

## **THE ROLE AND VALUE OF FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTION**

This study takes a look specifically at the purchase process and customer relationships. It provides valuable insight into the role face-to-face activity plays during the purchasing process.

Approximately two thirds (63%-70%) of attendees place a high level of importance on face-to-face interaction during the pre-purchasing stages of the continuum.

There is a continuing need for face-to-face interaction in the later stages of implementing the purchase and maintaining the ongoing relationship with their vendor. It is interesting to note that while face-to-face interaction overall is of high importance, upon consummation of the purchase, attendees felt interaction was not as critical, but still necessary. It is reasonable to conclude that the reason for the slight drop in face-to-face interaction importance upon consummation is the overall strength of the relationship between the attendee and the exhibitor throughout the purchasing process.

Overall, face-to-face interaction is of high importance to over 60% of attendees along most of the purchasing and customer relationship stages of the continuum.

For attendees, face-to-face interaction at exhibitions is particularly important at the early stages of the purchasing process. Eighty-six percent use face-to-face at exhibitions to become aware of new products, evaluate vendors for future purchase and/or narrow their choices to preferred vendors.

Almost a third of attendees find exhibitions extremely or very important in making their final purchase decisions. Previous research on the Total Buying Plans found that 53% of attendees are planning to buy one or more products or services as a result of what they saw at an exhibition. These two points further prove that exhibitions are of a high importance during the purchase process.

### **Preferred Method of Obtaining/Providing Information**

The most preferred method of information delivery by both attendees and exhibiting companies is one-on-one interaction with exhibit staff, either in direct conversations or in demonstrations.

### **Conclusions**

This study confirms that exhibitions are an excellent way to better your ROI via face-to-face contact with business partners. Returning to a "back to basics" system of quality interaction can create a unique buying/selling environment for those involved. It is the responsibility of show management to ensure that the opportunities sought by attendees and exhibiting companies are unique in nature while efficient. Never underestimate the power of excellent conversation.

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