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Five Marketing Nightmares and How to Prevent Them

By Susan Freidmann

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The success or failure of your trade show rests heavily on how well you market your event. Marketing, when done right, can project a positive image of your event, entice exhibitors to sign the dotted line, and attract loyal customers.

However, critical mistakes in your marketing campaign can have the opposite effect. Here are five costly errors that are common in our business, along with some sound advice on how to avoid making them.

1. You select the wrong exhibition hall.

You've got the perfect trade show — or so you think. The products are a great fit for the demographics you're going to attract. The city you've selected is glamorous, loaded with cultural and entertainment opportunities, is easily accessible, and has ample hotel space near the exhibition hall. And you've done a crackerjack job marketing your show — you've sold all your exhibit booths and advance ticket sales are off the charts. What could go wrong? Plenty, if the exhibition hall you've selected is a poor fit.

For example, suppose the exhibition space is too small for the crowd you'll attract. With thousands of people pushing and shoving each other to find the exhibits, your show will quickly get a bad reputation as an uncomfortable event where it's impossible to see all the products. And negative word of mouth travels almost as fast as the speed of light.

The solution: Do your homework! Get the inside scoop from other trade show managers who have done shows at that exhibition hall. Find out what was positive about their experiences. Conduct an on-site inspection before committing to the exhibition space, paying close attention to such factors as exhibit hall space, bathroom facilities, and air circulation.

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Consider location (is it in a dangerous part of town?), accessibility (are there traffic problems?), and service (are ticket counters adequately staffed?). Better yet, do your inspection while a trade show is going on at the exhibition hall. You'll get to see for yourself whether shows operate efficiently there.

2. You compile an ineffective prospect database.

You might be trying to cut corners by doing your data management in-house, but if you don't have database pros on staff, it's best to seek professional help! A list that has unlikely prospects or out-of-date addresses is a waste of time and money, and you'll lose precious opportunities to zero in on hot potential customers. You might hesitate to spend more money on a solid database management firm, but you could lose twice as much by failing to reach the right target audience.

3. You construct a poorly designed Web site.

You'll feel like a relic left over from the pre-Electronic Revolution days if you don't have a Web site. However, many trade show managers, in a rush to construct and display a Web site, wind up with sites that lack compelling graphics or information that will be useful to their potential exhibitors. Without proper guidance you'll waste money ... and project an image of a business that isn't ready for this millennium.

The solution: Find a reliable Web site designer who is familiar with the trade show business and will hire writers who can create Web site copy that is powerful, persuasive, and informative. But don't put a site up until you're ready; you wouldn't want your Web site debut to fall flat.

4. You have a great Web site, but nobody sees it.

Those who aren't Internet savvy sometimes think that once they create a Web site, their prospects will automatically find it -- after all, that's what Web search engines are for, right? Wrong! Search engines are great if someone wants general information about trade shows, but there's no guarantee your show will be at the top of the "hit list." Because there are millions of Web sites on the Internet, the only sure way to differentiate your site from the rest and drive traffic to it is through collateral advertising. Make sure your Web site address is prominently displayed on all your advertising and marketing materials, including your stationery and business cards. An expensive, snazzy Web site is useless if no one visits it.

5. You put together an ineffective ad campaign.

Bad advertising is worse than no advertising at all. Unless you have a great in-house advertising department, resist the temptation to create your own ad campaign. Advertising is not a good place to start a budget-cutting initiative. But just because you hire pros to do your advertising doesn't mean you'll have an effective campaign. It's best to find an ad agency that has had consistent success in the trade show industry.

To find such an agency, do your research. Consult with other trade show managers and look through the Advertising Redbook, available in the reference section at most public libraries. Ask for examples

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of an ad agency's work with other trade shows. Steer clear of campaigns that might be a turn-off to your prospects by appealing to a specific generation rather than a wider audience. And remember that humor and creativity are important attention-getting devices in advertising, but don't let your message get lost.

Nightmares

By Dr. Barry Burns

Nightmares are the type of dream everyone fears and wants to avoid. By their nature, these dreams are fearful, but often they need to be faced. The mind may be presenting them to us in such a dramatic manner because we have ignored a message for a prolonged period of time and it's resorting to more drastic means to get our attention.

The truth is, many nightmares are actually gifts that we should be thankful for because they are trying to help us.

Avoidance is the wrong response. The strong emotions evoked by these intense dreams are cries for help, and like a baby crying in the night for attention ... they will not be denied. The longer you ignore them, the louder they will get! Therefore ignoring nightmares is not only the wrong response, it's impractical in that it will make them worse.

Sometimes the subconscious mind will work with your nightmares to bring resolutions without you being consciously aware of the entire process. But when nightmares become recurring, then it's a sign that your conscious attention is being sought.

It's more common to wake up in the middle of a nightmare than during a regular dream. It's also more common to remember a nightmare. This is, again, by design as a way of trying to get your attention.

The best way to get rid of a recurring nightmare is to deal with it - that is to deal with the issue it's presenting. It will take some courage, but here are some tips on how to do it:

- Rather than turning and shooting a monster or "bad guy" that is chasing you, it's better to turn and ask the aggressor how you can help it. Use such questions as "What is it you want to tell me," or "How can I help you help me?"
- Come up with solutions by asking other "cast members" in the dream what resolution they would like to see.
- Bring your Spiritual Guide into the dream and ask for his/her suggestions.

Nightmares may also be caused by trauma, psychiatric problems or drugs (both legal and illegal). In such cases the care of a health care professional should be sought immediately.

Dr. Barry Burns received his doctorate from the American Institute of Hypnotherapy. He studied

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Neuro–Linguistic Programming, Hypnosis and Dreams. Dr. Burns founded Wellspring Hypnotherapy, conducts seminars nationwide and is author of "Wide Awake," a book on dreams. For more on the meaning of dreams, visit:



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