Are you one of the thousands of marketing professionals whose budgets are being cut? Even if your budget hasn’t changed, you have to be cautious given the economy and a customer base that’s less willing to consume.

The good news is trade shows continue to produce results, even in the current economic downturn. In a new report from CEIR on recessions and their impact on trade shows, findings indicate that even though attendance and exhibit space may decrease, key buyers continue to attend and the percentage of attendees that actually have plans to purchase remains high.

So instead of taking an axe to your trade show schedule, it’s time to whip out the scalpel. Saving costs without sabotaging marketing results means taking a serious look at your trade show budgets line by line. As an example, changing your approach to the printed literature and handouts in your trade show program will not only reduce your costs, but can also result in considerable added value.

When you stop and evaluate the ROI for your current printed materials, you might want to consider these somewhat alarming statistics:

• Research shows that only three in ten trade show attendees feel they need printed material to share with their bosses, colleagues or clients.
• While attendees may pick up trade show literature, according to the Wall Street Journal, 75% of this material is discarded.
• The trade show industry is second only to the construction industry in the amount of waste it generates. The majority of this garbage comes from unused or barely used materials.

* 91% of business decision makers surveyed by CEIR consider trade shows “very useful” sources of purchasing information and 85% of trade show attendees buy one or more of the products exhibited
* 66% of respondents in the 2008 Outsell Advertising and Marketing study rank exhibitions & trade shows as the best tactics for lead generation
* Hearst and GGC 2009 Marketing Trends Survey lists Trade Shows among the top three “best source of leads”
Email, websites and downloadable documents have replaced a lot of what was once printed onto paper making your information more cost effective to distribute and easier to access.

- Digital almost always reduces costs.

In addition to the obvious cost savings – the cost of printing, the shift to digital can result in significant reductions to a number of your tradeshow budget line items: packaging, handling, shipping, drayage, and perhaps even the costs of labor and display units.

- Digital not only eliminates waste but can also increase effectiveness and follow-up.

A switch to digital collateral materials enhances the ability to keep collateral current, makes customization and personalization more cost effective, and gives you the ability to build in tracking and follow-up.

- Digital promotes interactivity and projects a forward thinking corporate image.

Digital and online technologies are changing the nature of communication at face-to-face events and tradeshows by turning what was once a top-down one-time content ‘dump’ into an interactive year-round relationship.

- Digital is more eco-friendly and socially responsible.

Do you know that 25,000 pages of lower-end coated virgin paper = 1 tree, not to mention the environmental impact of printing and transportation and the waste that’s created when a beautiful, full color, multi-page brochure is tossed. According to a survey conducted by Global Strategy Group, nearly nine in ten Americans say the words “conscious consumer” describe them well and that they are more likely to buy from companies that commit to environmentally-friendly practices.

It may be "old school" but everybody keeps business cards. Everybody has a pile, a drawer full or a neatly organized Rolodex of cards often staying there long after the person has left the company or the company has ceased to exist. To reduce your printed material, consider handing out a perforated post card/business card combination. The prospect gets your business card and the postcard can contain a special offer or incentive that sends your customer to your website.
Consider using CDs and DVDs As Trade Show Handouts

Print is easier to throw in the garbage than a disc, but does holding on to a DVD or CD mean your prospect will watch or navigate it?

According to VidPro.org, a study from The Wharton School of Business showed that six times as many people prefer a video to printed information. Other industry studies have shown that video boosts comprehension and retention by 50% over other types of presentations and expedites buying decisions by 72% versus print. VidPro also sites recent case studies that indicate that 97% of videos are watched at some point with as many as 94% of video recipients passing their copy along to another viewer.

One of the biggest pluses with a DVD/CD presentation is that the prospect can “sell themselves” and it is simpler to set up DVD/CDs to link right to your URL making it easy to move your prospect from Interest to Action.

Whether you call them Flash drives, Jump drives, Pocket drives or Memory Sticks – they fit in your pocket, go anywhere and can hold just about anything.

If your program requires extensive information, consider providing content on reusable electronic flash drives as an alternative to printed collateral. Pre-load your Flash drive with video, slide shows or a video brochure complete with music and narration. Pre-loaded custom UBS Flash drives can also be programmed to present customized messages or auto-load your website.
Touch Screens Provide Self-Service Information

*Touch Screens including EBook and iTouch devices can be incorporated into booth designs to deliver content. Just by touching the screen, booth visitors can look up the information they want and send it to an onsite print station, download it to their PDA, or mark it for distribution back to their home office.*

Design Your Information Downloads

*Following on current trends in Outdoor, images, audio video clips, vouchers for special offers or a branded mini web browser can be transmitted to booth visitors who have Bluetooth or Infra-red enabled devices. Posters and displays can be fitted with an infra-red port or Bluetooth “tag” that can beam information directly to mobile handsets.*

New Print Strategies

Limit the amount of printing, shipping and handling in your budget by switching to Push-to-Web Handouts, On-site Print-On-Demand, or post show Fulfillment Strategies.

Regardless of the effectiveness of the design and content of your sales materials, conventional offset printing can only create scores of identical copies.

By using Printing-on-Demand services you not only save money and eliminate waste, you are also able to measurably increase the value of your communications by producing customized/personalized content. Fulfillment services, particularly those with online content delivery systems, provide a scalable system, offer easy access to your collateral inventory, and give you control over access, customization and reporting to track and monitor the effectiveness of your materials.

Print Green

When you do print, don’t forget the importance of using recycled materials and “Green” printing methods. *For example: Just by using paper certified by the Forest Stewardship Council and/or recycled material and soy based inks when printing a typical run of brochures, you can save approximately 13,502 lbs. of wood from trees (that’s 47 trees), 19,026 gallons of water (enough for 1100 eight minute showers), 4073 lbs. of exhaust emissions (equivalent to driving a compact car 5322 miles) and 2174 lbs. of solid waste (75 32-gallon cans of garbage).*
MC² is a national provider of corporate events and meetings including general sessions, special events, break-out sessions, production, meeting logistics and deployment.

We design, construct, install and store exhibits from small strategic booths to comprehensive trade show experiences. Our General Contracting service manages trade show logistics including registration, destination management, facility contracting and show services.

Using current CAD and fabrication equipment, MC² develops, fabricates and delivers permanent environments and displays, corporate presentation facilities, and museum displays.

EVENTS & MEETINGS
* Strategic Creative Development and Design
* Turnkey Production Management
* AV and Staging Services
* Meeting Planning and Implementation
* Destination Management

EXHIBITS
* Award Winning Creative Design
* Multimedia Production and Graphic Design
* Promotional Marketing
* Custom Rental Solutions
* National Logistics Support
* Installation and Dismantling

ENVIRONMENTS
* Professional Fabrication and Installation
* Showrooms, Boardrooms, and Spatial Experiences
* Project Management Support
* Strategic Planning and Design

ENTERTAINMENT
* Headline Music, Comedy and Speakers
* Venue Selection
* Complete Lighting and Audio Production
* Turnkey Productions
* Pre and Post-Event Marketing

ELECTRONIC MEDIA
* Video and Animation
* Flash and Audio Production
* Web-based Communications
* E-vites and Specialized E-mail
* Event-based Data Capture
* On-line Project Management

EXPOSITIONS
* Turn-key logistical support for all show services
* Full scale general contracting and show management services

ADDITIONAL SERVICES
National Custom Rentals
National Storage
National Labor
International Services
Online Project Management
Marketing Consultation
Mobile Marketing
Staff Training

MC² was created in 1999, a union of five leading companies involved in exhibits, events and creative services representing more than 50 years collective experience in the industry. Headquartered at 3 Alpine Court, Chestnut Ridge, NY, MC² has nine operating divisions throughout the United States and alliances throughout the world. MC²’s list of clients representing some of the world’s best brands includes Canon USA, Samsung Electronics, GSA, Owens Corning, Pioneer Electronics, and The Home Depot.

www.mc-2.com • 800-537-8073