



CEShoppes

Tradeshows –Exhibiting At A Tradeshow

How successful your tradeshow experience will be and your return on investment will all be pre-determined by how well you do your job BEFORE you ever get to the tradeshow.

- 1) You will need to determine your objectives before attending the show:
 - a. Produce sales at the show
 - b. Target key buyers
 - c. Encourage early ordering
 - d. Produce sales leads/Requests for information
 - e. Improve client relationships
 - f. Demonstrate products
 - g. Attract new customers

- 2) Many exhibitors determine the success of a show based on:
 - a. How many catalogs were given out
 - b. How many attendees they scanned in the booth
 - c. The number of sample requests they received
 - d. How many people attended a special presentation

While these may all be “feel good” indicators of success, what you do with this information and how many objectives were reached after the show, will actually determine the success of the show.

As we know, many attendees will walk down an aisle and take every single catalog, promotional sample etc., without the slightest thought about using your company or even knowing who you are and what you do. Your sales team may even scan these people in to your database or take a business card . . . never to be heard from again. At the end of all tradeshows it is amazing to hear from hotel staff and convention center staff how many catalogs and promotional items are found in the hotel room and convention center trash. Your marketing message may not make it to your intended target!

It is very important to seriously think about who you are targeting at these shows and why. Do you want to give out 1000 catalogs to 1000 attendees when a fraction of them may ever buy from you?

Here is a list of Top 10 Ideas for Having a Successful Tradeshow

1. Set specific show objectives
2. Train your staff on how to qualify a potential new customer. Make sure they know your product benefits and features.
 - a) If you are a one man operation – hire a spokesperson or model to help you with your booth. There are many persons that hire themselves out for tradeshows. Ask others in your area, call the Convention and Visitors Bureau in the area where the tradeshow will be held and get the name of some possible temporary employees.
 - b) Send the person you select a copy of your catalog and a link to your website prior to the show.
 - c) Have this person meet you at the tradeshow on set-up day. They can assist you to set up your booth and discuss the product line as you are putting your wares or information out on the shelves. The spokesperson does not have to know everything there is to know about your line, but a few hours of training can make them look like a viable part of your team and help you with your potential customers.
- 3) Give your staff a list of preferred customers and target list of new customers to watch for at the tradeshow.
- 4) Make sure they scan all visitors coming to the booth. Many show badges will now show you which attendees are qualified buyers, staff members or visitors.
- 5) Give your staff a list of qualifying questions to ask possible new customers. Make sure the questions are not easily answered with just a yes or no. An example might be “How familiar are you with our product line?” This is a great lead in for your team to explain the line.

- 6) Train your staff to take good notes and to follow up with any promised information directly after the show. – If possible, they can call in to the home office and have this information delivered to the attendees email or sent to their office before the attendee leaves the show.
- 7) Make sure to send out Pre-Show invitations with some sort of show promotion.
- 8) At the show use the pre-show promotions to strengthen your relationship with the preferred or targeted customer.
- 9) Use “at show” promotions to attract more attention to your products while in the booth. One of our customers gave away an entire line of stress reliever animals, to highlight a new book series featuring animals, to a group of educators. Their booth always had high traffic. The tie in was perfect and that just added to the sale!
- 10) Make sure to follow up after the show. Send out another email to those who attended. Add some type of offer to the email, or reiterate or extend the “at show” offer. – Send a “We missed you” direct mailing to those who could not attend or to those you wished to target but did not see while at the show.

If you were reading Najla’s Notes – this is the 2nd part of How to have a successful Tradeshow.

Let’s take a look at one aspect of getting the right people in to your booth (those more likely to use your product or service within the next 6 months to a year or better yet, purchase from you at the show).

PRE-SHOW Promotions

Qualified attendees plan ahead. They usually have a plan to visit specific exhibitors versus browsing aisles. Many attendees are very serious about what their objectives may be and want to accomplish more than seeing what’s new.

Pre-show promotions may be aimed at encouraging booth traffic, stimulating curiosity, previewing new items, or making your targeted audience excited about visiting your booth.

- 1) Get a list from the show promoter of attendees who have signed up to be at the show
- 2) Send out email blasts and direct mail pieces with information to those who are on the list (verify the list is permission based) as well as to those who have not already signed up, but still may be qualified to attend (such as your existing customer list).
- 3) Incorporate a “show special” of some sort for those who cannot attend. Make sure it is equivalent to the show special you will be offering to those who do attend the show.
- 4) Determine a promotional item that can be mailed to your preferred target customer (not the entire list of attendees – only those that qualify or use your product or service). Companion type gifts are used the most and are very effective pre-show promotions.

I have seen sequin designs sent with the promise that the design will be heat transferred to your T-shirt in the booth, or send a high quality pen from a deluxe pen and pencil set with the promise to be completed when the attendee visits the booth etc... Whatever the pre-promotion is, it should be related to what you do and it should appeal to your target audience. Make sure the first gift emphasizes the promise of the second gift when they get to your booth.

The goal here is to get “Qualified” customers in to your booth.

Advertising at the Tradeshow

Another way to get good booth traffic is to advertise at the show. Purchase ad space in the tradeshow program or newspaper that is handed out at the tradeshow. Get a space in the program, sponsor an event. – However, each of these measures should be done with the thought of reaching the objectives you set prior to the show.

If you are having a “show special”, this is what you should advertise in the daily show program. If you have a new product, show a picture of it, give an incentive to come by and see it and feature it prominently in your booth for everyone to see.

Another bold approach would be to give out T-shirts with a catchy slogan and the name of your company. Then tell everyone that you hand them to, that if they wear them the 2nd day of the show and they are “spotted” by your secret spotter they will win (a given prize, like an MP3 Player, or a gift certificate to a restaurant etc – set a budget for this and make a big deal out of the people “Spotted.”) This will not only excite people, you will be amazed at how

many people will be wearing your shirts and how many will come asking for them. All of which means more traffic to your booth!

Tradeshow Give-Aways

Think about the items you have given away in the past in your booth. Did it tie in with the "Theme" of your booth, the event, or a promotion? Why or why not? If you sell computer equipment or software, think about items that can be used or will remind attendees of you and your products. Perhaps a mouse pad or a screen duster for cleaning keyboards and monitors, or a self adhesive monitor calendar.

Regardless of what you are promoting in your booth, it is important that your give-away reflects what your company is all about. It doesn't make any sense to show hair care products in your booth and then give away a pizza cutter, unless the promotion you are doing is for hairspray that smells like pizza!

Work closely with your promotional specialist to come up with a theme, and the products to go with that theme.

Remember, you are trying to attract qualified prospects. Not everyone is a prospect. You don't need to set your give-aways out on a table for all to take, unless it is a sample of your own product and you want everyone to have one. Keep your give-aways behind the flow of traffic. As you qualify your prospects, give the items you have selected to just those who qualify in exchange for a scan or a business card.

Make sure to purchase a smaller amount of higher end items to give to those who are your "key customers", or for those who purchase a nice size order from you at your booth. These special gifts should have a higher perceived value than the give-aways. They could also be a "free" product of your own that you give as an add-on when an attendee places an order.

POST-SHOW Promotions

Make sure to review all the requests you took during the show. If you were not able to send out information or samples during the show, the week following the show should be the time to do so. Don't wait for a month to pass to get around to sending out catalogs, or samples. It won't show your company in the best light. Your objective was to get people talking about you and to place orders. Waiting for weeks because you got tied up or were too busy is not a good excuse and a plain waste of money for attending the show.

If you do not have the time to do the mailings and follow up yourself, either your staff or temporary staff (hired from a temp agency) that you hire for a few days or a week will be able to help you get a mailing out the door, place orders for samples and enter information in your database. The increase in business will easily pay for the temporary workers.

If each of your staff or sales team has the time to do the post-show mailings, encourage them to include a personal note about meeting the customer or recall something that they and the attendee discussed at the booth that will help the attendee remember and value the interaction.

A call immediately following the show telling that the materials are on their way can also add impact.

Send out another email blast after the show to those that you met at the show and to those from the first email blast. – If you can, personalize the message with their first name and differentiate the emails.

Separate out the emails from the pre-show to only those who did not attend the show or did not end up in your booth. Give them both a reason to visit your website, order a product or reiterate the show special (Extending the promotion by another week) etc..

The post-show Promotion is even more important than the pre-show. How you handle the post-show follow up will determine your success!