

# The Trade Show Dilemma

by Barry Vogel

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I have had the privilege of being a part of the consumer electronics industry for over 40 years at just about every level, from sales, to installations, to management, and more. I have been at the retail level, the sales level, the manufacturer level, and of course on the association level. It has been an interesting and challenging ride. Which brings me to the subject of this editorial;

Trade shows are designed to fulfill many needs on many levels, but at its core they are designed to generate business. The training, the networking, the learning, the teaching, and all the social aspects are fun and exciting and worthwhile. But in the end, it is all meant to generate business.

I can remember a time when going to trade shows was a matter of taking the time, and not about the expense. There was never a question of whether or not they were a good investment. The return always far outweighed the investment. Some show goers are better at "working" the events than others. Some were intent on the after event parties than the actual business at hand. But most would agree that being there and networking with fellow industry participants is important.

While few would argue the importance of in-person one on one networking and collaboration, costs have escalated at a pace that for some does not justify the expense. Trade shows can be expensive! This has resulted in every trade show receiving careful scrutiny. Anyone who exhibits at one or attends one needs to feel assured that they will receive a positive Return on Investment (ROI). What would that look like? What are reasonable expectations from a trade show?

As an exhibitor participating in a trade show, one should expect to raise their profile to a qualified and targeted audience. An exhibitor should expect to spend quality time with perspective and current customers that can result in increased business growth. An exhibitor should be able to utilize a trade show to gather sales and marketing staff for strategic meetings and planning. An exhibitor should use customer training sessions and on sight promotions to attract and engage current and future clients.

Attendees at trade shows should expect to spend quality time with industry members, business relations, and contacts. They should expect an abundance of networking opportunities that can be used for personal as well as business growth. Attendees should expect to obtain training, education and skills enhancement that they can put to work immediately.

Anyone from the exhibitor or attendee camp would agree that the above goals and expectations from a trade show are desirable and that the only other consideration should be cost. Please read on....

**ALMA International** has held an annual **Winter Symposium** for many years. It has gone through some minor tweaks and reformulations along the way, but that changed in 2013. The **ALMA** Board of Directors determined to expand the scope and appeal of the event. Our 2014 Symposia introduced a few minor improvements that were well received. Our 2015 event grew dramatically in both size and scope, and introduced the course that **ALMA** would pursue going forward. Based upon the overwhelming response from exhibitors and attendees; *we are on the right track.*

For 2016, the evolution continues. We have changed the event name to; **ALMA International Symposium & Expo** to better express the scope of the event. We have added more space for break-out sessions and private meetings. More networking availability. More exhibitor time. More ways to connect!

We humbly submit that **ALMA International Symposium & Expo** offers the best trade show value in the loudspeaker and electro-acoustic industry. A bold statement. Our event is more intimate than many. There are fewer people passing by exhibitor booths than at other shows. But unlike other shows, *every* person who passes by a booth is a potential client. Lots of people passing by an exhibitor booth seems impressive, but what is the value if they have no connection to the exhibitor's business? This is a targeted audience. There is time to talk, connect. and do business without the draw and distractions of some other venues. No exhibitor gets lost in the mix. Every exhibitor has an equal opportunity to stand out. Our new ROI package allows a broad spectrum of opportunities to accomplish *more* at our event. *The lowest cost per square foot of any trade show in the electronics industry (by far!)* that we know of. And the value proposition extends to attendees as well.

Please take a look at the *2016 Prospectus*. Pay particular attention to the new *ROI+ package*. We certainly hope that you will choose to exhibit at **ALMA International Symposium & Expo**. We also hope that you consider turning your exhibitor commitment into a *company event* by taking advantage of the ROI package.

**ALMA International** will make history again in 2016. Join us!