

Marketing Link

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Marketing Link is your link to news, information and advice on issues of interest to businesses, organizations and marketing professionals. The quarterly newsletter emphasizes topics related to marketing, advertising, promotions, communications and corporate culture.

Now Showing in This Issue:

THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE TRADE SHOW BUSINESS

*Marketing has a lot in common with
show biz - and nowhere is that more
apparent than at the trade show . . .*

There's an audience, a cast, props, sets and scouting for the right location. For many companies, trade shows are the heart of their marketing program, a vital muscle that keeps a revenue stream flowing through the corporate body.

That's a tall order for an exercise we often think of as a table, a smile and some brochures.

Trade shows have evolved into a highly specialized, business-to-business marketing art with technology and techniques that can enhance your contacts, leads and success. It's a direct opportunity to draw attention to your products and services - but getting that attention isn't easy. There are over 10,000 trade shows in North America every year. You're part of a field of 1.5 million exhibitors trying to reach more than 100 million attendees. What you do before, during and after the show will determine whether a particular performance is a hit or a flop.

Should you exhibit at a trade show?

In a 2004 survey in Sales & Marketing Management Magazine, 22 percent of business executives said trade shows generated more leads than any other marketing source. Trade shows provide a level playing field for businesses large and small, and they're a great way to get "face-time" with people who need what you offer. In addition, they can reduce the number of follow-up contacts needed to close a sale (1.6 with a trade show, 3.7 without one), as well as the overall cost of the sale. Other reasons to participate in trade shows include:

- Finding new customers
- Introducing new products or services
- Reinforcing your position with existing customers
- Recruiting new talent

Also inside this issue:

Introduction to Trade Shows	1
Booth Design Tips	2
Pre-show Marketing	2
Staffing Your Booth	3
Following Up	3
Promotions and Gifts	4
Inc. Blotter	4

- Distributing product samples
- Performing product demonstrations
- Checking out the competition
- Receiving client feedback

How do you choose which shows to attend?

Start by identifying your objectives - are you likely to further your marketing goals by participating? Before you can answer, you'll need information about the show:

Who will be there? How many companies are represented?

What's the focus? Is it a good fit for my company?

What are the costs? Is the potential return worth the investment?

What do my salespeople think? Have we been here before?

Am I prepared to make a good presentation if I participate?

Evaluate the show's history and don't be shy about calling your key customers to see if they'll be attending. The more information you have in hand, the easier it is to determine which trade shows are right for you.

Give your booth an **EXTREME** MAKEOVER

You have reserved your booth,

made your way to the trade show and have some great selling points you are ready to share with attendees - but how do you get their attention? The average trade show has more than 400 exhibitors (some have a lot more), and the average visitor makes his or her way to only 25 booths. Don't worry - you can stand out in the crowd and achieve the positive objectives you've planned for with an impressive booth design. Plan your booth around your objectives: What will it take to accomplish your goals? How much space do you need? Many trade shows offer various booth sizes, and most of the time, exhibitors choose a size according to their budget. That's not necessarily the best strategy. Do you need a larger space for demonstrations, or a private area to meet with potential clients? Also, consider the competition - will a larger booth differentiate you from the smaller booths that surround you?

Design Elements

Except for your budget and imagination, your choices for displaying your exhibit are endless. They range from a simple tabletop exhibit and signage, to large back-wall exhibits, to 3-D electronic island displays with computerized sound and light capabilities. Design is important because it separates you from the crowd, creates an impression about your business and determines how comfortable a potential client will feel approaching your booth. Remember, it's all about the customer. You might believe your exhibit is a work of art, but you'll be a starving artist if it doesn't meet the needs of the

people you're trying to attract. The design of your booth should inform, entice and have a message that's readable from 20 feet away. Consider these design elements:

- Booth should be easy to enter and arranged in a comfortable, non-threatening layout.
- It should be functional for your needs, and in most cases, versatile and portable for future uses.
- Products and important signage should be displayed at eye-level.
- Use professional quality graphics to exhibit a professional image.
- Signage should be easy on the eyes and easy to read.
- Post your company sign at a level high enough to be seen across a room.
- Demo stations and your information area should be large enough to handle multiple visitors at once.
- Color code areas to direct visitors to different stations.
- Keep pens and pads of paper handy for diagramming and notes.
- Signage should answer basic questions about who you are and what you do.
- Design the booth with clearly identified areas to take advantage of cross-selling opportunities.

- Have an organized area to receive business cards or information.

- Brochures and information should be out front and easily accessible.

- Provide adequate storage to ensure no clutter or blocking of the area.

Optional Elements

- Use computer monitors or television sets to run a company ad or presentation.
- Bring free-standing podiums to display products.
- Create models to demonstrate the function of equipment.
- Have a designated area to pick up gift items and giveaways.
- Establish a semi-private area for more in-depth meetings with good prospects.
- Use an entertainment source, game or food item to increase your visitor stream.
- Host an informational or educational seminar at a regularly scheduled time.
- Accent your area with large photographs and back-lit transparencies.

Keep in mind that visitors determine the success of your trade show efforts, and booth design is your best tool for attracting visitors. If you have questions, it's a good idea to contact an advertising agency or professional exhibit design firm for help in planning your booth display.

Pre-show Marketing: Let Them Know Before You Go

First impressions matter. And there's no reason to wait until showtime to make one. You can increase your effectiveness and trade show visibility by promoting your booth before the show. Getting the word out early:

- Urges companies to attend the event
- Invites attendees to look for your booth
- Establishes an impression about your company
- Informs visitors about your offerings
- Sets you apart from the crowd

Standing out in the crowd is important. Research shows that fewer than 1 in 5 exhibitors use pre-show promotions as a way to reach potential attendees. Yet most people who attend trade shows come with a pre-set idea about what they want to accomplish and the types of information they want to gather. Becoming part of that agenda is a big step toward ensuring higher, more targeted visitation.

Connect Early

There are a number of ways to make an effective connection before a trade show. Start by identifying the firms or individuals who are likely to attend. In some cases, show managers will supply a list or can offer the names of companies who attended the previous year. If a list is not available, you can work with trade associations or your own sales staff to compile a suitable list of candidates. Next, devise your message. It should reflect your company's offerings and give individuals a reason to stop by your booth. Popular pre-show promotion techniques include:

- Pre-show fax
- Personal letter or direct mail piece
- Email blast
- Phone calls
- Printed invitation to a hospitality gathering
- A note or door hanger for each hotel room
- Billboard on the road to the arena

- Welcome posting at the airport
- An ad in a trade journal or magazine
- Press releases sent to target publications
- A contest or gift incentive

Contests and Gifts

Publicizing a contest, such as a drawing for a prize, not only increases the likelihood of an attendee visiting your booth, it's a valuable tool for collecting contact and lead information. Exhibitors might also try sending their contact list tokens to be redeemed for a free gift at the booth. Another effective technique is to send a part of a giveaway (such as a calculator case or pen box) before the show and giving away the rest of the item (the calculator or pen) when they come by the booth. Bells International and other promotional products companies can provide trade show gift ideas that can be imprinted with your booth number, theme title or facility name.



Working a trade show is exactly what it sounds like - work. It takes preparation and commitment to do it well. Trade shows are opportunities to bring in new business and they should be staffed accordingly. If you want positive results, send your best people, not your most expendable. There are strategies and techniques that can make anyone a more effective exhibitor.

Don't chit-chat
with fellow booth staffers. It can make visitors feel as if they're interrupting.

Dress
professionally (or appropriately for the venue). Consider coordinating shirts for your booth staff.

Connect
with other exhibitors. There may be networking possibilities that are mutually beneficial.

Have some small talk ready.
Be prepared
to break the ice.

Don't be late.
Don't leave the booth unattended.

Stay Positive
Never bad-mouth competitors.

Observe
etiquette - don't eat, drink, smoke or talk on the cell phone in the booth.

Qualify
leads in a timely manner, and dismiss non-qualifying visitors in a cordial way.

Smile
- make eye contact, it's the best way to put others at ease.

Lose
the attitude.

Ask
open-ended questions that invite answers. Yes or no questions don't engage conversation and provide few opportunities to connect. Don't interrogate.

Never
promise more than you can deliver. Always deliver what you promise.

Keep
business cards handy and brochures organized.

Wear
the nametag on the right-hand side so it can be seen while shaking hands.

Cross-selling

Cross-selling is the process of offering information about a range of products and services at the same booth. A visitor may have come with one need you couldn't address, but that doesn't mean you can't do business. By asking the right questions and steering visitors in the proper direction, you may find they have a different need that your company can satisfy. Use a team approach to "hand-off" customers who might need information on additional offerings.

It Starts at the Top

It's up to you to ensure that your people have the knowledge and information they need to make the most of this group effort. First, market internally. It's one thing to let your customers know about a new product or service, but have you notified your staff? The more your exhibitors are kept in the loop, the more effective they can be in cross-selling your services. Also, incentives aren't just for your visitors - they're powerful motivators for your team. Offer incentives for a specified number of leads or provide gifts to reward a job well done. You'll be pleasantly surprised by the results.

LEADERS FOLLOW-UP

It's just common courtesy and it's VERY good business - follow-up with the people you meet. Shortly after the show ends (preferably within 24 hours) send a note or post-card to everyone who stopped by, entered your contest drawing or left a business card. Let them know you were glad to meet them and include a brief reminder of your products or services. Be sure to include a business card and contact information, and invite them to call if they have needs you can address. Prepare a more comprehensive marketing package for good leads and, when appropriate, follow-up with a phone call.

GIVEAWAYS **KEEP ON GIVING**



There is one universal truth in the trade show world - everybody likes free stuff.

Whether it's a premium you send out as a pre-show promotion, a unique item that you give away at the booth, or a spectacular prize item awarded in a raffle or drawing, the lure of the freebie is a sure-fire way to increase your lead generation. Studies show promotions increase lead acquisitions by an average of 33 percent. There are thousands of products that can be used as trade show incentives, and choosing the right one requires

careful consideration of your needs and objectives. Here are a few points to consider:

Budget

If you were giving away a Lexus to every visitor, then the line in front of your booth would start somewhere in the next state. It's a great incentive but a terrible thing to do to your budget. Consider how many people will be attending, how many are likely to visit your booth and what your budget will bear for an effective promotional giveaway.

Be Creative

The more distinctive the item, the more likely it is to be noticed. Come up with a unique giveaway idea they're not likely to find at other booths. And remember - there's no law that says every visitor has to get the same gift. Think about supplying higher-end gifts to very good prospects and another gift item for those who are just stopping by. (You might want to send the higher-end gifts out after the show, or at least be discreet. You wouldn't want to offend a marginal prospect this year who might be a great customer next year.)

Tie In With Your Offering

Is there a product that will remind prospects of your company? A computer firm might offer a mousepad with its logo and website, or a food company might hand out oven mitts. You can even distribute samples of your own product.

What Do They Need?

Think about where you are: Are there items you can give away that your visitors will find useful? Products like notebooks and tote bags can be used on the trade show floor, and they're likely to be around long after the event is over.

Target An Industry

Know what you're looking for in a prospective client and choose items that appeal directly to that industry.

Imprint a Memory

Gifts are great for getting someone to your booth, but they can also be important reminders of your services after participants return home. Imprinting the giveaway with your logo, website or contact information makes it a more powerful, more cost-effective tool for your marketing campaign.

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Marketing Link is a publication of Bells International, Inc., an Austin-based corporation offering advertising, promotional products, new media, event fulfillment, online store development and marketing services for clients across the U.S.

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Inc. **BLOTTER**

Wonder why television advertising is so popular? The average American spends about **120 hours a month in front of the tube** - about five days worth.

Good news if you sell furniture, paint, building supplies or home appliances. **Houses are getting bigger.** The average American home is 2,200 sq. ft. It was 1,400 sq. ft. in 1970.

They say kids and dogs can sell anything. They're natural-born actors.

Dogs can make about 100 different facial expressions.

You notice **they don't say the same thing about cats.** It might just be harder to put them to work - they sleep about 16 hours a day, the most of any mammal.

The only **vegetable ice cream** ever produced? A ketchup flavored concoction from Baskin Robbins.

The fact that a **gecko** is the spokesman for Geico Insurance Co. isn't that surprising. It's not just that the names are similar. The gecko is the only **lizard with a voice.**



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