' (64.63%), 'own in-house communication portals' (51.1%) and so-called E-hubs' (44.2%).

As a consequence, **exhibitors take the lead** for the transformation of live-communication from pure face-to-face contacts to digital solutions and digital and/or hybrid events. Organizers will suffer from less exhibitors, less visitors, less space, and less service income. New income and service opportunities have to be found and brought to operations. The business model of the service providers will also need to convert: extended services, new target groups, co-operations with organizers and other service providers.

Organizers and trade show requirements

Exhibitors demand a range of new services from organizers. These e.g., are: guarantee of health standards at trade shows (54.3% of the respondents strongly agree; 29,3% agree somewhat), new services for launching new products (29.0%; 42.5%), suitable and excellent digital concept all year (34.5%; 34.1%). Other requirements are: matchmaking tools, and new opportunities to present products and brands outside the exhibition halls.

Impacts on live-communication strategies

The good news in advance: $\frac{3}{4}$ of the exhibitors assess live-communication as essential and say exhibitions are indispensable. However, 'Business as usual' – in principle, will not endure after the Corona crisis. One of the expected but confirmed links is the fact that 'going digital' also means better IT security and better data protection. More than 80% of the respondents agree to this relation (I strongly agree 40.5%, I agree somewhat 41.3%).

The danger of an instant lockdown during live-events is a real risk. Eight of ten exhibitors assess this as a real threat they have to deal with (43.4%; 36.6%). Other affects that are identified: the design of exhibitor stands will change radically (25.1%; 36.4%). In accordance

with these amendments the space for application and presentation will be replaced by communication space (18.7%; 34.7%).

These outcomes require a fundamental reorientation of the relationship between organizers – service providers – and exhibitors. The new relationship must be questioned and developed further on.

It is a snapshot

The above outlined outcomes are a snapshot. The resulting deductions and recommendations for future measures and concepts are to be further developed in a goal and action-oriented manner, depending on the company's point of view. Contingency plans for the foreseeable future are needed.

The reader is strongly encouraged to do so.

If you intend to buy the full report (@480,00), please feel free to contact
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The solution is always simple, you just have to find it.

(Alexander Solzhenitsyn) - *Why not with us?*

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