Myths Versus Reality in Selecting a Lead Retrieval Provider
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For a show organizer, it's the details that make the difference in achieving a smooth-running event. While many of these details vary depending on the nature of the show, a common concern—one that can make or break an event—is exhibitor leads. Choosing the right lead retrieval provider can make all the difference in a show's success. In the midst of all the responsibilities an organizer must attend to, finding the right way to offer top-quality lead retrieval systems can be the most challenging and frustrating. There are many vendors in the business who will offer this service, but only if it's tied to registration or other related services. But what if you don't want or need all these peripheral services?

Now there is hope for trade show organizers looking for lead retrieval only. It's appropriately called: Lead Retrieval Only.

The ideal customers for Lead Retrieval Only (LRO) tend to be associations that organize their own shows and manage their own registration processes using their proprietary software or industry standard software such as TIMSS or IMIS. They may have everything in place—except the one thing today's exhibitors are *demanding*.

Exhibitors have come to expect lead retrieval to be an integral part of the show. To add value to the exhibitor experience, the best LRO vendors offer supplemental services such as web-based options that provide attendees a list of booths they visited.

A significant benefit to offering lead retrieval is that it facilitates the connection between buyer and seller, resulting in a more productive show. This will please exhibitors and attendees alike.

In many cases, to offer the service, the association simply needs to furnish a place for the provider's staff to work in the exhibit hall. Top-quality LRO vendors will handle the rest. And, in most cases it ends up virtually free to most show organizers!

After many years as a key player in the lead retrieval game, I believe that some of the most important qualities a show organizer must look for in a LRO provider are size, service level, reputation, and equipment standards. Among these standards are the use of USB ports and the option of paper printer solutions and/or computer-based lists. Not having USB ports on hardware results in long waits for exhibitors at the end of an event. Also, LRO services should always be computer-based to allow for follow-up such as sending out post-event letters or e-mails to attendees. Capabilities like this have become a new industry standard that helps move attendees closer to an actual purchase – the desired outcome for any exhibiting company, and one that will keep exhibitors coming back year after year.

A good LRO provider is a partner in your show's success. By choosing a competent provider, you can circumnavigate many potential downfalls or problems that typically arise. For example, a good provider can offer valuable assistance in creating a barcoded badge. Also, if organizers don't want to pay for software to create barcodes on badges or don't know how, the best providers are those who offer free software and instruction. With a good provider, applying barcodes is easy and fast and will keep the registration process running quickly and efficiently.

Ancillary services such as an online list-rental program signal that your provider is going the extra mile for your show. My company has found that this type of service can also help promote the show on all levels.

Even if you're specifically in the market for LRO, beware of the companies that don't offer optional registration service. That can be a sign that they are small and may not have enough of their own equipment or experience to deliver top quality service.

A select few higher quality contactors are now providing full LRO services. Full service involves sending technicians on-site to work directly with exhibitors and even adding temp staff for speedy servicing. Having technicians on-site for lead retrieval at shows is a

huge asset for the organizer—a remarkable depth of service not offered by all LRO vendors. It is also important for a provider to have the best equipment—if it is outdated, it often simply doesn't work. The best systems can be set up many different ways, offering an array of solutions to common problems.

One thing that prevents some organizers from offering lead retrieval is the misconception that LRO is expensive. This is not true. The average price per lead retrieval unit is about $300 per exhibitor for the entire event. The average number of leads then generated by most exhibitors is about 150 ($2 per lead average). Some show organizers include the lead retrieval unit in a show package. This usually lowers the price per unit due to a guaranteed volume of rentals. It is often included in booth packages as well. More than 60 percent of exhibitors take advantage of these benefits provided by LRO. Everyone wins!

Some show organizers hesitate to use LR providers because they don't want to develop forms and create a lot of paperwork. Good vendors will do that for them. Organizers also may fear that they will need to take phone calls or create materials for service kits. With a provider that has a high quality LRO-type service; this is all done for them too.

Finally, some organizers may be a little "techno-phobic" because they are unaware of how easy and versatile the service actually is. Many have found LRO easy, efficient and beneficial. All that needs to be learned is the ability to produce a barcode, and all you need is some simple abilities and a computer platform to run on. Good vendors can do the rest. Overall, it's a great way help sellers and buyers connect. For those fearful of having just an electronic record, paper printout can still be provided, thus, giving exhibitors that choice (paper may never go away, despite technology).

So, the bottom line for an association or other show organizer is that partnering with a good provider of lead retrieval services should be, overall, a pleasant and profitable experience. By entrusting all responsibilities to a provider partner, an organizer should be able to begin an event with true peace-of-mind. Technology can be somewhat frightening

to someone who is forced to delve into it without any support. But the time has come to banish all doubt that lead retrieval systems can be anything but beneficial.

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