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Trade Show Success Tip: Train Your Exhibiting Staff

By Dick Wheeler

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One of the keys to trade show success is the training of your booth staff. Each trade show requires a specific marketing message targeted to a unique prospect and an exhibiting staff that can communicate with that audience. In order to take advantage of your trade show appearance, it is crucial to have a knowledgeable, qualified and highly trained sales staff at your trade show booth. Before the trade show, rehearsals and training sessions for your exhibiting staff are essential to maximize the leads and visitor sales potential at a trade show.

Here are the basic tips for grooming your exhibit staff:

1. Hire an exhibit staff trainer before the trade show.
2. Have a trainer in the booth to set up procedures and monitor booth activity.
3. Provide incentives (to stimulate tradeshow booth traffic, give a gift coupon out every hour).
4. Be good custodians of your (and your visitors') time. Proactive learning on how to engage and courteously dismiss visitors in a professional manner is critical.
5. Staff the tradeshow booth with personnel who match up well with prospects - i.e., engineers from your firm if prospects are engineers, etc.

There are basic "do's" that attract attention:

1. Have a warm smile and a welcoming persona.
2. Enthusiastic behavior -- have direct eye contact, confront prospects by greeting, then engaging, and, finally, qualifying them.
3. Be professional and courteous, have authority and a solid knowledge about your product or service.
4. Treat visitors as they are your guests--same as you do at your company or in your home.
5. Demonstrate a receptive body language -- have your arms under control and your posture erect. Be proactive.
6. Trade Show Booth housekeeping--maintain a neat, clean and tidy appearance at all times.
7. Your name badge should be on the right side of your body so when you shake hands people see it clearly.

Here are some "don'ts" in your trade show booth:

1. Do not eat, drink or chew gum.
2. Do not make or accept phone calls (leave the tradeshow booth to make calls).

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3. Do not sit – (except in conference area of your tradeshow display to conduct client business).
4. Show up on time — Do not show up late. Be considerate of your booth mates.
5. Never leave the tradeshow exhibit unattended.
6. Don't visit socially in the tradeshow booth with your co-workers or neighboring booth staffers.

Engage visitors with effective sales techniques and tactics:

1. Greet and engage prospect or client (30 seconds).
2. Probe prospect with questions memorized from a lead sheet – who, what, why, when, where— to determine their requirements and their timing. This is the positioning and pre-qualifying stage – (1 1/2 – 2 minutes).
3. Determine if the tradeshow prospect is qualified or not. If not, professionally dismiss them.
4. If they are qualified – go into a demonstration, lead to deeper dialogue, answer questions, present details on services/products (up to 5 minutes).
5. Get permission to proceed or get deeper into subject or schedule further dialogue.
6. Wrap up – inform them of where you go from here. Move toward the future appointment or sale.

Set a time to reconnect. Swipe badge or get their business card. Plan to follow up by sending materials to their office so that the package is there when they return to their desk immediately after the trade show.

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

<http://www.proexhibits.com>

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Boost the Sales Power of Your Trade Show Exhibit

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Your company's presence at industry trade shows is critical to stay competitive in a global marketplace. A properly managed trade show display can be one of your most effective and powerful sales tools.

Here are some pointers to consider as you approach the challenge of maximizing your trade show selling efforts:

To get started, enlist the early interest and participation of your Marketing Director. He/she should be a dedicated promotional partner in getting your exhibit program launched. If you do not have a communications department in your company, consider hiring your trade show exhibit company or an

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outside trade show marketing consultant. If you do not have the budget for a consultant, take the time to educate yourself and your sales team on the basic essentials of trade show selling.

Recognize the importance of trade show exhibiting and give it your very best. Business-to-business marketers in greater numbers every year are adopting the trade show exhibit function as an increasingly valuable component of their promotional toolkit. A study on the nine basic marketing approaches used by the nation's top companies, trade show exhibits rank #3 in marketing dollars spent, only behind advertising and sales promotions and ahead of sales force management, direct and online marketing, premiums, public relations among others. What this means is you need to spend time and effort on exhibiting at trade shows to remain competitive.

Set standards for trade show exhibit quality, design and staff conduct to optimize the trade show exhibit area experience. A well-presented exposition area can be a very compelling attraction especially if you make it a first class event with strict standards for quality trade show displays with a set of guidelines. Portable and custom modular exhibits are now available through professional exhibit specialists who handle the entire design and build function from initial graphics to delivery of the finished exhibit at the trade show site. New lightweight materials and collapsible construction make assembly, breakdown and shipping both easy and affordable.

Train your staff to effectively sell at your trade show booth. Keep in mind who you are exhibiting to, what your specific message is and why visitors to your trade show booth need to know about your product, service or message. Practice your message with your staff to make it clear and brief. Be sure you have the informed staff at your booth to answer specific questions in detail. Make sure they are effective representatives for your company and that they have proper trade show booth etiquette -no eating, no lounging, no chatting amongst themselves and ignoring client prospects.

Seek guidance from reliable sources. As the trade show exhibit industry has grown, so have its resources for providing support for those interested in making the trade show exhibit function an important part of their marketing efforts.

As you plan your sales and marketing function, take a closer look at the added value of a well-conceived or upgraded trade show exhibit. In today's business environment, where the high tech conveniences of e-commerce and cell phones eliminate face-to-face encounters, your company is probably craving the high touch experience a trade show exposition can add to assist your sales team.

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