



## Growth of International Trade Show Activity Outside the USA

A survey conducted by UFI (Global Association of the Exposition Industry, [www.ufi.org](http://www.ufi.org)) stated that each of the seven world regions projected positive growth for meetings and trade shows in 2015-17. Each world region also expressed their greatest concerns to be the continued strength of their local economies and their uncertainty about the global economy. All in all, world companies believe in the value and investment of trade show marketing for the near future.

*In 2012, I conducted an international survey with exhibit supplier companies from 27 countries. Each of these world companies were members of IFES (International Federation of Exposition Services). The survey results were then presented at the annual EDPA ACCESS Meeting. The question that was asked of the owners of global exhibit suppliers...*

***What percentage of your trade show business is done for customers outside of your country of origin?***

*Not a scientific survey, but accurate enough for general purposes. Note that Canada was considered a part of North America, and Mexico was shifted to Latin America. Europe is a rounded figure since many suppliers regularly did exhibit projects outside of their country for shows in other European countries. Most of Africa activity was South Africa. Egypt was shifted to Middle East.*

### ***The response from seven World Regions:***

Europe- 27%

Asia- 23%

Middle East- 67%

Africa- 15%

Australia- 42%

Latin America- 27%

North America- 5% .... *(Why so small a percentage for USA?)*

In 2012 the US marketplace was just now beginning to take more seriously the idea of designing and managing exhibits for shows outside of North America. Note that a small percentage of the larger US exhibit supplier companies ( and OSPI Partners in the US) were already assisting their customers abroad. They did so because their customer requested that they do so, and to help consolidate their marketing efforts for better control of their brand across the globe. What took so long for the US suppliers to go global?

The answer was simple-With so much local trade show activity to keep a US exhibit supplier busy, why consider to do work internationally and take a greater risks and less profit? Especially if your clients were not asking you to do so, but now are! Kind of a dumb attitude, but was true. Fat cats who never run out of food never get hungry. Few US exhibit supplier companies were aggressive about international business before 2004. Those that did embrace international business are now leading the pack. Today, in North America, most all exhibit supplier companies are jumping on the band wagon for international business opportunities. Exhibit supplier companies who can efficiently support their customers with exhibit services around the globe, with trusted partners, are in high demand.

Over the past 10 years, there has been a fast moving trend toward *international* trade shows for exhibiting companies, as well as for exhibit suppliers, in the **USA**. This trend is the result of a recent American willingness to seriously consider new sales through the international marketplace. This new US exhibit supplier trend, to now service exhibitors outside of their country of origin, may seem a bit odd to exhibit suppliers from Europe and Asia, since they have been embracing international marketings as a common business practice long before the USA who have recently opened up their eyes to uncover added business opportunities beyond their borders. Many US companies have been marketing abroad for years, but have been doing so through their international branch offices, and not through their local exhibit suppliers. Much of this eye opening experience, for US exhibit suppliers, was a result of their corporate customers requesting that they do so. The suppliers became experts in a hurry.

For many US corporate headquarters, their US marketing departments now wanted to control their brand and their international trade show tactics from country to country. Exhibiting companies then began to lean more on their US exhibit partners to help them to do so. In 2005, many of the larger US exhibit supplier companies quickly scrambled to establish global partnerships with trusted international partners to serve their customers abroad. Many simply selected a single partner for Europe and one for Asia. These partnerships then grew to begin the trend of sharing project opportunities with each other. Most all exhibit companies in the US now state they service clients internationally.

*Travis Stanton, Editor of Exhibitor Magazine*, has been tracking international trends in the exhibit industry. In the *March 2017* issue, his surveys reported that **72% of US exhibitors exhibit internationally**. Note that this does not mean that their local exhibit supplier companies are assisting them for each event. He also reported in a 2017 Economic Outlook Survey, that in 2016 the

***average number of trade shows attended by US companies-***

Regional- 22.0 — 51%

National- 14.3 — 37%

International -6.4 — 12%

These are nor scientific studies, but I believe we can safely say that US company participation at international trade shows are on the increase. I also believe that more US exhibit suppliers are now managing the full exhibit programs for their clients both national and international.

So if exhibit suppliers in the US were only doing 5% of the their clients work outside the USA in 2012, they are now doing 12% in 2017. A big increase, but still far short of the international events managed by non US exhibit suppliers for their customers within the six other regions of the world.

Trade show marketing venues in Europe and Asia continue to grow strong, but in spite of our political distractions here in the US, the power of trade show events in North America continue to flourish. Why do you suppose that EDPA is the only exhibit supplier association with more international supplier members than any other country? The answer.. the consistent value and power of the US marketplace. Let's hope it stays that way. In spite of this, other world venue locations will share the stage to host some of the major world trade show events now held in the USA.

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