

Improving Customer Service to Exhibitors with a2z Tools

THE CHALLENGE

As a large international professional organization dedicated to improving the educational success of individuals with disabilities and/or gifts and talents, the annual convention was of huge importance, and growing in size fairly quickly. The convention and expo showcases student assessment, behavior management and curriculum delivery products as well as recruiting school systems. This event draws more than 7,000 attendees and 200 exhibiting companies.

Just three years ago, the exhibit sales and management staff labored under paper-based processes for taking booth reservations, collecting exhibitor descriptions for the convention program, checking off product categories represented, and registering booth personnel. Documents were received from exhibitors by mail, fax and email, and the information was manually entered into the iMIS system.

“It was time-consuming, and there was room for errors,” said the Advertising, Exhibits and Sales Manager. “We wanted to give the exhibitors ownership of their information and free our time to focus on selling space.”

THE SOLUTION

The a2z solution proved to be the most flexible option of those evaluated. The affordable software provided a suite of website, expo and conference management tools, including exhibitor tools that would save time and improve customer service. The organization chose to implement a2zShowEZ.

The exhibitor prospectus featured an announcement about a2z software and pointed exhibitors to a FAQ on the show website where they could learn how to use the tools. “For some exhibitors, this was their first experience with web-based technology,” the client said. “But most exhibitors were pretty savvy. They exhibit at other shows, and they were familiar with similar products.”

a2zShowEZ enabled exhibitors to reserve booth space online, enter their own company descriptions and contact information for inclusion in the directory, check off the product categories they wished to be listed under, and submit the names and contact information for booth personnel who would need badges. Exhibitors who called in for help with these processes were directed to the show website, where they could do it themselves.

In the first year, about 70% of exhibitors used the a2z tools. By the next show cycle, and with a high retention rate, exhibitors were already familiar with the tools, and remember how to use them. The exhibitors used the tools with no trouble and understood it better after having seen what it could do in the real world. 85% of exhibitors used the a2z tools in the second year.

THE RESULTS

Using the a2z tools streamlined the exhibit management process for both exhibitors and the organization. The self-service website saved exhibitors from having to call show management to make changes or correct errors in their information. And it saved show management time managing these administrative tasks so the staff could focus on customer service and sales.

If there was any doubt, the organization got proof that the tools improved customer service and satisfaction in the post-show exhibitor survey. Based on that survey, a2z was voted the #1 vendor. The exhibitor survey revealed:

- 78% rated a2z's overall usefulness as excellent or very good, up from 47%
- 67% rated a2z's ease of use as excellent or very good, up from 44%
- 69% thought the booth reservation process was excellent or very good, up from 46%
- 70-80% thought tools were excellent or very good for managing descriptions, product categories and booth personnel, up from 40-50%

This client attributes the dramatic year-on-year increase in satisfaction to the exhibitors' improved familiarity with using these self-service tools. But the organization also notes that the 2010 event brought in 1,500 more attendees than anticipated. This made the exhibitors very happy.

NEXT STEPS

For the 2011 show cycle, the organization has upgraded to a2zShow to take advantage of such advanced features as the featured product categories, where exhibitors can showcase individual products for an additional fee. Exhibitors also will be able to use ChirpEvite to access their social media contacts and invite them to the show.

ABOUT a2z, Inc.

a2z, Inc. offers powerful Web-based software tools to help increase and accelerate booth sales. Clients also realize improved productivity in back office processes; increased connectivity with their membership, CRM and financial databases; and an improved web presence for their attendees and exhibitors.

Interested in learning how you can get similar improvements? Call us at 410-740-9200 or email us at sales@a2zinc.net today for more information.