

## Competitive Analysis Form

Create your own custom competitive-analysis form by selecting from the following questions, provided by Bob Francisco, president of Admore Exhibits in Worcester, MA, and E. Jane Lorimer, managing director of Lorimer Consulting Group in Denver. Choose the pre-, at-, and post-show questions that best match your intelligence-gathering goals, and add any industry-specific questions that will help you obtain the information you need to evaluate and improve your program.

For each question, identify what competitors are doing and whether it is effective; then analyze how your booth compares to the competition in terms of this specific element.

### BEFORE THE SHOW

For the answers to these questions, talk to show management or check competitors' Web sites or product literature. Also inquire with non-competing exhibitors, trusted clients, and your exhibit house and other industry suppliers who might be handling competitors' exhibits as well as your own.

Which key competitors are exhibiting, how big are their spaces, and where are they located?

Are there any new companies with competing products at the show?

Is there any pre-show hype about a new booth, big drawing, product launch, etc.?

What kind of pre-show marketing are competitors doing?

Which companies placed ads in major trade publications?

Have any of your competitors recently received media attention?

### AT THE SHOW

Examine the entire conference for signs of sponsorships, ask management about ancillary events, and visit competing exhibitors' booths to answer these questions — always considering the effectiveness of each element and how your program stacks up to the competition.

#### Exhibit and Graphics

Where is the booth located — at the front, on a main aisle, or buried at the back of the hall?

What's your first impression of the booth? Can you tell what company the booth belongs to and what the company is selling?

What is the booth saying about the brand? Is it lively, trusted, conventional, cutting edge, etc.?

What is the exhibit theme, and is it appropriate? Does it carry through all elements of the campaign, from mailers to graphics to giveaways?

What is the age and condition of the exhibit property?

Does the exhibit design complement the company and its message?

What are one or two words that best describe the exhibit design?

What is the overall layout of the booth — open, closed, peninsula, inline, island, etc.?

Where are attendees clustered in the space, and what are they doing?

Where are graphics located — overhead, on exhibit walls, as stationary kiosks, on banner stands?

What images, text, and messages do the graphics offer?

What main elements does the exhibit design contain, such as a double deck, hospitality area, theater, reception desk, conference rooms, etc.?

### Products

Which products are highlighted in the exhibit?

Are there new products or new product bundles?

How are the products displayed and presented?

What are the product messages being communicated?

What mediums are being used to send the product messages?

Are there any direct or indirect comparisons to your products or those of your competitors?

Are any special pricing options available to attendees?

Is product pricing on target or out of line?

*Note: According to Security Exchange Commission (SEC) regulations, employees of competing, publicly-traded companies cannot discuss pricing with fellow competitors.*

### Staffers

What are the demographics of the staff in terms of executives, booth babes, crowd gatherers, salespeople, engineers, etc.?

Do staffers greet attendees when they enter the booth, or do attendees approach a central reception desk of some sort?

What kind of opening questions do staffers use?

How long does each initial staffer/attendee conversation last and what happens as a result?

How are staffers collecting leads?

What lead-qualification process, if any, is being used?

What kind of promises, if any, do staffers make to departing attendees?

### Presentations

What kind of product demos, if any, are offered in booth?

Are there any live presentations aside from product demos?

What kind of multimedia presentations, if any, are offered?

Do the presentations clarify or augment a specific message, or are they gratuitous?

Are presentations offered continually, throughout the show, on a timed schedule, or at attendees' request?

Are one-on-one presentations offered? If so, what type of presentation medium is used, and how often are they offered?

What messages are offered in the presentations, and do they include messages about your company and its products?

Who is offering the presentations — hired talent, executives, product specialists, engineers?

How long is each presentation, and is the audience engaged throughout it?

Are the presentations interactive?

Are attendees seated or standing for the presentations?

Where are presentations offered in relationship to products and the rest of the exhibit?

Are the presentations well attended?

### Promotions/Literature

What kind of giveaways are being used, and are they appropriate?

How are giveaways being distributed, and to whom?

Are there traffic-building activities such as games or entertainment?

Are staffers distributing literature? If so, is the literature well done, and what messages does it relay?

Are staffers distributing any non-paper forms of information, such as CDs, DVDs, or memory sticks? If so, which format do attendees prefer?

Is there a live Internet connection in the booth? If so, how are staffers or attendees using it?

### Attendees' Perspective

From which direction do attendees approach the exhibit, and where do they enter it?

What do attendees look at when they approach the space? What draws them in?

Which part of the exhibit do they migrate to first?

Do attendees bring direct mailers with them to the booth?

Are attendees eager or reluctant to provide their contact information to booth staffers?

What is the overall mood of attendees? Are they excited, subdued, serious, inquisitive, puzzled?

How much time do attendees spend engaged with a staffer or a presentation in the booth?

Do attendees have prescheduled meetings with booth staff?

What kinds of questions are attendees asking staffers?

Are any of your customers in competitors' booths? If so, what are they looking at and talking about?

How much time do attendees spend in the exhibit?

What do they take with them when they leave the space?

Where do attendees go next?

### Media

Are competitors holding press conferences? If so, are they being held in the booth, in the convention center, and/or off site?

Are competitors using VIP- or guerrilla-marketing techniques targeting the press?

Do competitors have press kits in the press room, and if so, what information is provided?

Which companies have placed ads in the show daily?

How are reporters greeted in the booth? Do they meet with staffers or executives, and do they take anything away with them?

### Other Activities

Which companies host hospitality events? Are they well attended?

Are companies recruiting at the show? If so, for what positions?

Are competing executives speaking at the show? If so, are their sessions well attended?

What types of sponsorships are competitors using, how many people are they reaching, and how much do they cost?

### Overall

What can you remember about the exhibit and its messages one hour after you leave the booth?

Is the booth well attended?

What are the company's main strengths and weaknesses?

What size exhibit space is being used by your competitor, and how much does it cost?

How much does the exhibit cost?

Are there any competitors at the show that aren't exhibiting? If so, what are they doing instead?

How does your overall presence at the show compare to your competitor's presence?

If an attendee directly compared your program to theirs, whose would come out on top?

### **AFTER THE SHOW**

The marketing war never ends, which means competitive-intelligence gathering must continue even after the show is over. Visit competitors' Web sites and talk with your customers, random attendees from the show's registration list, suppliers, and show management to get the answers to these post-show questions.

What kind of follow-up do leads receive, such as a thank-you e-mail, literature package, etc.?

What kind of post-show follow-up appears on the company Web site?

Have competitors signed up for the same booth space next year? If not, where is their new location, or are they still exhibiting?

Have competitors issued press releases regarding their success at the show?

Have competitors generated media mentions as a result of the show?