

Aligning Your Exhibit Attraction Strategies with PhRMA Code Revisions

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When PhRMA code revisions went into effect on January 1, 2009 most healthcare exhibitors lost the ability to use traditional branded giveaways like mugs, pens, calendars, clocks, calculators and water bottles to lure doctors to their exhibit. Initially, the reaction from exhibitors was negative. But it turns out that this revision - which at first appeared to be a handicap – may actually be a blessing in disguise for savvy exhibitors.

A blessing you say? “*With all the continuing educational and poster sessions, doctors don’t spend much time on the exhibit floor as it is, so how are we going to get them to our booth now?*” That’s a good question. But here’s a better question: Why do healthcare professionals go to conventions and meetings? Is it to see how much free stuff they can take home? Is it because they have no place better to be? Absolutely not!

*Healthcare professionals attend expositions to study, learn and evaluate
products, devices, procedures, practices and therapies
to benefit patients and enhance their practice of medicine.*

Please read that again. And notice how it aligns perfectly with what the PhRMA code revision is all about. Also, not one exhibition industry study I’ve ever read found that the primary reason people visit a specific exhibit is because of the giveaway being offered.

Going forward, here are the key questions we need to ask to improve exhibit performance:

- **Who** specifically do we want to see at our exhibit booth? What specialties or sub-specialties?
- **Why** do we want to see them? **What** are we going to teach them, inform them of, educate them on, show them, tell them, demonstrate to them?
- **How** will this benefit their patients and their practice of medicine?
- **What** marketing media can we use to quickly and effectively inform them about what they will learn, gain, know, and avoid by visiting our exhibit?
- Knowing all of this, what would make a **compelling, useful, informative, educational** giveaway?

Thoughtful answers to questions like these, moving away from using non-educational giveaways as a reward for visiting and doing a better job of targeted pre and at-show marketing will help you attract more than enough of the right doctors to your exhibit.

Oh, by the way you can still invest up to \$100 per doctor in creating a useful, informative and educational product to use as a reward for visiting your exhibit. So instead of trinkets, exhibitors are now using things like anatomical wall charts, CDs, DVDs, subscriptions to print and online journals, text books, patient counseling folders and more. And things like these better support the primary reason for attending healthcare exhibitions.