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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.

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

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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

<http://www.exhibitdeal.com/>

Is a Trade Show for You?

By Susan Dunn

Is a Trade Show for You? by Susan Dunn, Marketing Coach and Consultant

Are you considering taking part in a trade show for the first time? It can be quite an investment in time and money, so get the answers to the following questions first.

1. Is the trade show focused?

You want to make sure it will be attracting your target market. Talk with the people who are putting on the trade show and find out.

2. Ask the promoters how they plan to promote it.

Billboards, TV, radio and newspaper ads, trade journals? Make sure it's going to be well publicized.

3. Get the history.

How many trade shows have they done in the past and how successful were they? They should have

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numbers to show you.

4. Get the names of people who have participated in the trade show in the past and make some phone calls.

You'll get a lot of un-censored information from actual participants, but do talk to several.

If you decide, from your research, that you want to participate in the show, do the following:

1. Visit a couple of trade shows to become familiar with what's going on.

Observe the displays, how the people work their booths and attract people to come visit, the giveaways, etc. Take a notepad and make notes. Observe what works for you - what makes you approach a certain booth. Is it the display? The person? The way the person is dressed or how they're standing or sitting?

2. Plan to work with a partner.

Running a booth is a two-person proposition, for many reasons. You'll need relief to take breaks, one of you can walk around meeting other people while the other person staffs the booth, people are more comfortable approaching two people than one. Also your equipment can be cumbersome. One of you can drop the other off at the door for setup and go park the car.

3. Prepare your booth display and materials.

You need something eye-catching that can be seen from 15–20' away. There's whole industry supplying

these materials, which include displays, booths, portable trade show exhibits, pop-up displays and exhibit booths in various sizes (20' - 6'), and floor-standing or table-top models. Check them out on the Internet. Here is one: <http://www.showstopperexhibits.com/>. It's a sizeable investment, but you will need to be competitive.

4. Prepare an ample supply of brochures, flyers and business cards.

5. Decide your goals. Just to meet people, try and close some sales, get names and email addresses, or do your first trade show and learn?

6. Have some way to capture names, addresses and emails.

Most of the literature people pick up at booths (or anywhere else) is discarded shortly thereafter. You can have a giveaway, where they drop their business card in a fish bowl, or a sign-up sheet for a free gift.

7. Prepare your "elevator speech."

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Many people will only stop by your booth for a minute or two and you need to have prepared quick descriptions of what you do, what services you offer, or information on a certain product or program you're promoting.

8. Don't forget that the other exhibitors are your audience as well.

They may need your product and services or be in a position to refer you to others. Visit around and network within the show.

Remember that your work is only half done after the trade show is finished. Process after the trade show so you know what went well and why, and what you would do differently in the future.

Then follow up on all your leads. Get the names on your newsletter list, mail out flyers, make the phone calls.

Lastly, analyze the response rate vs. the time and money you put into it. Take into account any residual business you may get. It can take up to 7 "hits" before a person will buy, and you may have made the first "hit" on a large number of people and gotten a lot of exposure.

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