

# 7 Proven Strategies to Maximize Your Tradeshow Experience

Here's your playbook for pre-show prep to post-show impact.

COLLECTIVE 1776

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**How do you feel when you approach an upcoming tradeshow? Dread? Excitement? Exhaustion?**

Your response may vary depending on how long you've been in the industry. The reality is tradeshows are an indispensable platform for networking and industry intel gathering, especially for defense-focused companies and contracting officers, if you plan well.

These high-energy (and exhausting) events offer unique opportunities to pitch, learn, connect, and engage. But it would help if you established goals, created an action plan, and prepared your communications before you set foot on the show floor. Otherwise, you're just another person with a badge at a work function.

The biggest thing to remember when networking at the show is that you are talking with other **humans**.

Recognize that partnerships and relationships make sales possible and are established when people trust and like each other. Get to know people for who they are outside of the role they've reported to the show; a personal connection may be more impactful than your sales pitch.

**The success of your tradeshow experience is measured not just by the number of business cards you collect but by the quality of the relationships you build and nurture.**



# PREPARE YOUR TARGET LIST

## **BEFORE THE SHOW:**

1. Create a target list of people and companies you want to engage.
2. Start by scanning the tradeshow website for a list of speakers, exhibitors, and sponsors.
3. Research these key players to understand their business needs, interests, and challenges.

Before stepping onto the tradeshow floor, you should have a solid list of targets to prioritize your time and efforts effectively. Most show websites or apps allow you to create your target list online, simplifying the process.



# MASTER YOUR ELEVATOR PITCHES



Shows are nonstop, which means if you catch the ear of the right person, you're on the clock because there are others in line to have the next conversation. Craft compelling elevator pitches for different segments of your audience. Whether speaking to a potential customer or a high-ranking official, your pitch should be succinct but impactful.

Tailor your talking points to address their specific interests and how your product or service can solve their problems or enhance their operations. Remember, don't heavy sell; this introductory conversation should pique interest and prime the person for a follow-up.

**NOTE:** All company representatives should have prepared talking points about your company, product, or service to ensure your message is communicated consistently.

# PLAN YOUR POST-EVENT FOLLOW-UP

Don't wait until you're back in the office to start the follow-up communications. **Before** you leave for the tradeshow, draft a series of personalized follow-up emails to the people you want to meet. Leave blank spaces to insert key information you learned from them during your interaction.

Be ready to send them out within a week of your return. This pre-event prep limits the overwhelming task of show follow-up.

**Helpful hint:** Insert the details of the conversation into the email when you conclude the conversation so it's fresh in your mind.



STRATEGY #4

# BE A WALKING BRAND AMBASSADOR



There are a lot of faces at events. Buyers meet hundreds of people who want to partner with them. Even if your technology or product won them over, visual cues still help. Make sure your brand is prominently displayed in the materials you share, such as slick sheets, LinkedIn profiles, and business cards; even wear branded clothing if casual attire is allowed. This creates a professional and cohesive look and makes it easier for potential leads to remember and recognize you after the show.

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# PROVIDE A SIMPLE FEEDBACK MECHANISM

All too often, people leave a show never to be heard from again, and in the world of marketing and business development, that is an epic fail. All new connections are leads. That lead should immediately enter your customer funnel. Provide a simple feedback mechanism, such as a business card with a QR code or a link to your website where contacts can leave their details, sign up for more information, or watch a product demo. This streamlined approach makes it more likely for attendees to connect with you post-event.



# LISTEN AND LEARN



In-person interactions regarding sales are still as powerful as ever. Take advantage of the face-to-face interactions to listen to the pain points of potential clients or stakeholders. Actively engage in conversations, asking questions that go beyond your pitch. **The insights you gather can be invaluable for tailoring your marketing strategy, product development, and customer service to better meet the needs of your audience.** More importantly, it builds rapport and elevates the human connection.



# STAY OPEN TO THE UNEXPECTED

While preparation is vital, flexibility is equally important. Stay open to impromptu conversations, unexpected opportunities, and new connections. Sometimes, the most fruitful interactions are the ones you hadn't planned for. Be ready to adapt your approach and learn from every conversation and interaction you have at the show.







# GET PREPARED

The key to tradeshow success? Having a plan. Instead of just showing up, come prepared. Crafting a solid plan beforehand can make all the difference in maximizing your time and opportunities at the event.

Use the checklist below to strategically prep for your tradeshow experience.



## CHECKLIST

-  Create a target list of people and companies you want to engage.
-  Research key websites that drive your agenda.
-  Review the tradeshow agenda and prepare your strategy.
-  Invest in a customer relationship management tool (CRM), like Honeybook or Dubsado, to manage contacts or data you'll collect from the show.

# FOLLOW-UP

Crafting a successful tradeshow experience extends far beyond the event itself. These proactive follow-up strategies in the checklist below not only solidify connections made at the tradeshow but also lay the groundwork for continued engagement and future collaborations.



## CHECKLIST

- ✔ Reach out to leads promptly, whether through personalized emails, phone calls, or social media messages, to maintain momentum and foster relationships.
- ✔ Express gratitude to attendees, booth visitors, and potential collaborators for their time and interest in your offerings.
- ✔ Incorporate any new insights, feedback, or contacts gathered from the tradeshow into your marketing materials, such as brochures, presentations, and website content.

# KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

The conversation doesn't end when the event does. It's essential to have a robust communication strategy in place to nurture leads and build lasting connections. Below are a few tips to keep the dialogue going beyond the event floor.



## CHECKLIST


- ✓ Create a captivating landing page and lead magnet to direct interested leads for more information. This also builds your email list!
- ✓ Engage with your contacts on social platforms to start building your network.
- ✓ Boost your thought leadership presence and post content consistently that supports your brand's story, products, and services.



# Tradeshow Planning


<b>TRADESHOW</b>	
<b>DATE</b>	

TARGET COMPANIES   CONTACTS	
Name, Title, Email	Booth #




*Create your list of must visit and meet people and booths before you enter the show.*

RELEVANT NEWS   ARTICLES	
Article Title and Link	Date




*Research news that is relevant to the conversations you'll be having so you can reference Important data points.*

AREAS OF INTEREST	
DAY 1	DAY 2
DAY 3	DAY 4



*Identify areas of interest or technologies you want to learn about while at the show. Plan them out so you don't miss an opportunity.*

EVENTS TO ATTEND	
DAY 1	
DAY 2	
DAY 3	
DAY 4	



*Create your list of must attend events before you enter the show.*



# Tradeshow Planning

<b>TRADESHOW</b>	
<b>DATE</b>	

<b>PROGRAM OFFICE CONTACTS</b>	


<b>NOTES FROM MEETINGS</b>	

<b>RELEVANT ACTIVITIES</b>	
<b>RFP   OPPORTUNITY</b>	<b>PAST CONTRACTS</b>
<b>COMPETITORS</b>	<b>LINKEDIN POSTS</b>

# Tradeshow Planning


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# BEST OF LUCK!

Need some support executing these tasks and creating messaging?  
Reach out to us to learn how we can help you make the most of your marketing.

[COLLECTIVE1776.COM](https://collective1776.com)