



ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO EXHIBITION MARKETING

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Whether you're first time exhibitor or a battle hardened veteran, you'll know that trade shows are one of the best ways to meet your customers face to face in large numbers. It's also however one of the most expensive marketing activities - one where there's little room for guess work or error. To help increase your chances of success we've compiled an 8 point checklist covering the key aspects of trade show planning, marketing and promotion.

Pre event

you'll learn how savvy exhibitors promote their stand/show

At the event

We'll show you how to prepare and execute your activities

Post event

See how to best capitalise on your leads and convert them into sales

1. PRE EVENT MARKETING

A busy stand attracts more attention so generating footfall is essential. Visitors may feel intimidated walking onto an empty stand and becoming the sole focus of an eager sales team. For this reason most savvy exhibitors will engage in a number of tried and tested pre event marketing activities such as:



Direct mail

Personalised print communications targeting your existing clients, prospects, registered attendees. Invite them to your stand .tell them how to find it easily ..give them a good reason to come and see you such as a show discount, give always, product launch or a high profile celebrity photo opportunity.

Direct e-mail

Similar to direct mail but better to use it as a follow up communication to remind your prospects of the date/details/updates etc.

Advertising in event publications

Most shows these days offer attendees an event brochure. This is an excellent forum in which to promote your company and its stand position.

Website and email

Create a web banner on your sites homepage to promote the fact that you are exhibiting at the show. Create a graphic banner to sit alongside your email signature for all outgoing company emails in the build up to the event.

Issue a press release

Business editors in trade publications and local/national press are always looking for content. A news worthy press release is an excellent way to achieve free publicity for you upcoming show.

Social media

Don't ignore your followers on social media pages. Use LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook to push out your message and while you're at it make sure to use your web blog too.

2. STAND DESIGN

A trade show stand is not a brochure so don't approach its design as an opportunity to overload your audience with detail. You only have a matter of seconds to engage with passers by, so think of it as a billboard rather than a brochure and you're on the right track.



3. MARKETING MATERIALS

- As humans we process colour and images far quicker than text, so keep your design clear, visually appealing and impactful.
- Make sure any important text/information on your displays are kept as close to eye level as possible.
- The no. 1 priority should be to communicate who you are and what you do as quickly as possible – leave the rest to hand out marketing materials if you must.
- Remember, the little extras can sometimes make all the difference and that means good lighting, overhead signage, animated monitor presentations, flags, eye-catching centre pieces etc.

Different companies have different needs when it comes to marketing and promotional print for various events. The best approach is to draw up a check list and decide what's needed and what's not. Typically this might include items such as: business cards, brochures, price lists, product data sheets, branded promotional give-aways, samples, posters, CDs/DVDs, leaflet dispensers, information packs.



4. LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!

The location, size and orientation of your trade show stand is important. Where a choice of location is offered by the event organiser, get in early and select the best possible space. Locating next to large or well known companies will help to draw more numbers to your stand. Try and secure a central location where attendees approach your stand from as many sides as possible. Locating close to meeting/eating areas and coffee

5. STAND OUT

One of your primary goals at any event is to get noticed and stand out from all the competing pitches. Obviously it needs to be done within the limits of taste and adhering to appropriate etiquette but that still leaves lots of room for manoeuvre. Creating a buzz of activity arouses people's curiosity and helps entice visitors to your stand. Easier said than done you might say! Well here are some proven, effective techniques you can employ to ramp up some interest.



Celebrity appearances

if you can arrange it or afford it, this is one of the best ways to generate serious crowds at your stand.

Competitions

It's a great way not only to attract visitors but also to get prospect contact information and build up marketing databases.

Gadgets & displays

who doesn't want to see something cool, something innovative or something downright bonkers?

Don't follow the herd

General Patton once famously said, "If everyone is thinking the same then someone isn't thinking". Look at your display system, its design, your marketing collateral, even your dress code and see how you can differentiate your offering. Above all don't be boring and resist the mundane.

Provide food & drink

it might sound simple but it works. It also helps to relax your visitors.

6. *ETIQUETTE*

The way your company's staff or show representatives interact with prospective customers is critical. Here are few points to remember:



- Dress code – make sure its audience appropriate. If your customers are expecting a neat casual dress code, then sporting a suit and tie may not be the best approach. Conversely, taking too relaxed an approach to dress can be equally counter-productive, so dress to impress not to disappoint. Make sure your team understand the required dress code, whatever it is.
- Ensure all staff are clearly identified with name badges. They should detail their position, area of expertise and full name. If not supplied by the event organiser then you will need to have badges professionally printed.
- Keep the stand space free of clutter such as boxes, bags, excess furniture, food/drink (unless provided for customer use), personal computers and phones

- Don't be overly informal or pushy. Smile and engage with people in a positive, relaxed manner, making sure they are comfortable with your line of conversation. Being alert and attentive means not constantly playing with your mobile phone or computer – its shows a distinct lack of interest.



7 SALES TECHNIQUE

Run through your sales pitch before the show with all team members.



- Do some role play if it helps less experienced members of staff gain confidence. Prepare scripts or cue cards with questions to help kick-start conversations with visitors to your stand.
- Prepare a elevator pitch that's both concise and compelling.
- Print and use lead sheets to record all contacts and enquiries. Ensure that your team know what's required in terms of prospect information/contact info. Inform every visitor to your stand as to the nature of the follow up i.e. will it be by phone, email, appointment etc.
- If you are selling directly to customers at the event, it's critical that where possible this is done only by trained sales staff. Team members from technical or admin roles may lack the required skill set to identify opportunities or close out sales.
- "Telling isn't selling" – always listen and react to what your customers are saying. Every customer is different and pushing a pre prepared sales pitch is not always a successful formula.

8. POST SHOW FOLLOW UP

Every bit as important as what happens at the show is what happens after.

- Prospects identified at the show need to be followed up in a timely manner. Never leave it more than 1 week... 2-3 days is considered ideal. It's a task that should always be assigned to designated individuals with clearly defined objectives.
- Not all enquiries or leads are of equal importance and deserving of top priority, so categorise your leads by potential value, level of interest, readiness to purchase or whatever criteria works best for you.
- The first follow up could be something as simple as an email to say thank you for visiting your stand and then outline the next step in the process.
- Of course you can't really beat picking up the phone, it's a great way to renew relationships and cut to the chase.





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