

# Why 1% Isn't Nearly Enough!

**AKA "The Exhibitor Education Manifesto"**  
by Marlys Arnold, ImageSpecialist

Taking a stand on exactly what exhibitor education is (and isn't) ... plus why it matters

Presented by [ExhibitMarketersCafe.com](http://ExhibitMarketersCafe.com)



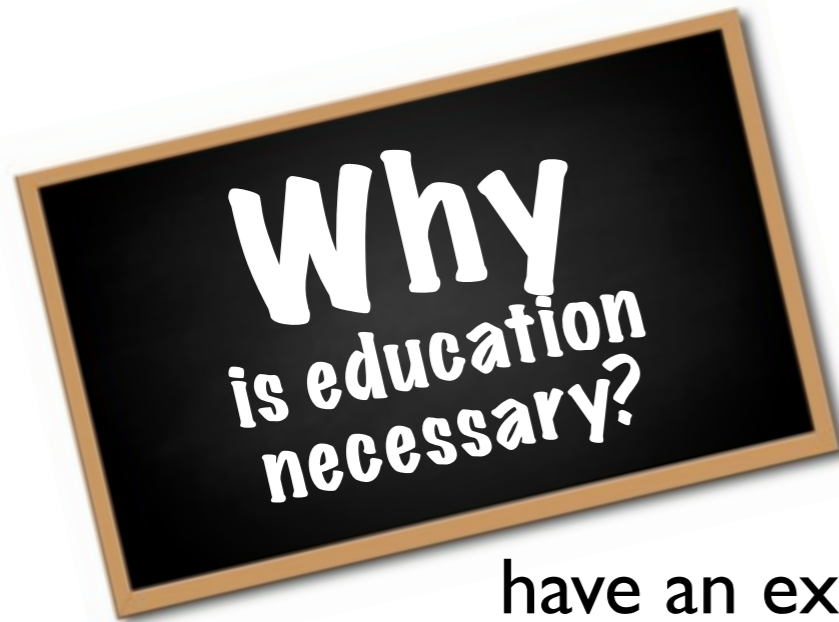
*Manifesto = a declaration of beliefs, motives, and intentions; forward-thinking and inspires readers to change; may be used to launch a revolution*

*Read or listen to the original post that started it all at:*

*<http://www.tradeshowinsights.com/2012/08/the-importance-of-exhibitor-education/>*

The Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR) issued a [report on “How the Exhibit Dollar is Spent”](#) which stated that when the \$24 billion used for U.S. trade show marketing is broken down, staff training comes in dead last at a measly 1%! [Tweet this!](#) When you stop and think about it, the per-person average works out to almost nothing.

So I created a [podcast/blog entry on “The Importance of Exhibitor Education”](#) and it sparked a firestorm of controversy online! Since I’ve spent more than a decade focused on teaching exhibitors how to improve, it seemed a logical next step to create a ‘manifesto’ on exactly what exhibitor education is (and isn’t) plus why it matters.



*“Because sending untrained staff is like handing the car keys to your teenager who’s never had a driving lesson!”*

*Marlys Arnold  
Speaker, Author, Consultant  
[Exhibit Marketers Café](#)*

If companies are willing to spend thousands to have an exhibit, why wouldn't they want their staff to be educated on how to get the best return on that investment? [Tweet this!](#) It's a known fact that better educated exhibitors are more effective and successful. A different CEIR study states that they're 68% more effective,\* in fact. **So why do so few exhibitors invest in this key piece?**

It's likely for one of three reasons:

- They've had a fair amount of success in the past, so feel they don't need any training
- It's not as obvious as buying a display, shipping it to the show, and having carpet in the booth
- They don't know where to go to find the education

\* CEIR *Power of Exhibitions II*



*“Just because a salesperson is great in the field doesn't mean they're good in a trade show environment ... trust me, I've heard from dozens of exhibit managers across the country who are beyond frustrated with the behavior of salespeople in their booth!” ~ Marlys Arnold*

Read or listen to the post, “The Challenge of Using Salespeople as Booth Staff” at: <http://www.tradeshowinsights.com/2012/01/the-challenge-of-using-salespeople-as-booth-staff/>

## Different audiences, different needs:

<b>Entrepreneurs/ Small businesses</b> (exhibit occasionally)	Need a start-to-finish education on how to design for maximum impact, as well as techniques for gathering & managing leads
<b>Corporate exhibit managers</b> (“been there, done that”)	Need fresh perspectives on pre-show promotion, effective booth design, attracting attendees, and streamlining the entire process
<b>Booth staff</b> (including salespeople)	Need to know how to properly engage & qualify attendees, booth etiquette, what makes a lead qualified, how to deal with members of the media, and more

# Who benefits from education?

*“My original comment about turning teens loose [with the keys] without a [single] driving lesson was a comparison to having staffers in the booth who are uneducated on the finer points of how to effectively work a trade show and maximize results. Not sure why this is all causing so much controversy ...” ~ Marlys Arnold*

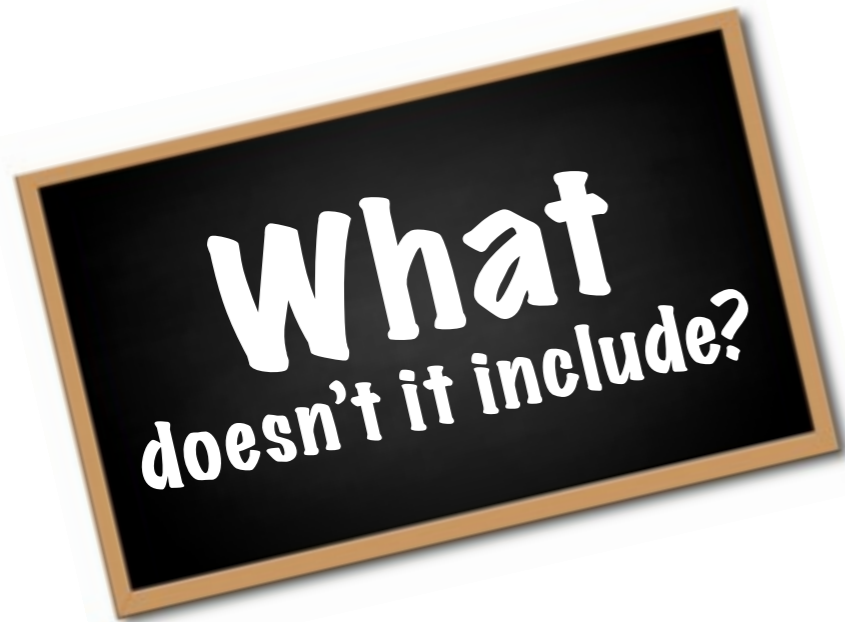
- **Booth staff** does a better job and feels more satisfied
- **Attendees** have a positive experience at the show and feel it was worth their time to attend
- **Exhibit manager** has a happier, more productive team and comes off looking good to superiors
- **Show organizers** have successful exhibitors who happily sign up for next year’s show, often taking a larger space and even becoming a sponsor
- **Industry vendors and show venues** discover that better educated exhibitors see the value in the various services offered to them at shows

# What should be included in the training?

*“It’s often easy to focus exclusively on the display, but that would be a mistake. Successful exhibitors understand that trade show marketing is a specialized form of marketing. Too often, we learn by trial and error in this business, when learning from an expert would save thousands of dollars in expenses, countless hours in time, and hundreds (if not millions) of dollars in lost sales. I can think of no other marketing where the expression, ‘penny wise and pound foolish’ is more appropriate. Work with an exhibit professional ... until you become an exhibit professional.”*

*Mel White  
Vice President of Marketing/Business Development  
[Classic Exhibits](#)*

- Show **goals, strategy & logistics**
- Orientation to **booth features** (various stations/ product demonstrations/in-booth attractions/etc.)
- How to **define & properly qualify a lead**
- **Communication** skills/conversation starters
- **Interacting** with attendee personalities (engage/ qualify/ disengage; handling difficult attendees/ objections)
- Booth staff etiquette/ **behavior**
- **Working together** as a team to achieve goals
- Lead retrieval system/ **lead management**/ follow-up



*“Knowledge is power. In my past experience on the show organizer side, exhibitors who took advantage of industry education became clients more strategically focused on business outcomes rather than pipe & drape color. In my current experience on the supplier side, exhibitors involved in industry education realize the importance of partnering with their organizers for increased positive results and the need to stay relevant and unique in an increasingly competitive environment.”*

*John Mikstay, CEM, CSR-P  
Manager, Events Audit  
[BPA Worldwide](#)*

- It's **not sales training** (your sales team should already be good at their job)
- It's **not product knowledge** (although a quick overview of the products being showcased can't hurt)
- It's **not general company information** and how you compare to the competition (again, your team should already have a clear understanding of this)



*Based on industry surveys, 85% of a visitor's overall first impression is based on the booth staffer, and that staffer also accounts for 80% of their final decision whether or not to do business with that company*

*For exhibitor training programs focused on sales lead generation, 52% report a leads increase in excess of 10% (CEIR report G-103)*

*So why wouldn't you want to send a well-trained staff?*

Many exhibitors have exhibited for 10 or 15 years (sometimes longer) and **never had any type of training** – other than watching other exhibitors, which isn't the right kind! [Tweet this!](#) Even if they believe in the importance of education, **they might not know where to find it**. Let's face it – there's no shortage of information (both online and off) about exhibit marketing, but much of it never goes beyond the surface, and **nearly all of it stops short** of providing the tools needed to take action. But there are places where quality exhibitor education is provided. Read on to learn more ...





*“Exhibit Marketing is not something taught in most college marketing programs today. It is imperative that employees who have been tasked with planning and executing their company’s exhibit acquire education elsewhere in order to avoid the pitfalls and learn the tricks of the trade. Time and money can be saved by taking advantage of the experiences of those who came before you.”*

*Siobhan Connellan  
Sr. Manager, Exhibitor Operations  
[Experient](#)*

## Education comes in many forms & places:

- **Articles** in industry magazines & online (including blogs)
- Industry association **conferences** & local chapter events
- Social network **industry forums**
- **Classes & webinars** hosted by associations, magazines, trade show organizers & professional exhibit trainers
- **Online exhibitor education** communities, such as the [Exhibit Marketers Café](#)

Check out the [Exhibit Marketers Café](#) and request an “Extra Shot of Exhibit Success” with audio tips from experts – free in your inbox!



*“Your exhibit and your staff ARE the face of your company on the show floor. Professional-looking displays and professional-looking staffers present your brand as a professional brand. Never have first impressions been so critical as they are on the show floor. Often times attendees may never even interface with your staff at a show, but they do see your exhibit and staff as they walk by. That impression is as important as the one they get if they shake your hand and have a conversation with you ... sometimes even more important.”*

*Kevin Carty  
Vice President of Sales  
[Classic Exhibits](#)*

## It's an ongoing process:

- In the weeks and months **leading up to the show** (how to attract and engage attendees, what is acceptable behavior in the booth, etc.)
- **During the actual event** (conduct a daily debrief with team to motivate and make midcourse corrections as needed)
- **After the show has ended** (do a post-event recap and evaluation of what worked and what needs to be improved for next time)

# Who is Marlys & why a manifesto?

*“I stand firm in my position that exhibitor education is a critical component of exhibit marketing. While you may have been fortunate to have a great exhibiting team at your company, not every exhibitor is so fortunate. In a perfect trade show world, everyone would be a natural in the booth environment, but that’s often far from reality. That’s why education should be an important part of every exhibit budget ... because an educated exhibitor is always a more successful one.” ~ Marlys Arnold*

As an exhibit marketing strategist, I’ve not only been an exhibitor, but also organizer of several expos and events. This unique perspective of the industry allows me to share insights with both beginning and experienced exhibitors, and I’ve provided exhibitor training for events ranging from local consumer expos to some of the largest trade shows in the U.S. I’m the host of the [Trade Show Insights](#) blog/podcast, author of **Build a Better Trade Show Image** and the **ExhibitorEd Success System**, and founder of the [Exhibit Marketers Café](#).

I’m totally amazed at how my original blog post stirred up such a hornet’s nest online! I expected most people would agree that having an educated staff in the booth was a positive thing. The fact remains that selling on the show floor is very different from any other method and as such it requires a different set of skills and education. Because it’s become such a controversial issue, I decided a manifesto was needed.





*“Now there are even fewer excuses for exhibitors to not be better educated.” ~ Marlys Arnold*

- **Subscribe** to trade show industry publications
- **Follow** the [Trade Show Insights](#) blog/podcast
- **Join** industry associations
- **Participate** in online industry forums
- **Encourage** show organizers to provide classes & webinars led by professional exhibit trainers
- **Join** an online exhibitor education community, such as the [Exhibit Marketers Café](#)
- **Continue** the discussion with Marlys



[@ImageSpecialist](#)




[@ImageSpecialist](#)



[@MarlysArnold](#)



*This work is copyrighted by Marlys Arnold, but licensed under the  [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/). You are granted the right to print this manifesto and to distribute it electronically (via e-mail, your website, or social media), but you may not alter it in any way, and you may not charge for it.*

**Download** via SlideShare or [ExhibitMarketersCafe.com/manifesto](http://ExhibitMarketersCafe.com/manifesto)

**Comment** at [ExhibitMarketersCafe.com/manifesto](http://ExhibitMarketersCafe.com/manifesto)

**Share** via    or your favorite social media tool

Cover image from Digital Juice; chalkboard frame from stock.xchng/jaylopez

Thanks to the industry experts who shared their thoughts on the importance of exhibitor education. Feel free to connect with them via social media or the included links.

**Exhibitors  
+ Education**

---

**Success & ROI**

**Pass it on!**

**Presented by [ExhibitMarketersCafe.com](http://ExhibitMarketersCafe.com)**