

## WHY PHYSICIANS COME TO YOUR EXHIBIT — A WHITE PAPER

By: Marc Goldberg, CME, E. Jane Lorimer, CME and Mim Goldberg, CME

Introducing original research from Marketech, Inc.

Marketech, a 20 year old company that offers exhibitor staff training and performance measurement, interviewed over 2300 US physicians and healthcare professionals at 26 healthcare events across all disciplines over the last three years. Intercept interviews and visual audits for specific clients were conducted at both Pharma and medical device meetings, such as: ACCN, AAO, DDW, and ASCO. The results of these studies form the basis for this paper.

Recent surveys cite industry association and trade meetings being among the three top physician information sources for product information, and about 80% of physicians interviewed planned to attend at least one medical meeting a year.

Other research tells us that over half of attendees at medical meetings plan to buy one or more products exhibited within 12 months of the show, and that 78% of visitors to medical events typically have purchasing power to recommend or make final decisions.

[Sources: Accenture Health & Life Sciences, meetingsnet.com, Exhibit Surveys]

According to Medical Meetings Annual Survey of Physicians, many pharmaceutical reps feel

fortunate when they get 90 seconds of a physician's time during office calls, with the average visit being five minutes or less. Their survey also noted a developing trend within the past year that sales reps are being denied access to some physicians' offices.

Studies by Exhibit Surveys, a tradeshow research group, indicate that attendees at medical conferences will, on average, spend seven (7) hours on the show floor. The industry norm is that they will typically visit between 21 and 35 exhibits during this time. The data suggests that a visiting physician could spend from 12 to 20 minutes per exhibit at any given conference.

It is clear to see from this research that exhibits at medical conventions afford more quality time with physicians and health professionals than do many of the rep calls at the field level. Moreover, Exhibit Surveys also found that over 80% of the health professionals who attended shows reported they had not had a sales call within the previous 12 months. This becomes a tremendous advantage or benefit to exhibiting companies and the sales reps in terms of gaining

opportunities for face-to-face communication with physicians.

These statistics, in and of themselves, will support exhibiting as a wise marketing choice within the medical industry and so the challenge at medical meetings and conferences then becomes to selectively attract the right audience to your exhibit. That then raises a central question regarding your exhibiting success: "Why do physicians come to your booth?" To answer this question, let's first look at why physicians go to medical meetings.

### Why Physicians Go to Medical Meetings

Tradeshow Week 2004 Executive Outlook reported that the number one reason physicians attend medical events, in general, is for the conference program or educational opportunities. The top five reasons cited were:

1. 92% - Conference program/ educational opportunities
2. 67% - City location
3. 42% - Featured conference speakers
4. 33% - Exhibits
5. 33% - Networking opportunities

## Why Physicians Stop at Specific Exhibits at Medical Meetings

Taking a deeper approach, Marketech, surveyed over 2300 U.S. medical show attendees at 26 healthcare conventions about why they visited specific exhibits at medical meetings.

The top five reasons physicians stop at specific booths were: (Fig 1)

1. 27% - To get specific product education or information
2. 19% - To see or speak to a sales rep
3. 17% - To pick up a giveaway item or get food/beverage
4. 9% - Just happened by and something got their attention
5. 6% - Booth activity (panel, speaker or demo)

importance of relationships in the buying continuum.

Getting a giveaway item five years ago was at the top of the list of reasons why visitors stopped. This reason is now in third place. The data suggests that the attraction of giveaways is still important in the minds of the attendees, but is no longer the overriding reason that visitors stop.

We feel this is due, in part, to the stricter PhARMA Code regulations which have changed the former practice of handing out significant or expensive giveaway items to one of handing out "reminder" items of low intrinsic value such as candy, pens, note pads, or giving away items with more value that relate to patient education such as CD-ROMs

The fourth reason for stopping at a specific exhibit is "happenstance." Happenstance occurs in every aspect of our lives and it is true for exhibit marketing as well. Something about the exhibit such as the graphics, signage, or activity appealed to a visitor that caused him/her to stop and have a meaningful interchange, and that constitutes "happenstance." For example, it might be the location of the exhibit that creates "happenstance" as an attraction.

When evaluating attraction to an exhibit, an exhibiting company's position in the hall is an important consideration because if it is easy to access and in a path of least resistance, visitors will stop to see what is NEW.

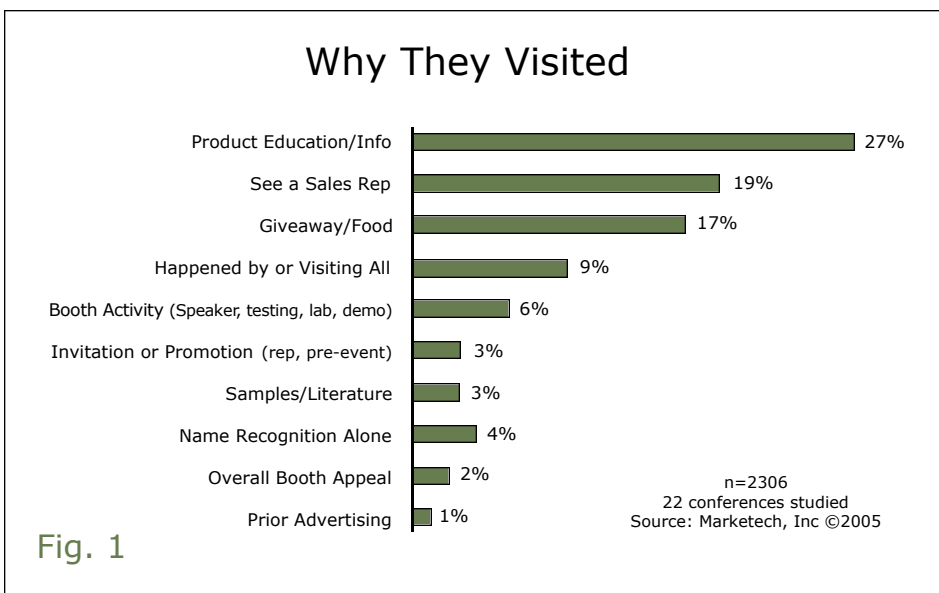


Fig. 1

It's important to note that happenstance may also indicate a lack of communication with physicians in advance of the meeting such as invitations to drop by from their sales reps, hotel room drops or other forms of pre and at-event messaging. Other research we have done indicates that personal rep invitations are one of the most effective communications for attendees and that pre-show mailings are the one of the least effective methods of getting on the medical professional's agenda at medical conferences.

Physicians and other medical professionals cited product education as the number one reason to visit a specific exhibitor.

The second most often cited reason for visiting a specific exhibit was to see a rep, which ties back to getting product information and relates back to the fact that office visits often lack the time needed for more thorough information exchanges. Our findings also point to the

containing product information, slide kits, and laser emblazed pens that physicians use everyday in their practice.

For greatest effectiveness, the giveaway should be one that is either integrated into the booth theme, has perceived value for the patients or is given as a post event deferred "thank you" to reward as well as reinforce attendee memorability of their experience.

In the past, when most exhibit professionals were asked what they thought made their exhibit memorable the answer was – the giveaways. Marketech's research found that visitors remembered staff Interaction as first and product information discussion as the second most memorable part of their experience at the exhibit. This research also supports the hypothesis that physicians come armed with specific questions about products and that they

want to talk with experts – "experts" being your staff. (Fig 2)

The third most memorable element of an exhibit, according to the physicians interviewed, related to activities within the booth.

Healthcare professionals like hands-on activities, presentations by knowledge leaders and product demos where they can learn and takeaway new information or applications. They also like interesting exhibits that feature a variety of learning and messaging approaches. Healthcare attendees (like most all industry show attendees) are comprised of those who learn by hearing, seeing, and/or doing.

As related, industry research has indicated that the primary reason attendees visit meetings as well as specific exhibitors is to get education through the CME program or on the floor communicating with staff in the exhibit. Interestingly, Marketech's research found that slightly over half (51%) of the healthcare professionals interviewed said they had learned nothing new during exhibit visits. (Fig 3) Does this mean, as exhibitors, we have failed?

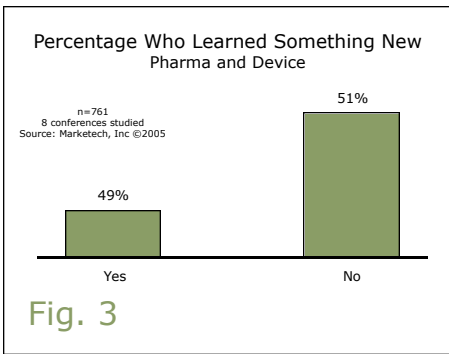


Fig. 3

Conclusion - Yes and no. In some cases, there simply were no new products or product applications, and in some cases the respondents reported their reps or the manufacturer had kept them informed during the year through regular contact.

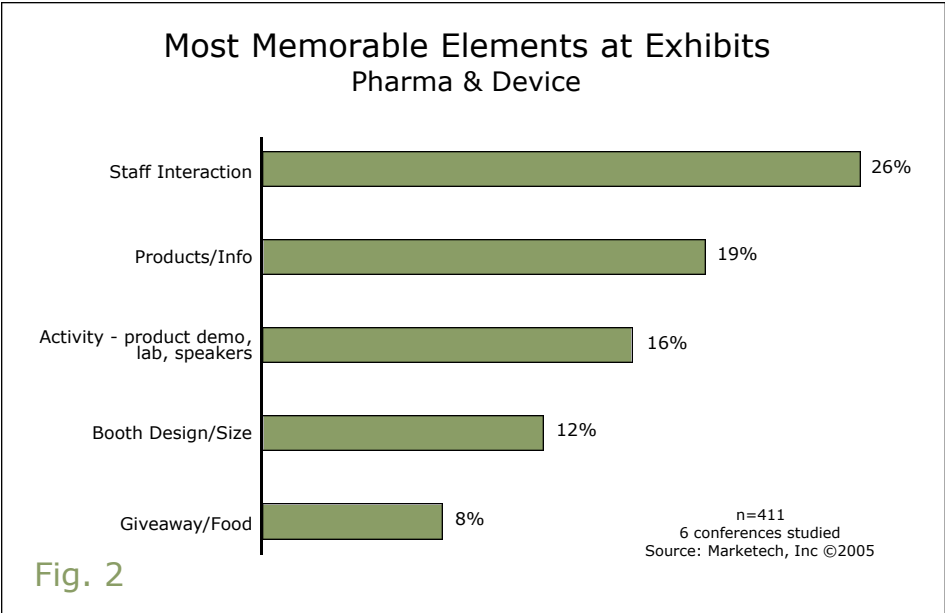


Fig. 2

The way visitors remember products and services is to create an experience. It might be through an exhibit activity or it might be the pure relevance of information that is being transmitted. It can be new information or it can be 'old' information presented in a new way. The overriding objective is to create an event experience that is remembered when it is time to buy, use, recommend or prescribe.

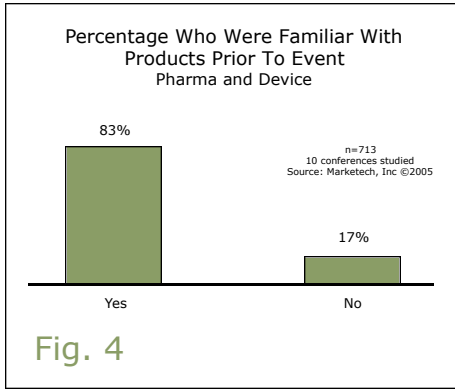


Fig. 4

Eighty-three percent (83%) or eight of every ten visitors interviewed (Fig 4) were already familiar with the exhibit company's products, yet only 4% (Fig 1) said name recognition alone was the reason for stopping at the exhibit. Our findings indicate that although most physicians were already familiar with the manufacturers' names, they more often identified with

actual product names rather than with the manufacturers' names.

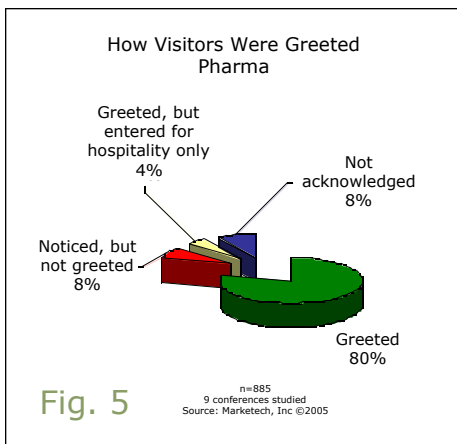
The bigger question to be raised is if more than 80% of visitors to your booth are already familiar with the products and/or pharmaceuticals, then why exhibit?

To answer this, let's consider the remaining 17% who were not familiar with the products prior to visiting. Even if only a portion of these were in a high decile target group, the exhibiting company still benefits. Additionally, some of the ones who were already familiar with the products also learned something new, which reinforces positive exposure to the brands.

New learning can come through a variety of ways such as hands-on demonstrations, communication of a new use for the product, information to increase skill level, a new procedure, or interactive games that present key messages while challenging the physicians' knowledge.

### The Importance of Booth Staff

We asked a simple question of healthcare attendees to specific booths. How were you greeted when you arrived at the booth?



They were given a choice of three answers. Of the 885 physicians interviewed, we found that 80% indicated they were greeted, while 8% were either noticed and not acknowledged or were not acknowledged at all. (Fig 5) Our data also correlates with a study by Exhibitor Magazine that found about 70% of professional healthcare attendees rated exhibit staff performance as either excellent or very good. (Exhibitor Magazine’s study ratings were based on how well staff interacted and how well informed they were.)

It is a common axiom in exhibiting that 85% of a company’s success is due to the quality of staff interaction with the audience. In other research where we conducted customer journeys (a tracking process of observing how visitors migrated and interacted within the exhibit), we found that physicians would "journey" first to receive product education –i.e. product information, get answers to their questions or to build upon their knowledge of a particular brand. To do this, they communicated with a rep. Not necessarily their rep, but a company rep. These findings definitely reinforce the need for having a well-trained, technically qualified staff in the booth to better meet attendee needs.

As noted earlier, if 82% of attendees who visit an exhibit at a healthcare event have not had a face-to-face contact with a sales

rep of the company in the past 12 months, this booth visit might, in fact, be the only person-to-person interaction the exhibitor will have at all with these its booth visitors.

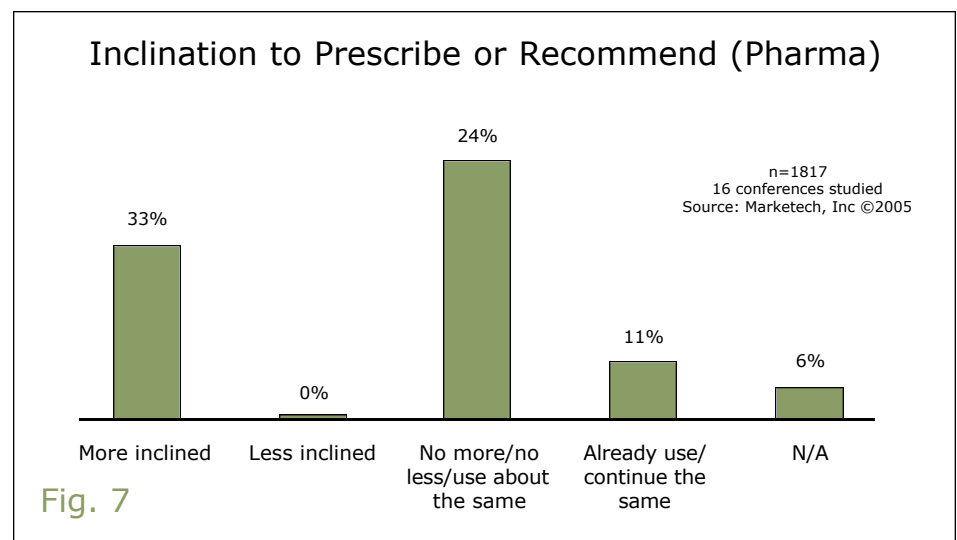
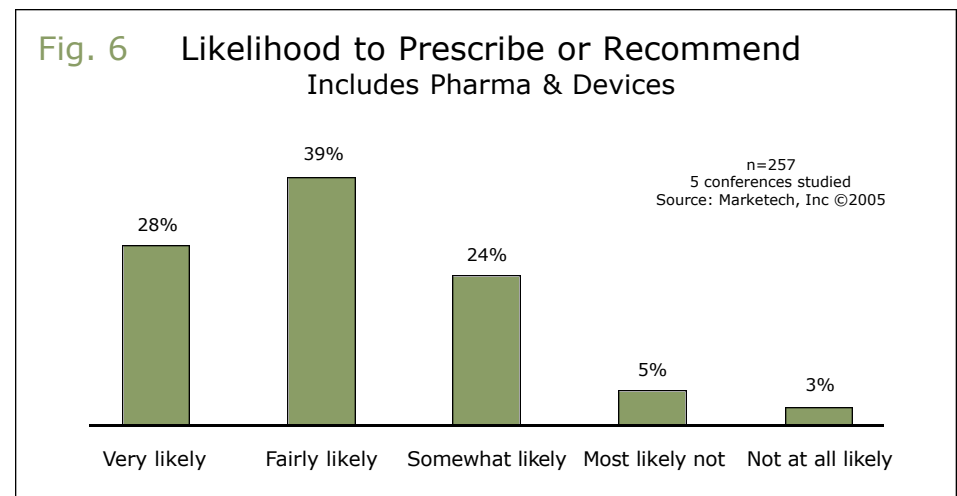
Relative to greeting all visitors, some just "want to look or browse" and they should be left to do so; however, their presence should be acknowledged and they should know that you are available and interested should they have questions. Visitors who are ignored often perceive that the exhibiting company has no interest in them as current or potential customers and many times will leave the exhibit experience with a negative perception of the company.

### Impact on Prescribing or Recommending

The bottom line for most company marketing efforts is, in fact, the

top line – and that is gross SALES. Marketech’s research found as a result of visiting an exhibit that seven out of every ten (67%) physicians indicated they will be either very likely or fairly likely to prescribe or recommend the exhibitors’ pharmaceuticals or medical devices. (Fig 6) The important finding is that nearly a third (29%) of booth visitors to specific exhibits said they were more likely to add to the exhibitor’s top line by prescribing more. When respondents said "not at all likely" it was typically because the drug was not yet available in their area or they did not have authority to prescribe or recommend.

In other Marketech studies where we phrased the question differently, we also found that a third (33%) of the healthcare



professionals who visited a specific client exhibit indicated they were more inclined to prescribe or recommend the exhibiting company's products as a result of having visited their exhibit during the conference, and none ("zero percent") indicated they were less inclined to prescribe or recommend. (Fig 7)

Both sets of data clearly indicate that exhibits at healthcare conventions positively impacted the recommending/buying/prescribing behavior of at least a third of the attendees who visited specific exhibits.

## Conclusions and Learning Elements

A brand is the sum of all the associations a prospective customer has about a product or company. For medical exhibits, the key to being distinctive and memorable is education, education, education. It is important to present the information in a variety of learning formats (seeing, hearing, interacting, and take-away) that appeal to physicians and healthcare professionals. Physicians like hands-on exchanges with knowledgeable professionals. They like meaningful giveaways and interactive displays. They want credible information that increases their fair and balanced knowledge about the products and services. They want information that will allow them to help their patients.

## Learning Elements

- Assure that the product information is readily apparent and available via graphics, demos or hands-on activities, knowledgeable staff.
- Use the convention venue to promote an outstanding roster of in-booth speakers at a speaker theater or demo lab to attract a solid audience. It addresses the attendees' desire for continuing education as well as to see, hear and learn from and be in the presence of industry knowledge leaders.
- Select giveaway items that physicians will find of value and that communicate a reminder message about your product. Giveaways within the OIG guidelines that create a link in their minds about you and are ones that serve as a reward or motivating element for spending time in your exhibit.
- Encourage sales reps to personally invite their physicians to the specific meeting of interest to stop at the booth, learn what is new, or hear KOL's (key opinion leaders) on topics of interest.
- Give care to staffing selection rather than simply choosing your staff because they are based in cities close to the meeting city. Ask yourself "Do

these successful field sales reps possess the right skills needed in this unique selling environment? Are they well versed with our products? Are they comfortable talking with strangers?" Most importantly, ensure that they understand the value of longer face-to-face communication on the floor and the resulting impact on prescribing or buying attitudes in the next twelve (12) months. In short, bring the best.

- Transform "known information" into something new. For example – a new indication for the product or services offered. For medical devices and medical procedures, create a hands-on experience that will increase the attendee's skill level thus giving them greater confidence to try or an easier way to use the product. Remember, the more interaction and hands-on activity, the greater the memorability.

Your exhibit staff has the opportunity to spend quality detailing time with these visitors as well as expand what you want them to understand better about your products. These knowledge exchanges positively impact prescribing, buying and recommendation rates. It's a win-win situation.

### ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Marketech's research is a cumulative result of surveys conducted at 26 U.S. healthcare conventions held between 2003 and 2005. The surveys were conducted with professional attendees as they exited exhibits of eight (8) different healthcare companies exhibiting at the 26 healthcare conventions. Exhibiting companies included pharmaceutical and device companies. Marketech's research also includes findings from repeated qualitative studies such as visual audits and customer journeys performed for some of these same companies.

Additionally, this white paper weaves in other industry research that further supports the value of healthcare professional attendees who visit exhibits connected to medical conferences.

### ABOUT MARKETECH

Marketech, Inc. was founded in 1985 to specialize in staff training, strategic exhibit market planning, measurement and consulting. The staff comes from multi disciplined backgrounds. All of our programs are marketing oriented, because exhibiting is a marketing communications tool utilized to achieve higher organizational objectives. Our main office is in Westboro, MA and we have associates in San Antonio, TX and Denver, CO.

For more information call us at 508.836.2633 in Westboro or 303.388.9224 in Denver.  
Website [www.stafftraining.com](http://www.stafftraining.com)  
Email: [marketech@stafftraining.com](mailto:marketech@stafftraining.com).