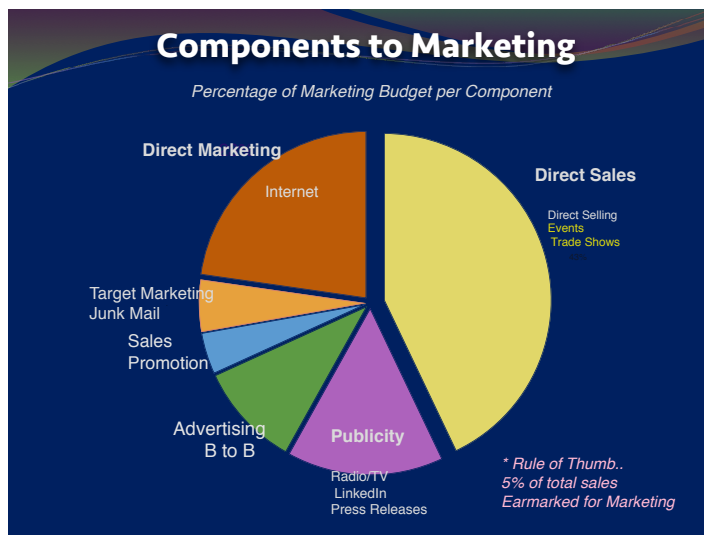


Did you Learn about Trade Show Marketing in College?

.....By Larry Kulchawik

I can't tell you how many times I have cited the CLC (Convention Liaison Council) study conducted by Deloitte&Touche in 1995 which calculated the Convention & Meeting industry to be \$83 billion in size, ranked #22 in contribution to the GDP in the USA, yet few have gone to school for direct training to work in this industry. Most of us in this business have fumbled into it in one way or another, and grew to like it. We then became experts through on the job training and by trial and error. I suspect the industry total now represents over \$100 billion in revenue. Today, there are many more training avenues for trade show marketing available than in the past, but the average university marketing department hardly mentions trade show marketing and its place within the overall marketing mix. I am not saying that we need to establish college degrees in trade show marketing, but we can start by reaching out to our alma maters and favorite university business / marketing departments to share our knowledge and grow awareness about the power of trade show marketing, and its place within the marketing mix.

The old rule of thumb was that 5% of a company's revenue should be earmarked for marketing. This total budget then is divided among the different marketing channels to choose from and create a plan to integrate each of the components to work together to reach your goal. No one component is more important than the other, although some will cost much more to do. Using the budget wisely is the key.



In September of this year, I was introduced to the marketing department at NEIU (Northeastern Illinois University) in Chicago. I made a presentation that focused on how trade show marketing fits in the overall marketing mix. In this case, establishing awareness that trade show/event marketing even existed!

The class I presented to was a marketing class that focused on 'how to write a marketing plan'. The professor then divided the students into

small groups and they were asked to come up with a new product or service, and then prepare a marketing plan to bring it to market. The student groups were then required to present their final plans in the form of a trade show to present and sell their 'companies' and product/services. The students needed to create graphics for their displays and needed to orally present their plan conclusions. On **December 5th**, the classes presented their findings to a group of local marketing experts who served as judges. Each class group presented they're marketing plans and were then judged on the



effectiveness of their conclusions. I found this class to be an excellent way to introduce and experience the power of trade show marketing, and how it integrates within each of the other components in the marketing mix. I sure wish that I would have taken a class like this before I started in the business!

"The benefits realized from this single class offered our students three experiences to take with them to their working careers after college. One-How to write a Marketing Plan, Two-the components of a marketing mix, Three-working as a team and presenting your ideas face to face in a trade show environment," says **Professor Shabnam Zanjani of NEIU**.

"Our NEIU student body is one of the most diverse in the USA. The majority of our business and marketing students live, and will continue to work, in the Chicagoland area. Preparing our students to be of value with business and marketing skills to work at local companies is our goal. With McCormick Place and major corporations in our backyard, we surely want our students to be fully aware of all marketing methods and tactics, including trade show marketing"-says **Michael Bedell, Ph.D.**, Dean of the College of Business and Management at NEIU.

So, my request to all exhibit industry experts in the USA who have discovered a passion for the trade show/event industry, and are still having fun, please reach out to your local universities and share your knowledge about trade show marketing with the college Business and Marketing Departments in your area. Trade show marketing awareness begins with small steps to establish its value within the overall marketing mix.