SC09 Post-event assessment: The Booth

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I.   Executive Summary:

Fermilab's SC09 booth met all stated objectives and requirements. During the convention, it was used largely as intended, and met the staff's needs. Both the SC09 planning team and the staff using the booth's meeting areas provided feedback regarding improvements for items such as eye-level signage, scheduling, and meeting area configuration.

II.   Fermilab's booth-related objectives for SC09 – were they met?
A.   Build and nurture relationships with funding agency representatives, vendors, computing/scientific people from universities and other national labs, and interested public.

The booth accommodated many scheduled and ad-hoc meetings in the two meeting room areas, and welcomed passers-by in to see and discuss the CMS centre, the QuarkNet display, the Ask-a-Scientist sessions and the looping videos of lab scientists.
The general consensus by FNAL staff and feedback from visitors is that the booth felt welcoming.
Answer: YES, this objective was met.

B.   Foster an interest, respect and appreciation for Fermilab's computing and scientific work among same groups as above, and highlight the role the Computing Division plays in Fermilab's mission.

The graphic and text panels served to highlight the accomplishments of CD in areas of analysis, simulation, networking, data storage and collaborative computing. The looping videos of scientists discussing their use of computing served to highlight how CD supports the lab's scientific mission. The CMS centre demonstrated real-time the necessity of collaborative computing tools, networking and distributed computing to large-scale HEP experiments.
Experts in many areas of computing had scheduled times in the booth to meet with visitors (both scheduled and ad-hoc) to share information about FNAL's computing programs.
Answer: YES, this objective was met.

C.   Encourage collaborative relationships between Fermilab and other research institutions.

The availability of comfortable meeting areas allowed FNAL staff to conduct meetings that could lead to collaborative relationships. The design of the areas, to look like rooms with a view, and with some (albeit limited) privacy, was conducive to relaxed conversation and openness.
Answer: YES, this objective was met.

III.   Booth Requirements – were they met?

1. The booth is 30 ft. by 30 ft. (The booth is already rented. It is #2157 in the Portland, Oregon convention center). **YES**
2. The booth must function primarily as a meeting place. **YES**
3. The booth must simultaneously seat two separate groups of 4-7 people comfortably for meetings. **YES**
4. The booth must provide a separate video area with seating for 3-4 people for remote meetings and/or presentations. **YES (the Ask-a-scientist/video area had three stools; no one scheduled remote meetings, but that capability was available)**
5. The booth must accommodate display of 5 primary themes to showcase Fermilab's leadership in computing research and production deployments (data transfer, data storage, simulation, data analysis, networking) and 3 secondary themes (education, collaboration, future technology challenges). Some of the displays may overlap themes, so this does not necessarily require 8 separate displays. (See the reference information below.) **YES ("data transfer" was replaced by "collaborative computing" as a primary theme in the Aug-Sept timeframe; 6 panels represented each of the listed primary themes plus a general topic of "where HEP data comes from and goes to"; QuarkNet represented education and future technology was represented in some panels by mention of current projects (e.g., the Network Weather and Performance E-Center) and by staff-visitor discussions.)**
6. The booth must incorporate A/V displays. **YES (we had a high-def connection to CMS centers, and to Ask-a-scientist back at Fermilab; also we had high-def videos looping during some hours)**
7. The booth must have adequate network infrastructure. **YES (see above)**
8. Two people must be able to setup the booth in 8 hours and complete teardown in four hours OR the proposal must include vendor-provided setup/teardown. **YES (We contracted with Freeman to perform setup and teardown of the materials they provided. FNAL set up CMS center and QuarkNet display. We had adequate personnel and adequate time.)**
9. The booth elements must be able to be packaged so as to be cost-effectively shipped to Portland, Oregon, AND/OR must incorporate elements available at venue, by venue management/contractors. **YES (see Freeman's response to RFP for pricing. Freeman took care of shipping, drayage, setup, etc.)**

IV.   Observations on booth by SC09 team

- CMS center was popular.
- Ask-a-scientist attracted attention and positive comments, but required constant "care and feeding"; participation was not self-sustaining.
- The amount of text on the outside walls was very appropriate; lots of booths had more than we did. No metrics on how many people actually read them.
- We didn't have, but should have, eye-level signs that say "Fermilab". Our hanging sign was visible a fair ways off (good), but not from up-close (bad).
- FNAL staff were respectful of scheduled meetings, and shared space nicely.
- People from collaborating projects bring posters for you to display at the last minute – we need to expect that and accommodate it (we did accommodate them, but hadn't expected)
- Should provide Kleenex and hand sanitizer in booth.
- Should have better OSG publicity.
- Should make OSG partner signs (on rigid paper stock), and distribute to partners
- Try for better storage for user equipment and stuff — the cabinet under the Ask-a-scientist area was roughly adequate in size but inconveniently placed (the camera was right above it, staff disturbed some ask-a-scientist sessions)
- Provide better space for Fermilab staff to plug in laptops, not to displace meetings
- Provide a plan B for each risky activity in case plan A fails

V.   Comments on booth by other FNAL staff and visitors

- "Booth is welcoming and comfortable"; apparently it seemed bigger than last year's
- It was good to set up some meetings ahead of time, and also good to accommodate impromptu meetings
- We should have OSG signage (all TeraGrid-related booths have signage)
- Suggestion to have a large overhead projector with animated content
- The kick-off breakfast was very appreciated
- CMS centre staffers liked doing free-form presentations to speak directly to the interest of passersby
- Booth staffing was not well enough documented
- Suggestion to provide a large screen at each meeting location for use similar to projection in conference room.
- Suggestion to have a regular (higher) table to sit around, rather than lounge setting, at least for one of the meeting areas. Apparently there's a model available for which tabletop is a whiteboard.
- Ambient noise was too high to hear across the table in a meeting area.

- Should provide notepads
- Suggestion to provide Fermilab shirts in order to make us more recognizable as we stroll the floor; same applies to OSG
- Comment: "if I'd known we got registered for the technical track, I would have asked for different (booth) time slots" — apparent lack of communication ahead of time between people doing SC09 registration and the travelers