

# The Booth and Beyond

With the advent of spring, trade shows begin to blossom. Research suggests that tradeshow are where today's businesses invest much of their marketing budgets. According to *EXPO Magazine*, in 2005 revenue expenditures from booth sales will increase 27%! As these shows and conferences continue to grow in space and numbers, the challenge for businesses becomes how to maximize these shows to secure the greatest return on investment both in dollars and time.

## Define the Goal

Successful trade show marketing begins by first defining the desired end results to be achieved from attendance. This goal should be written using the S.M.A.R.T. criteria –Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistically Set High and Time Driven. Sometimes, several desired results are defined such as: identifying potential competitors; identifying potential customers; determining if this is a trade show where my company should exhibit next year; learn what the competition is saying about our product(s), etc. Through these written goals, then decisions can be made as to the number of people to send and what type of people should the company send e.g. engineers, sales, marketing, etc. Without identifying the initial goals, companies will receive **costly** unexpected and unanticipated outcomes.



## Ready, Set, Stop!

Goals are set, but there is still more planning before you walk through the exhibit hall doors. Do you know what you wish to learn from each exhibitor? The goal is maybe to identify the competition, but how you operationalize that goal is different for company's engineer vs. the company's salesperson.

## Communication – The Key

Given that tradeshow are the **Mecca** for communication both verbally and non-verbally, the key is to be able to deliver in less than 15 seconds what you or your company does. If your "tag line" is delivered in an engaging manner, your visitor will ask a second question allowing for a dialogue to begin.

Communication extends beyond your "tag line." Calendars need to be blocked out to return all those promised telephone calls and send out any promised information. **Follow-up communication planning is critical to achieving your goals.** Creating a post-event mailing piece such as a thank you note and having them available upon your return will enhance goal achievement.

## The Engagement – The Spot Light Is On

The doors open and all eyes are on you and your booth especially if you secured a high traffic booth. You are the consummate professional with the proper tools (business cards, pen, highlighter, Palm, exhibit hall map), professional appearance and your warm, energetic and engaging smile. Now is the time for all that planning to pay.

During breaks, you may wish to use the time to walk the exhibit hall to make necessary, legible notes regarding booths, products, etc. Look to those exhibits that seem to draw attendees to them. In case you see old friends, acknowledge them, but don't linger as this keeps you from achieving your goals. At all times, keep your goal in mind so that you maximize your personal resources of time and energy. Before the event closes, check with registration to secure any available statistics such as a count of the number of attendees as well as information on next year's event.



### **It's Over – What's Next?**

The tradeshow is over, so what's next? The answer is simple – **FOLLOW-UP!** Executing follow-up is probably where many businesses fail to leverage their limited resources and secure a positive return on investment.

After the event, you begin to build your **nurture marketing** for each prospect to create "Top of Mind Awareness (TOMA© [www.toma.com](http://www.toma.com)). In today's hectic business world, research suggests that you need to **touch your prospect 13 times**. Your follow-up efforts from phone calls to mailing literature are the second "touch." Each 21 to 30 days, you again need to touch your prospect with a postcard, fax, email, newsletter or article. Your

**consistency** during this process is what wins the race and turns those high cost trade show dollars into **real sales**.

Keeping **track of all sales** from each trade show allows you to better determine what to **budget for next year**. Sometimes this data takes over a year to generate especially if your sales cycle is 6 months or longer. Reserving your space for the same conference for a second time may be based on an overall impression from the first event, but by the **third time**, you should know if the conference or tradeshow is a **worthwhile investment**.

The following tips may help you plan your next tradeshow endeavor.

#### **Individual Tips – Before Event**

- ❖ Establish goals
- ❖ Determine what you wish to learn from exhibitors
- ❖ Identify what exhibitors need to know about your business
- ❖ Create consistent tag line, elevator speech (10 seconds)
- ❖ Create after event post-event mailing piece e.g. thank you
- ❖ Establish system for collecting business cards
- ❖ Create an easy read professional name tag
- ❖ Locate booths that meet your goals
- ❖ Use map, if available, to determine how you will efficiently walk the show

#### **Individual Tips – During Event**

- ❖ Bring energized **SMILE**
- ❖ Seek to engage others using Active Listening Skills
- ❖ Remembers **lots of business cards**
- ❖ **Bring name tag**
- ❖ **Travel light, leave coat, etc. in car**
- ❖ **Bring Palm and have planner easily accessible**
- ❖ Dress professional with comfortable shoes
- ❖ Have map of event, highlighted with booths of interest
- ❖ Bring highlighter and pen

#### **Individual Tips – After Event**

- ❖ Evaluate goals at end of show
- ❖ Reserve next day for follow-up
- ❖ Block off next year's date if this is a **MUST SHOW**



### **Booth Tips – Before Event**

- ❖ Create a draw to your booth
- ❖ Review check list for any giveaways, handouts
- ❖ Order fresh flower, candy etc for event
- ❖ Check booth for any damage or to update
- ❖ Review roles of those staffing the booth
- ❖ Practice "10 second" speeches

### **Booth Tips – During Event**

- ❖ Note booths with creativity and high traffic
- ❖ Supply candy or "take aways"
- ❖ Utilize fresh flowers help to attract visitors
- ❖ Limit time visiting with friends or existing business contacts
- ❖ Avoid sitting
- ❖ **Keep booth open until event closes!**

### **Booth Tips – After Event**

- ❖ Have enough people to quickly disassemble your booth
- ❖ Notice and communicate any damage to the booth
- ❖ Secure disc from "Electronic Swiper"
- ❖ Register for next year's event

Word Count 1,042

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