

# GUIDE TO event marketing & trade show display strategies



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The return on your investment in consumer show marketing almost always ranks as the #1 most cost effective method for meeting and closing new customers. Key planning is required to help you be successful. This document should serve as a quick study in the art of exhibiting, to help save you time and effort and to help make you money!



# GUIDE TO event marketing & trade show display strategies

## HOW TO ENSURE YOUR SUCCESS AT YOUR NEXT TRADE OR CONSUMER SHOW!

### Why participate in a show?

Trade shows offer unique sales and marketing opportunities by providing a forum for vendors to come face-to-face with the highest caliber of qualified visitors with buying influence.

Research has proven that the most effective sales process is face-to-face sales. Research has proven that face-to-face appointments are harder to get than they used to be. Research says that most sales people are doing less face-to-face sales than they used to.

Even in the information age, most business is done between people who have established a relationship.

**You will drive your success at a show.** Advanced planning is essential to success at a show. If well planned, you will have better control, save yourself time and money, and provide yourself with the opportunity to gain significantly better results.

#### successful exhibitors will:

- plan for their success
- support and integrate the booth with other marketing activities, and
- provide their staff with the tools and resources they need to achieve objectives and goals

## Research the Event - Get Into the Right Show

1. Does the show audience comprise your target market?
2. Visit the exhibition or talk to others who have. Open your eyes to all aspects of the opportunity.
3. Understand the expense - be sure to understand the entire cost of your participation in the event.
4. How long has the Show Producer been producing events? Have they proven to have the expertise and marketing ability to produce a successful advertising campaign to attract show attendees?
5. Realize that all shows are not created equal - just like competitors in your industry; some are good, and some are not. Never discount a show opportunity because of a bad experience in an unrelated event.

## Set Objectives for Your Participation

The most common fault in exhibiting is not knowing what is trying to be achieved. Set objectives to ensure you and all staff involved in planning and staffing the event knows what the objectives are.

### Common reasons exhibitors give for participating in shows:

1. Make sales
2. Meet new potential clients
3. Introduce new (or modified) products or services

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4. Create an image
5. Increase exposure to a target market
6. Demonstrate a specialized product or service
7. Be compared to your competition
8. Conduct market research
9. Address past servicing problems

## Primary Goal

From the list above (or your additional reasons for exhibiting), determine and/or create a measurable primary goal that achieves your reasons for exhibiting.

- Choose an item that is most important for you to accomplish (x number of solid sales leads for the show)
- Let this primary goal guide you through other decisions on booth design, booth staffing, literature distributed, and other show decisions
- Trying to achieve too much from one exhibit may lead to disappointment
- Break this down to smaller goals to give targets to each person staffing your booth to get them in sync with your goals for the show.

## Identify Back Up Objectives

List your back up objectives to ensure you won't miss any opportunities.

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## value of face-to-face interaction

- 87% of exhibitors rate face to face interaction in marketing their company's products or services to prospects very or extremely important in performing their job.
- 40% of marketing executives indicate that the importance of event marketing for their company was increasing.
- 76% of attendees rate face to face interaction with potential vendors or suppliers extremely important in making buying decisions.

## Set Realistic Objectives

If targets are too low, there is no challenge. If they are too high, you end up with frustrated booth staff. Ensure all resources are available to booth staff to meet the objectives.

## Read the Exhibitor Manual

Your best place to start pre-planning the event is to read the exhibitors manual. All National Event Management manuals are available on line in our show website at [www.nationalevent.com](http://www.nationalevent.com). Show Management should have provided you with an action list of things to do and important deadlines not to miss. There will be forms and lists of suppliers who can help you with many aspects of your exhibit and answer many questions for you. Be sure to meet all deadlines with show suppliers. This will save you MONEY!



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## Booth Design

The objective of all booth design should be to grab the attention of attendees. The design of your booth will reflect directly the image of your product or service. You have 3 - 5 seconds to make an impression as a visitor walks by. **MAKE THEM STOP!**

Your booth should differentiate your company from other exhibitors and demonstrate your Unique Sales Position. Make sure people coming to your booth can experience your product or service. Let them touch, see, feel, hear or taste it. Make sure there is a call to action to help you achieve your goal; something to inspire interaction between show attendees and your staff.

Design your booth with a left to right focus - from the visitor's perspective. This is how they will scan the booth to determine if they should stop.

- Get your tables out of the way! Let visitors into your booth - make easy access for them to get into your booth. (If you have a corner booth, keep both sides open if possible.)
- Determine if chairs are required. If sit down meetings will close business, strategically set chairs at the back of the booth. If sit down meetings are unrealistic, you may not need chairs as it will only tempt booth staff to sit down on the job!
- Ask Show Management for help - they can direct you to many outside resources for booth accessories and booth marketing strategies if required (i.e. books, videos, associations and seminars to attend).

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- Ask yourself important questions like: Should you refurbish or use your current exhibit? Is there a need for a new exhibit? Is there a need for new graphics? What show services need to be ordered? Has booth installment/dismantling been organized?
- You can rent from our Show service company. See our website for photos of booth rental options. Or also research cost-effective large format images from local graphic design & print houses. Today, these are great options to make a major impact on show attendees without blowing your budget.

## Pre-Show Promotion

- A well thought out promotion can produce spectacular results. Thirty percent of visitors claim it was a pre-show invitation that brought them to the show. (Show Management will provide your firm with some free admission passes and/or discount coupons to invite your clients and potential clients to the show.)
- Set appointments to meet potential clients at the show. Give that hard to meet potential client a reason for coming to see you at the show.
- Include your participation in the show in your ads running two weeks prior to the show. This may entice clients who are reluctant to call you to come and see you in a no pressure environment at the show.

## Booth Staffing

Your booth staff's attitude will be the #1 factor in the success of your participation as an exhibitor. Have the most positive, approachable and outgoing people staff your booth. Be sure your staff is also qualified to answer all important questions about your organization.

Ensure all staff who are manning the booth know the goals of the event. Hold a pre-show meeting if possible to communicate your strategy, objectives and other opportunities for building relationships at the event.



## Selling at the Show

Spend you time wisely! It is important to spend time finding the people you should be talking to, rather than "pitching" to everyone who walks by. The following are the key areas of dealing with people on the show floor.

### Approach

- Don't wait for people to approach you, be proactive!
- Talk about their buying needs, rather than your products or services
- Find effective openers when they approach the booth or when you have made eye contact with them as they pass by the aisles. Never say: "Can I help you?" Try: "Have you seen this product?" or "Are you familiar with our company?"

## Qualify The Prospect Relatively Quickly

Use the Action Acronym to find the six bits of information you need:

- AUTHORITY** - Are they decision-makers or have influence?
- CASH** - Do they have the resources for your products?
- TIME** - Is this prospect ready to buy within your sales cycle?
- IDENTITY** - Use a lead card to obtain required information?
- OPERATIONAL CONSTRAINTS** - Is there a reason they could not do business with you?
- NEED** - Does this prospect have a need for your product or service?

## Presentation

Teach your staff the "Trade Show Demonstration" - this is very different from the office demonstration or "pitch." Be sure your staff can summarize and present the features and benefits of your products or services in less than three minutes. Keep focused on the customer's need to buy rather than your need to sell.



## Disengage

- Once you have finished your job...move on!
- Create a lead sheet where you can take down pertinent information that you will need to follow up with the customer. Make it simple for your representatives to tick off appropriate boxes for the products or services that the prospect was interested in. Asking the customer their info is another great way to qualify the prospect, plus, completing the lead sheet is a great way to disengage the prospect so you can move along to meet other clients during valuable show hours.
- Use premiums, brochures or contests to help you disengage (Be sure to have effective methods of disengaging unqualified prospects quickly.)
- Be polite

## Follow up

- Confirm your follow up plans with your prospect
- Thank the prospect
- Keep your promises

Create an effective follow up plan to take full advantage of the leads generated at the show. Be sure they remember you from the show. (It should be a warm call!)

## Three Methods of Follow Up:

Without a well-thoughtout and well-executed follow up plan for the show, you are destined to have unsatisfactory results. Surveys show that less than 20% of exhibitors actually execute a follow up plan; use this to your advantage to ensure your success! Trade shows and events are the only form of marketing that allow you the face-to-face introduction to your best prospects; it is now your follow up methods that will allow you to create a relationship with your prospects.

### 1. Email

- Nothing is more impressive than your prospect having an email waiting for them when they return from the show. Have some generic (or specific, if possible) information on your company to refresh the prospect of your meeting at the show. This will dramatically increase your impact on the customer and get your sales staff to the next key step in your sales process.

### 2. Direct Mail

- First mailing 7 - 30 days following the show
- Follow up mail on a regular basis

- Find interesting and useful things to send to prospects (not expensive); i.e. special announcements or invitations to other shows or events

### 3. Telemarketing

- A telemarketer should have a reason for calling; i.e. set up an appointment or obtain customer needs
- Telemarketers should be well trained, have product knowledge, understand selling skills, communicate well, and have a pleasant telephone manner
- All questions should be answered within twenty-four hours. Promises should be noted and followed up promptly

An effective follow up program is vital to the success of a show. All of your work and efforts at the show will only be successful if an effective follow up program is implemented.

Working a trade show stretches most peoples' comfort zones and builds new sales skills and techniques. To win in today's marketplace, we have to be constantly looking for new business and taking advantage of opportunities whenever they occur, and trade shows offer such opportunities!

Be prepared, plan to be successful, and follow up on your leads!

**Best of Luck at the show!**

For further information, or help in making your next show more successful, please contact National Event Management. We are here to help!



### NATIONAL EVENT MANAGEMENT

Tel: **905-477-2677**

Toll Free: **1-800-891-4859**

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### PRE-SHOW CHECKLIST

- Business Cards       Calendar
- Exhibitor Manual, including contract, order forms & copies of orders sent in advance
- Review booth location on floorplan
- Letterhead & envelopes
- Pens, markers, tape & paper clips
- Appointment book to make customer appointments
- Phone contacts with existing prospects
- Lead Forms       Stapler, staple remover, & staples
- List, review & clarify show objectives
- Brochures, flyers & press releases
- Review presentation and literature
- Bills of lading for shipping

### SHOW CHECKLIST

- Wear registration badge       Arrive early
- Walk the show to see competition, hall layout & show facilities
- Review exhibit layout & sales presentation
- Review staff objectives and number of sales and leads per hour
- Keep exhibits neat & clean (put coats and personal bags out of sight)
- Remember that you are there to generate sales and collect leads, do everything you can to ensure your goals!

## LEADS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State/Prov., Zip/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

### INTEREST

product \_\_\_\_\_  product \_\_\_\_\_

product \_\_\_\_\_  product \_\_\_\_\_

### WE DISCUSSED...

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### MY FOLLOW-UP ACTION WITH THIS PROSPECT IS:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### TIME FRAME?

0 to 3 months  3 to 6 months  6 to 12 months  12 months+

## LEADS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State/Prov., Zip/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

### INTEREST

product \_\_\_\_\_  product \_\_\_\_\_

product \_\_\_\_\_  product \_\_\_\_\_

### WE DISCUSSED...

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### MY FOLLOW-UP ACTION WITH THIS PROSPECT IS:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### TIME FRAME?

0 to 3 months  3 to 6 months  6 to 12 months  12 months+





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