

15 + 1 THINGS TO CONSIDER IF YOU ARE GOING TO BE AN EXHIBITOR AT A MAJOR TRADE SHOW

1. **ATTEND THE TRADE SHOW-** If you going to exhibit at a specific trade show at least takes the time to attend the trade show the previous year. Speak with some of the exhibitors, speak with some of the attendees, and speak with the trade show producer. I don't think you would buy a car without first driving it. Don't you think it's necessary even though you cannot drive it, you can at least check out what it looks like.
2. **DEVELOP A PLAN** – If you intend to exhibit at a trade show and you do not have a plan of what you expect to accomplish at this trade show, in effect all you are is an attendee with a booth. As an exhibitor your company will be make a substantial investment but with that investment, if the trade show is done correctly and effectively your company will be rewarded with some very qualified business opportunities.
3. **SURVEY YOUR CLIENTS** - If you are not sure which trade show would be best for you then take the time and do a survey of your clients. Ask our clients, "Which trade should do you attend and why?" See what kind of response you get. If the majority of your clients are attending Trade Show "A" and you have made the commitment to Trade Show "B" you may have a problem.
4. **YOUR CLIENT PROFILE** - Do you know who your client is? What size company? What do they do? What is their product line? If the age of the people that are purchasing your products are between 15 and 25 and the average age of the people attending the trade show is for the over 55 crowd, I think you may have a problem. You need to know the profile of your attendees.
5. **YOU MUST INVITE PEOPLE TO YOUR BOOTH** – Invite all of your clients, prospects and suspects. Ask your clients to bring some of their business associates along. You want as many people as you can contact to know that you are going to be in this specific trade show. Don't wait for until the last minute to start contacting people. It has to be an ongoing process that is going to get them excited about this trade show as you are. Do not expect to contact an executive of a major company a week before the trade show is to start and ask that person to stop by your booth. You need to start contacting someone of that magnitude at least 6 to 10 weeks before this trade show is to take place, and then you must get back to that person at meaningful times to remind that people of how important it will be for that person to stop by your booth. If you don't make it important and take the time to truly invite that person why should he or she attend?
6. **YOUR COMPANY NAME AND TAG LINE** – If you are in a ten foot booth, you have approximately 3 seconds to make an impression on an attendees pass in front of your booth. If you do not have a good question to ask or no other way of having this attendee want to stop at your booth your company name and tag line must say exactly and specifically what your company does, if it doesn't the attendee will just keep on walking.
7. **DEVELOP A BOOTH SCRIPT** – You want all of your booth staff to tell the same story. This is pertaining to products, delivery, price, specifications and service. It is not uncommon for a person to come by your booth and ask a booth person the price and availability of a specific product, then leave and return that afternoon, or the next day and see if they get a different price and delivery date for the same product.
8. **QUALIFICATION FORM** – There is more that you need to know when you are qualifying an attendee or suspect that comes to your booth. Don't just take notes on the back of the person's business card, but ask the right questions, and focus on what the person wants. Question, then qualify, then respond. Don't be afraid to ask questions. They are there for a reason. They came to your booth because you have something that they may want or need. Remember, trade shows are to generate business and to make it easy for that person to make the best decision possible.
9. **INHOUSE COMMUNICATIONS:** If you have taken the time to get everyone in your organization involved with your Event or Trade Show you have to keep that momentum going with your Clients, Prospects and Suspects as well as your fellow employees. You should start these efforts 3 to 6 months ahead of time so that the people that you contact can make the necessary arrangement to attend this event. Here are a few suggestions that have been used successfully in the past. **1) Add a PS to all of your emails, Example: "Please check us out at the XYZ Trade Show at Booth 1234". 2) Send out a Press Release FAX to all of Clients. Example Heading "ABC Company will be presenting their latest equipment at the XYZ Trade Show on March 10" 3) On your phone in call waiting: Tell the person who is on hold what trade shows the company will be exhibiting. Literature: If you send out literature either via snail mail or e-mail always include a release about the events the company is involved with**
10. **YOUR ELEVATOR STATEMENT** – Elevator statements in the past were anywhere from 45 seconds to one and half minutes. In our fast paced world of today the average elevator statement or presentation is 25 seconds, and some as brief as 15 seconds. It is a statement of fact that will instantly tell the listener what you or your organization does.
11. **OPENING ACTIVE QUESTIONS** – Opening active question's, are questions that cannot be answered by a yes or no. It is used, especially in a trade show environment, to make the attendee, the person passing in front of your booth to respond. Of course, it some instances you may be ignored completely, but in the majority of cases it has been a useful marketing tool to start a dialog with a stranger. As a person who will be standing booth duty you must come up with a number of questions to insure that if the first one does not work, then try the next.
12. **KNOW WHO YOU'RE SPEAKING WITH** – One of the major problems that plague many booth personnel is that after the first interaction with an attendee, and they have made a presentation, and "qualified" a suspect they go into repeat mode thinking that everyone who comes to the booth will always be interested in their "canned" product presentation. This is not the case. Not everyone that comes to the booth will be interested in your product or service. You, as the company representative, and booth personnel must first check who you are speaking with. That means you must either look at their badge which usually has their name and title on it, or if they don't have a badge, ask them, "So what do you do at your company?" Most everyone like to talk about themselves, and by asking a question like that you put that person at ease. If you read their badge and it says, VP of Finance, do you really think that person is interested in how fast the unit is, or the size of the memory? You need different responses depending on who you are speaking too. You have to be versatile, flexible and always remember that you are representing your company.
13. **HANDOUT OR GIVE-A-WAYS** – I am not a big fan of give-a-ways, or the use of very expensive and detailed literature. With give-a-ways you always have to wonder if they came to your booth to find out about your product or service or did they come to your booth because your company was giving away some very nice pens. With literature, it's the same problem. It is a known fact that over 82% of the literature given out at a trade show never makes it back to the person's office but is usually left in the hotel room. If you do want to give out something on your company, product and service make it general in nature and include some information that the person can use while he or she is at this trade show. For example: list the top 10 restaurants in the area, or some of the best places for entertainment. The list of 800 numbers for airlines, car rentals, hotels and the police and nearest hospitals. Use your imagination, I am sure you can come up with something unique, that will make your company standout in a crowd.
14. **TABLE OR BOOTH:** The first thing I would do is take all of the chairs out of the booth or from around the table. Events and Trade Shows are hard work. You are there to present your products or services. No one wants to speak, with or ask questions to, someone that is sitting down and the other person standing. Stand by or in front your table or booth. Be enthusiastic, have a smile on your face, be approachable. Your company name, tag line or opening active question should tell what your company does. With a table or a booth you have very little time to make an impression. If the attendee cannot determine what you do they will just keep walking.
15. **SOCIAL MEDIA:** The Top 10 best Social Media Networking Websites are Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Bebo, Twitter, Orkut, Friendster, Ning, Meetup, and Plaxo. Each has a specific capability and research has to take place to make sure that the social media that you use will complement your marketing and trade show effort.
16. **VIDEO:** It's no secret that online video is hot. A recent study by comScore revealed that in October 2009, more than 167 million viewers in the U.S. watched an average of 167 videos each, while YouTube reached 1 billion views per day – or 41 million views per hour – in the same month. The reason is clear: video simply engages people in a way that static text and images cannot. There are dozens of studies that show the power of video to boost customer interaction, drive sales, encourage viral sharing, and build brand awareness. And according to MarketingSherpa, 95 percent of the companies that have used online video marketing are happy with the results and expect to use it again in the future. Whatever type of video you create, make sure it's short – under two minutes is usually best, but 30 seconds is even better. Simplicity is also key. Keep voiceovers straightforward and music at a minimum. If you want an example of the power of utter simplicity, check out the unique videos that explain hundreds of complex subjects produced by Common Craft.