



## Top 10 List of Successful Trade Show Exhibiting

*(from tsnn.com/blog by Peter LoCasio, Trade Show Consultants)*

### **Think sales and making personal sales calls on the trade show floor.**

There are few functions in business as exact and dynamic as personal selling. An organization's sales team lives and dies by the results of its efforts, which cannot be easily fudged, finessed, or faked. A salesperson obtains the orders required and either makes sales targets or doesn't. By thinking sales and positively affecting the selling process as a trade show goal, the exhibitor is setting realistic expectations that reside more in the area of an exact science. Armed with an understanding that the selling function has many phases, the trade show can shorten the existing selling cycle by delivering qualified prospects to your exhibit sooner than later and establishing a positive environment where sales and prospects will meet face to face to solve problems, add value, and influence the purchase of your products.

### **Plan early.**

At least six months before a trade show, present goals and objectives in a pre-show memo distributed to all involved. This overview should include a list of products being presented, show service details and logistics, display guidelines, appearance, and operation. It should also include input from sales, management, and marketing departments. In addition, the pre-show meeting time and location, as well as a booth duty roster, should all be in place weeks before anyone departs for the trade show.

### **Determine how much space you need.**

A simple analysis of setting targeted prospect numbers will help determine how much space is needed to attain goals and objectives for the trade show. The average salesperson can make one good sales presentation every 10 minutes while on booth duty and needs about 5 feet of space in which to operate, including support functions. If your pre-show plan calls for seeing 10% of the 5,000 attendees or 500 suspects, prospects, and customers during the 24 hours a trade show is open, you'll need at least 20 feet of space and 5 salespeople manning the booth at all times. Consider additional space for storage, literature processing, customer relations, audio visual equipment, and closing or conference rooms.

### **Target your audience**

Based on prior business, sales, and trade show attendance experience, establish realistic goals and objectives by asking how many attendees are likely to purchase products like yours in the next 6 months. Use that number to determine your exhibit space requirements, budgets, and operational demands. The trade show will deliver everyone from attendees who have no interest in your products and services to those ready to purchase immediately. By setting realistic targeted attendee profiles, you'll be more likely to attract, meet, and discuss products with a high level of pre-qualified prospects and customers.

### **Select the right space.**

In most cases, you're not able to visit an exhibit hall in advance of a show. As a result, it's important to study the floor plan provided by show management to determine where your exhibit will function best with as little interference as possible. In some cases you might want to contact the convention facility directly to obtain a more detailed floor plan that could show columns, elevators, food service areas, low ceilings, floor obstructions etc. to avoid being surprised when you get to the show. Other exhibitors are also important to consider because some might have loud AV programs or other distractions that will negatively affect your ability to conduct business effectively.

**Design an exhibit that communicates from the aisle.**

Your exhibit's signs and graphics should function much like magazine advertisements. The headline and body copy should be seen from the aisle and effectively communicate product benefits that encourage targeted prospects to enter the booth and want to talk with someone. An unorthodox way of looking at this important exhibit function is to consider that the exhibit must communicate well enough from the aisle to keep 4,500 non targeted attendees out of the booth while facilitating face-to-face meetings with the targeted suspects and helping achieve your sales goals and objectives.

**Select the proper people to work the booth.**

Not everyone is well suited to effectively and positively stand booth duty and perform the duties required during all scheduled hours of the show. Those selected to work the booth must have complete knowledge of product features, benefits, and value and be comfortable to present and demonstrate them within the often chaotic trade show environment. The pre-show meeting the night before the show is an ideal opportunity for marketing, management, and sales to review the salient value of all products on display. Staging a booth team meeting each evening at show close also creates an opportunity for everyone to compare exhibit performance notes, review sales leads, make adjustments to improve display and booth function aspects, and generally prepare for the next day's opportunities.

**Generate quality sales leads.**

Every screened visitor to the booth has an interest on some level. At the end of the show, sales lead cards or forms are worth their weight in gold, assuming they are filled out correctly and completely. Every person on booth duty should be well versed in asking the right questions and be able to carefully record a prospect's answers, concerns, and expectations and rate each on a scale of cold, warm, or hot. When the show is over, an excellent sales lead card used by the local salesperson can make a quality impression hard to match. The follow-up salesperson should thank the prospect for visiting the company's exhibit and refer to the lead card to discuss details and offer whatever might be needed to satisfy the prospect and close the sale.

**Prepare follow-up materials in advance.**

Weeks before traveling to a trade show, define, prepare, and assemble literature response kits to effectively respond to a booth visitor's interest. It is also imperative to have a management system in place that identifies and notifies the local salespeople of what material was sent — and when — to facilitate a timely follow-up. It is totally inconceivable to spend tens of thousands of dollars exhibiting at a trade show and not have an effective follow-up system in place to deliver information to every exhibit visitor a week or two after the show. Equally important is making contact with a visitor to confirm receipt of the information and offering any additional materials that might prove helpful.

**Conduct post-show evaluation.**

Gathering comments and feedback about the planning and executing of trade show exhibits will allow you to build on past show experiences and take gradual steps to maximize future show effectiveness and success. The building blocks for a professionally managed trade show exhibit program are found on the floor of every trade show in which you exhibit. It is critical that experience be positively encouraged in order to overcome challenges and maximize opportunities while maintaining firm continuity over the development of the entire program. The best way to accomplish this is for the trade show exhibits manager to be completely immersed in the function and to experience all aspects of planning, executing, and managing the entire effort, including physically manning the booth and being available during most hours of a show.

**Conclusion**

The myriad complexities and variables associated with successful trade show exhibiting require a careful, committed, and contemplative focus in order for this expensive and time consuming activity to evolve into a well-managed, justifiable promotional function. The many lessons, experiences, and opportunities learned by exhibiting provide the exhibitor with a means to establish and build upon a platform where over time, problems are omitted, planning excels, and desired results are assured. Those who can justify trade show exhibiting as a way to reduce sales time and costs while increasing the number of qualified customers and prospects should take every opportunity available to build and support a robust trade show program.