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Six Marketing Tips for Trade Show Success

By Marie-Claire Ross

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A trade show is an ideal way of showcasing your products and services to a large number of prospects all at the one location and at the same time. Thoroughly planned marketing is the key to success at your next industry related exhibition.

The following are six of the most important marketing rules that exhibitors need to undertake to ensure their next trade show is a success.

1. Market Prior to the Show

Four weeks before the event, invite your prospects and current customers to visit you at the trade show.

Ensure that you design an invitation that gives delegates a real incentive to come over and visit. Think of a distinctive approach to promote your company. For example, you could provide demonstrations of the latest technology that can benefit your audience. People love to look at what the newest thing is and how it will save them time and money. If you have a new food product, offer free tastings and samples.

2. Create an Eye-Catching Booth

Your exhibition booth is perceived to be a reflection of what you are like as a company. Make sure it is warm and inviting and that it stands out from the crowd.

Signage must be clear and kept simple. Clearly write your business name on your sign and state your unique selling proposition. You only have 10 seconds to grab the attention of attendees as they walk past. If people cannot work out what you are selling they will keep on walking.

3. Provide Promotional Materials

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Brochures and leaflets are typical promotional materials that need to be freely available. Make sure your contact details and web address are printed on everything.

Set up a DVD player in your booth that continuously loops your marketing video. Make sure that the DVD you receive from your production house has this loop feature built in. We're all little kids at heart and colour and movement can be a great way to grab attention.

Playing your promotional video is also a great way to demonstrate how your product is made and how your product works. Especially if your product is too large to take to the tradeshow or your production process is too long and complicated to explain.

4. Train your staff to Market for you.

Your staff represent your company and they must be professional at all times. Gossiping and ignoring delegates is a poor reflection of your company.

Make sure you staff your booth with employees who are people-orientated. Brief them fully on what is required of them. Let them know the reasons why you are at the trade show, what you are exhibiting and what you hope to achieve by being at the event.

Training on how to correctly approach and interact with people and collect quality leads is also essential.

5. Appealing Giveaways

Whether we like to admit it, most of us have probably left a trade show and proudly shown off our new pens and trinkets to those unable to attend.

It can be easy to dismiss these giveaway items as a waste of money. However, the reality is that they do increase awareness of your company and entice attendees to your booth.

The trick is making sure that you are giving away an item that your target audience wants. What items will appeal to your market?

6. Lead follow up

A successful trade show is dependent upon your skills in following up leads. Research has found that 70% of trade show leads do not receive proper follow up.

To make the job easier, plan before the trade show how you are going to follow up prospects. Design a system to mail out information to leads within a week or two of the event and how you will follow these up. The longer leads are left unattended the colder they will become.

Ideally, ensure that all your leads are qualified before you pass them on to your sales team.

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Nine Tips on How to Set Goals for Your Trade Show Exhibit

By Dick Wheeler

It is often said that if you don't know where you are going, you may miss it when you get there. And, as Malcolm Forbes also points out, "If you don't know what you want to do, it's harder to do it." This is good advice especially in the trade show exhibit arena. It is crucial to establish goals and set objectives before you plan to exhibit at a trade show. As with any important marketing effort, you measure success by how well the activity performs against your stated goals. For example, ask how many hot leads do I need in order to justify the cost of our exhibit? What is my projected close rate needed to warrant my trade show booth budget? You get the idea.

Start by being clear when you consult with your top management and marketing teams as to the reasons why your company wants to exhibit in a particular trade show. Ask the tough question -do you plan to have a trade show display because your competition is exhibiting or is it because you want a set return on your trade show investment? Analyze in advance what you want to achieve from your trade show display, convey this to your exhibit team, and put it down on paper.

Here are nine key goal setting recommendations from "Tips & Techniques For Exhibiting Success" by Nomadic Display:

1. Trade show display objectives should reinforce your corporate marketing goals. Clear, concise trade show exhibit objectives need to be in sync with your overall marketing plan, not function independently of it.
2. Is increasing your brand identity at the trade show a key reason to attend? How will you brand your trade show exhibit? Will your logo be part of the branding? Will you incorporate your brand on all your handouts?
3. Do you expect to increase sales on the trade show floor? If so, by how much? Be realistic and set attainable sales figures.
4. Outline your expected trade show results. The more specific, the better. Are you planning to introduce new products or services at the trade show? If so, what are they and how will you showcase these new products/services?
5. Is an important emphasis of your trade show display to educate your target audience? If it is, will you have on–site speakers, website presentations, handouts at your trade show booth display?
6. Do you expect to gather industry information and customer preferences at the trade show? Do you have a formal survey and will you offer incentives for people to fill out your survey?
7. Is one of your goals to attract new business? If so, how many new orders do you feel are realistic?

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8. Is recruiting new dealers or distributors a priority? If so, how many new dealers or distributors will be at the trade show?

9. Do you expect to educate customers? How do you plan to do this? Free literature Handouts? Internet presentations? In-person talks by your top management?

By putting your goals in writing, you have a list that you can manage and measure. Your specific goals need to be realistic and timed. Make deadlines and meet them.

You already know that trade show displays can enhance your marketing plans with measurable results. You now need to focus first on your goals and objectives so that your measurement and return on trade show investment are indeed meaningful.

Dick Wheeler is President of Professional Exhibits & Graphics, headquartered in Sunnyvale, California. The firm is a full-service premiere trade show exhibit, graphics and management services company. For additional information, go to

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