

Trade Talk

Getting the Most out of Your Trade Show

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Tips & Tools
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Why People Attend Trade Shows

Trade shows and conventions are the kind of events that many people go to, but they really aren't sure why. Think back to your own time at a show. How many times have you heard the following? "I don't know why I'm here. I could be back in my territory selling." Those words grate on my ears like fingernails on a chalkboard.

Remember your childhood days when you heard the immortal words, "Never talk to strangers?" It is my belief that a microchip programmed into every mother induces certain phrases, and this is one of them. I heard my wife tell our children the same thing, and if you listen carefully, you will hear the same expression in your own home.

Valuable words, but they do create a problem. While you are at a trade show, anywhere from 10,000 to 250,000 or more people will be coming through the doors. How many people do you think you will know – 10, 20, or maybe 30? Great, after you talk to these people, what happens next? Probably something like, "Sorry, can't talk, Mom says no!"

Shake hands: It need not be that way. You are there to meet people, so get out in the aisle, introduce yourself, get the person's name, shake hands, ask them open-ended questions and begin the qualifying process.

Let's examine why people go to shows:

- **50 per cent of the people that go to a trade show, do so to see new products**
- **35 per cent are at the show for the first time**
- **15 per cent come for general information**
- **10 per cent come for a specific product**
- **49 per cent operate at a managerial level or higher**
- **30 per cent have direct influence on purchases, or actually buy the product**
- **83 per cent have not received a sales call from your organization in the last 12 months**
- **The "power buyer" has an agenda and will stop at only 17 booths**

So why should you be an exhibitor? Because trade shows can be a very effective part of the marketing mix and, just like any other medium, you need an objective to evaluate your activities.

See our list of "do's and don'ts at Trade Shows". It's a steep climb up the ladder of success. Call Marketing Strategies & Solutions for a hand-up.

The following are valid objectives that can be used to measure the effectiveness of a particular show:

- a) You can use it as a sales opportunity to either generate immediate sales or qualified sales leads.
- b) You can use it as a communication opportunity to intensify awareness for a new product, create and develop a renewed interest in an older product, or build and maintain your image.
- c) You can use it as a distribution opportunity to provide dealer or retailer support, sign new dealers, or attract new sales people.
- d) You can use it as a product opportunity to gauge reaction to a new product, or discover new uses or applications for your products

Developing objectives: This list is not all-inclusive as to why you go to a trade show. Depending upon your product or service, you have to develop your own objectives. The most important thing to remember is – have a real, measurable reason to go, otherwise don't.

Don't go because you think it may be a good public relations opportunity. And don't go because the competition is there. They might not know why they are there either!

Things Your Mother Taught You About Selling

Our mothers did teach us hundreds of great sales techniques. How many of you recall this classic sentence on your way to a first date...or an interview. "Remember, you never get a second chance to make a first impression."

Those are good show and exhibit words to live by because 56 per cent of everything people think about is based on their first impressions and a lot of that is related to our body language.

Keep in mind these body language signals:

- If you stand in a booth with your arms crossed, that tells people that you aren't interested
- If you stand around with your hands in your pockets, it indicates to people that you might have some sort of social disease!
- If you lean against the booth or the equipment on display, it tells people that you are obviously too tired to sell and not to bother making inquiries
- If you pace behind an imaginary line or refuse to cross over the carpet line into the aisle, customers will think that you are caged in and they would never want to break through the bars for fear of being mauled

Effectiveness: Furthermore, when you add body language together with clothes, voice, tone, environment and eye contact, over 90 per cent of our communication effectiveness is accounted for.

When you meet people for the first time in this environment, don't start spouting facts. People aren't interested in this. What they are interested in is how your product or service can help them in their everyday life. People get stimulated when you talk to them about the benefits of your product or service

Let's imagine you are selling a very efficient heating system. Do you go on at length telling your new found friends how small and compact it is? How many BTUs it cranks out? How it is both CSA and UL approved? How great your company is?



If you do that, you will lose them. They really don't care about that. What they want to hear are the benefits: how much money will they save; how little time it takes to install; how little effort is involved to maintain and clean it. Those are the things that interest them – money, time and effort.

When we use facts as part of our presentations, we impress ourselves. When we use benefits, we impress others. The benefit of this technique to you is that you will sell more products and services to more people than you would using facts.

Now that we have you at the show (see **Why People Attend Trade Shows**), understanding why you are there, ready to make new friends and are familiar enough with your audience and product line to talk to potential customers where they live (in their wallets or by their watches), you are ready to open your display – but are you?

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A list of do's and don'ts for those who want to climb the ladder of success at Trade Shows



Top 10

In previous articles, we talked about trade shows, how to develop objectives for them, and how to use body language effectively while in attendance. In this article, I will introduce you to my Top 10 Show Rules.

Study this list and live by it. You will find it your stepladder to success at all trade shows.

For more information and to learn about the Top 50, give us a call: 519-432-8327

- 1)** Do wear the company colors. Customers expect the people they buy things from to be dressed in a certain way. It does convey a sense of professionalism. If you are the one choosing the corporate dress code, remember that not everyone looks good in everything. Just because you look good in a bright red golf shirt with horizontal stripes, not everyone is blessed with the same physique. Choose something that complements everyone's body style. Your sales staff will thank you for it.
- 2)** Do wear a name badge. People want to address you by your name, especially if you have introduced yourself first.
- 3)** Don't drink coffee or pop in the booth. The final result is a messy kitchen look with a collection of cans or cups. Potential customers will not approach you to talk about your product if you are "deeply involved" with your coffee.
- 4)** Don't stand around with your hands on your hips or folded over your chest. The first position gives people a defiant look while the other shows a definite disinterest in your product and the customers as well.
- 5)** Do approach customers. If they look interested, don't let them wander away.
- 6)** Don't spend more than three hours at a time in the booth. Neither you nor anyone else can stay alert and interested after standing and working a busy booth that long. Take at least an hour break between shifts. You have to eat, have a coffee and take care of business outside the booth.
- 7)** Don't send new employees to the show. If you have new employees and want them to attend the show, assign them to check out the competition and to prepare an evaluation on their strengths and weaknesses as compared to yours.
- 8)** Don't waste time with competitors who come to your booth and want to tie you up.
- 9)** Do turn your cell phone off while you are in the booth. How often, have you been to a trade show and the person has their computer open, the laptop going and people are walking by. People have made an effort to come to your booth for your product or service and the least you can do is to acknowledge their presence with your attention. If you must talk to someone, step out of the booth for a minute and promise to get back to that person as soon as you are on break.
- 10)** Do remember that shows are hard work and never ever say, "This show is a waste of time, I should be back in my territory selling." A show is what you make it. If you waste it, know now that you'll never get a second chance to make a first impression with all those people you missed. You may not remember them going by, but they certainly will.