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Giveaways That Gratify You, Too

By Marcia Yudkin

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"Yours free!" It's a rare head that doesn't turn at that news. By offering freebies that zero in on the interests and desires of your target market, you can take advantage of this powerful psychological appeal to grow your business. And by choosing giveaways with news value for your audience, you can easily enlist the aid of the media in spreading the word about your offering to prospective customers. Here's how.

Great giveaway strategy begins with a wise choice of your free item. You'll be tempted to give away what you sell for a limited time, but according to veteran online publicist Steve O'Keefe, this is a huge mistake, undercutting the perceived value of the giveaway product. People won't buy what they see being given away or what they know was given away in the past.

Instead, the best giveaway, both for its appeal to your target market and for its newsworthiness to magazines in your industry, is something that people can get only by satisfying the conditions of your giveaway. They can't buy it from you and they can't get it from another supplier, either. This could be an industry directory with a novel twist, a cleverly worded T-shirt, a set of third-party product reviews or some sort of corporate toy. Along with maintaining the exclusivity of the giveaway, make sure the item is something wanted mainly by your prospective customers rather than the general public.

Similarly, be careful how you publicize the free offer, because you could find yourself with an enormous number of inappropriate requests if some "best things in life are free" operator passes along news of your freebie to junior high students, retirees who like to collect things or missionaries without any income of their own to do business with you. You might even qualify those asking for your giveaway item by requiring a request faxed on company stationery or an online form filled out. To protect yourself from an endless obligation to fulfill the offer, set an expiration date for the giveaway.

Giveaways can work very well as lead generators. When I gave away thousands of copies of a free booklet called "Six Steps to Free Publicity," it was safe to assume that anyone requesting it was a potential candidate for publicity—related products and services. The mailing list from that giveaway helped build my business.

You can also offer giveaways as a bonus for a certain number or dollar value of sales. For instance, the Talisman Billiards Accessories Company in Thailand offers a free golf shirt for every offer over \$70. "I do see a lot of people increasing their order to get the free bonus," says Tony Jones, Talisman's general manager. The golf shirt would need a humorous imprint or some hard-to-find design relevant to the audience to be considered newsworthy, so you'll need creativity if media coverage is among your aims. Put on your thinking cap for a giveaway with pull power!

Trade Show Giveaways: What Works

By Matt Kelly

You have your trade show exhibit ready to go, the trade show booth is set up, and your product is a winner. Now all you need are the customers. Standing room only, please. Right?

Well, for most trade show exhibitors, attracting customers is just as important as the product they are selling. Enter trade show giveaways! Trade show giveaways are promotional tools (items, handouts, marketing materials) designed to attract customers, promote business, and help market a product after the trade show exhibit is over. By using these strategies, the goal is to bring business to your trade show exhibit, then give the customer something to remember your product by. Hopefully, the promotional item will be a success and your customers will leave satisfied, happy, and gladly telling everyone they encounter about your fabulous product and great free trade show giveaways.

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There are some choices to make when deciding what promotional tools to use. Ultimately, the goal is to choose the promotional method that will attract the most visitors to your trade show booth, and make your trade show exhibit a success. You will also need to determine the amount of marketing dollars you have to spend on your promotional materials. If you are unable to afford what you believe is the best promotional or marketing tool available, then you may have to settle for other items until your budget allows you to expand in this area. Many promotional tools are designed to be kept by the customer, and to remind the customer continually of your products and services. This is accomplished through items that have been customized with your company's information and logo. Items such as free pens, notepads, balloons, magnets, and key chains are perfect examples.

Another great and effective trade show marketing strategy is to have a raffle where the entrants are required to either sign up at your trade show booth (using their contact information) or leave a business card (you can set up a bowl or container to collect the cards), and then after they have enjoyed the exhibits, they will return to your booth for the announcement of the prize winner. The wonderful benefits from using this technique is that you have a book full of contact information and a container full of business cards that you may use in the future to contact these potential customers.

Another great idea is to use an attention grabber to attract customers to your trade show booth. This includes ideas such as: setting up a massage chair (sit back and watch how long the line grows as customers wait for their free massage), or even setting up a free food giveaway. These are just a few things you can do to catch the eye of the customer. Things such as free massages and food will help bring the customer to your trade show booth, and a free promotional item is something they can take home with them to remember your company's name.

Above all else, it doesn't matter how many trade show giveaways, free food, or raffles that you have if you don't have a ready-made script and properly greet all of your potential clients. When you notice a customer looking at your display, immediately greet them with a smile and start a friendly conversation with them. Your products, giveaways, and tickets are there to work for you, but you must be the one to work them. If you need to have assistants help you, then by all means do so. You should never enter into a trade show exhibit without adequate preparation and help.

Remember that the most important giveaway that you have to offer all of your customers is your genuine smile and friendly conversation.

Mat Kelly is the president of ExhibitDEAL the Original Exhibit Wholesaler specializing in trade show booths, exhibits and displays. ExhibitDEAL offers portable trade show displays at nearly half the market rate and can be found on the Web at

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