

Procurement at K-12 Education Conferences: Effective or Outdated?



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K-12 administrators at the district and building level have the daunting task of procuring the right curriculum that not only reaches student learning objectives, but also fulfills district and school initiatives for academic improvement. The task of researching, vetting, and adopting various types of curriculum can be a complex and lengthy process and requires an abundance of time, effort, and financial obligation--and that is even before the school or district decides to formally move forward with an educational program. For any educational institution, adopting the best curriculum is one of the most important precursors to ensuring the highest-quality teaching and most effective learning.

The outdated instructional procurement process

The current curriculum procurement process is antiquated and inefficient. Educators have demanding jobs focusing their efforts on improving instruction and increasing students' academic success. That said, they are also expected to perform additional tasks of researching curriculum that they just don't have time or budgets for. As long as instructional procurement has been around, it has been a challenge for even the most dedicated educators to research and connect with curriculum providers. When they do discover potential providers, they are met with strong sales pitches and very little opportunity to evaluate instructional resources that are best matched for their students. Even after valuable time is spent on searching, finding, purchasing, and implementing a new curriculum, adoption can take up to two long years to complete.

Traditionally, decision makers have been forced to spend many days at expos and conferences to gain exposure to new and innovative vendors and products. This is both time consuming and costly, requiring travel and related expenses that might otherwise be funneled into direct investments in teaching and learning. On the other side, vendors are required to showcase their products and services to an audience without any awareness of their current curriculum needs, and thus, needing to make their immediate interaction memorable.



The ROI of Exhibiting at a Conference

One main lead generating marketing activity for curriculum providers is to attend an educational conference as an exhibitor. This provides an opportunity to showcase K-12 products and services precisely to a target audience that has direct purchasing power. However, the return on investment for exhibiting can be low if there is little to no strategy for generating leads at conferences and closing sales afterwards. Take a look at what exhibiting at a conference could potentially cost:



Average cost of exhibiting at one conference:

\$14,045



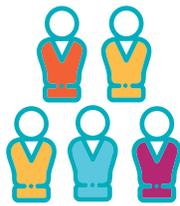
Average cost of exhibiting at four conferences:

\$56,180



Average travel cost for a team of three to attend a conference:

\$4500



Average overall conference attendance:

6029 attendees



Average purchasing decision-makers conference attendance:

1602 attendees



Average total exhibit hall time:

16 hours



Average dedicated exhibit hall time:

3.25 hours



To exhibit or not exhibit

Even if curriculum providers have the marketing dollars to attend and exhibit at a conference, there are other variables to consider. One consideration is to evaluate the economic opportunity of exhibiting at an in-person conference or virtual conference post Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic stalled many in-person events for the majority of 2020 and most likely will continue through mid-2021. This new environment created an opportunity for vendors to participate in virtual events where decision-makers are able to attend a conference at their convenience and “visit” with exhibitors within their busy schedule without having to travel. Looking to the future, virtual conferences will continue to take place as it is a cost-effective method of event marketing and in-person conferences will still be critical for building and maintaining networking relationships. However, educators will be selective on what conferences they will attend in-person.

Another consideration when exhibiting at a conference is marketing sponsorship activities that are built to ensure guaranteed FaceTime with decision-makers. Activities like participating in exhibitor sessions, leasing the attendee contact list, and sponsoring receptions may get you closer to networking with the right people, but providers still need to filter through to those who are serious about procuring instructional resources. Often these activities come at a higher price point than the actual cost of the exhibitor booth.



In addition to needing financial resources to exhibit, providers also need human resources to capitalize on the opportunities created at the conference. This is where the provider’s marketing team or marketer comes in with their communication strategy. It is crucial to have someone focus on moving leads through the sales funnel to get potential customers from interested to buying in a short amount of time. This can be challenging if the provider has a limited marketing team and, in many cases, the provider is their own marketer. In the end, conference attendance can be beneficial to provide face-to-face opportunities to develop long-term relationships, but if follow up strategies and dedicated time to market leads after the conference are not implemented, it is not worth the investment.



Questions to ask when deciding to exhibit:

- Are your competitors attending? What booth or conference activities are they participating in?
- Is there dedicated exhibit hall time where you can really connect with your audience?
- Do you have the budget to participate in other marketing activities that will make you stand out from the crowd?
- What marketing materials, swag, and literature do you have available for attendees?

The Solution: A Digitized Curriculum Procurement Marketplace

There are thousands of education products on the market with endless possibilities. However, is there a way for teachers and administrators to find the latest and greatest in literacy, STEM, social-emotional learning, and other instructional programs without having to put in the hours of online research, traveling to conferences, or vendor meetings in order to see if they are a good fit? Now, there is a modern, intuitive, and no-cost two-way marketplace platform that brings vendors and their products directly to educators seeking comprehensive learning tools and curriculum. EdCuration allows educators to perform the important task of finding exactly what they are seeking without the typical deterrents of the outdated procurement process.

Comprehensive Sourcing for Educators and Cost-Effectiveness for Curriculum Providers

EdCuration is a convenient online marketplace model that makes it possible to search by grade level, subject, content area, and featured products in a single location where data and information can be reviewed. Educators can shorten the procurement process while also becoming aware of new, innovative, high-quality instructional resources. The platform allows educators and procurement decision-makers to collaborate and share notes with colleagues and committees on the programs they are considering, communicate directly with vendors, and even pilot featured products. Two of the most vital resources for any educator, time and budget, can now be reallocated to other crucial teaching initiatives.

Curriculum providers can join the platform at a fraction of the cost of attending a conference and reach their target demographic with the help of EdCuration's premier vendor portal. Educators can reach out to providers with initial knowledge about their resources and tools, taking them further down the sales funnel prior to even connecting. EdCuration's tiered packages are designed for every type of vendor and provide marketing tools to assist providers in their marketing communications.



Activities include:

- Increasing your visibility through website advertising, newsletter advertising, and social media engagement
- Helping educators get to know your work better through content development of blog articles, podcasts, asynchronous micro professional learning, and webinars
- Ensuring new users by way of our EdTrustees--pilot-ready Ambassador Influencers
- Outsourcing sales support through our Fractional Sales Representatives for growing teams

These outsourced marketing and sales offerings help reduce the burden of creating content marketing and targeted messaging for curriculum providers, which is key to building thought leadership in the marketplace and closing sales. Overall, EdCuration is a cost-effective method that dramatically shortens the procurement process for both educators and curriculum providers. Purchasing decision-makers are more exposed to leading-edge instructional resources and products, while vendors are able to assess the needs of a school or district faster by utilizing EdCuration's intuitive dashboard.

While face-to-face interaction at a conference is still an essential medium for relationship building, the Return on Investment needs to be evaluated since the cost of exhibiting may not outweigh the unknown lead generation that occurs at a conference. Participating in a digitized system for K-12 procurement, like EdCuration, is an innovative and powerful approach that opens doors for vendors to be discovered by educators who are looking for effective tools and resources that directly help students succeed while limited on time and budget.

[Learn more](#) about EdCuration's services for vendors.

