

7 TIPS **TO** PREPLANNING **YOUR WAY TO** TRADESHOW DOMINATION

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WHAT MAKES A TRADE SHOW SUCCESSFUL?

Every trade show is different, and if you're wondering why some are more successful than others, you can bet it all came down to pre-planning. While what you do at the show has a big impact, pre-show tactics are the only way to triple, if not quadruple, leads. By taking a little more time to plan your trade show and marketing tactics, you'll be able to get a conversation going before you even meet your prospects. You'll build a contagious buzz around your brand, and get more people excited to visit your booth.

STATS YOU SHOULD CARE ABOUT:



YOU HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO FIND
NEW CUSTOMERS IN EVERY 4 OUT
OF 5 PEOPLE



70% OF SHOW ATTENDEES PLAN
A LIST OF BOOTHS TO VISIT BEFORE
HITTING THE FLOOR



81% OF GUESTS HAVE
BUYING AUTHORITY



ONLY 10-15% OF
EXHIBITORS INVEST IN
PRE-SHOW MARKETING

We find that last one a little shocking, considering the other three. Studies show that pre-show marketing has a massive impact on ROI, yet it remains an area of weakness for countless businesses that lose too many opportunities to count. Pre-show promotion can result in 50% higher lead conversion, so go ahead - pour yourself some coffee, with whatever you need to spice it up, and let's talk pre-show tactics.



TIP #1

CREATE A CAMPAIGN

When you sit in a cinema and watch a movie for two hours, you're actually witnessing years of hard work; and your trade show isn't any different. We're not saying you have to start prepping a year in advance, but a few months will do you good. While most trade shows last no longer than three days, a 3-month marketing campaign will build a buzz and raise the hype, getting people excited about the event well in advance.

THERE ARE SEVERAL TACTICS YOU CAN USE TO MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD.

Twitter: Set-up a campaign and strategy plan for well-thought-out posts over the next three months. Know exactly which post you'll release on which days.

LinkedIn: The same goes for this platform, but the difference lies in tone. LinkedIn is a more professional platform, while Twitter is more casual. You can post the same messages on both though - it's entirely up to you.

Facebook: No matter how many social media platforms emerge annually, Facebook still comes out on top with over 2 BILLION monthly users. Facebook has stellar marketing campaign features which you can refine and laser-target your audience and, in turn, maximize your ROI. With Facebook marketing, you can get a little closer to your audience and build meaningful relationships with attendees, building mailing lists and sparking interest.

There are so many benefits to using social media for trade show marketing, but the process must begin with a detailed strategy. www.hootsuite.com is a good place for you to plan out your social media calendar. But - you don't have to do it alone. There are plenty of marketing managers out there who you can hire on a per-gig basis to do it for you.



NO MATTER WHICH PLATFORM(S) YOU USE TO CREATE MARKETING CAMPAIGNS, THEY SHOULD ALL SHARE A FEW TRAITS:

1. Kick things off with a bang, AKA: an impactful first post with a decent lifespan.
2. Post pictures before, during, and after the show to encourage more people to stop by your booth.
3. Use customized, fun hashtags for all pre, at, and post-show posts. Google trending hashtags to find the ones that will get the most traction and views.

Of course, the only way to really measure the success of a trade show is to look at post-event results. Be sure to calculate new followers to determine your campaign's success, and start new relationships with those followers. But - again - this all begins with sound pre-planning.





TIP #2

HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT TRADE SHOW

On average, businesses pay anywhere from \$125-\$200 per square foot to participate in a trade show. In other words, a 20x20 display could set you back \$50K - \$80K. With that type of budget, we're sure you don't want to mess around or simply "test the waters". That's why it's so important to do your homework to see which trade shows are the right fit for you. Trade shows are notorious for gobbling up marketing budgets, so here are a few ways you can make more informed decisions when picking the right shows.

1. **Make a list.** Newsflash: The internet is your best friend. <https://www.tsnn.com/> is a prime example of a popular website to find relevant trade shows near you. When compiling your list, be sure to keep your clearly-defined strategies and objectives at heart.
2. **Add to your list.** The public is also your best friend. Ask your clients what trade shows they go to and where they'd be interested in seeing you.
3. **Refine your list.** Put your detective coat on - it's time to do some digging. <https://www.tradeshowexecutive.com/archive/recent-issues1550/> is a great place to see how shows have done, since stats are posted 2 months after a show has ended. You'll discover what trade shows work, which still *need* some work, and everything in-between.
4. **Be the guest.** Before paying to *participate* in a trade show, try attending a few as a guest yourself. You'll get to meet other exhibitors and attendees, giving you a real idea of how successful different shows are.
5. **Look at the history.** An event might look good now, but has it always been that way? Will it still be around for a few years? Longevity is a great success indicator. Try to learn more about the show organizers' reputation, and ask past attendees about their experiences.
6. **Where do I sign up?** That's the spirit. Once you know what trade shows are best for your brand, you can start signing up for the ones you believe will fast-track your success the most.



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***KNOWING YOU CAN
COUNT ON YOUR EXHIBIT
HOUSE TO BE THERE
FOR YOU ANYTIME
MAKES THE TRADE SHOW
WORLD SO MUCH EASIER***



TIP #3

HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT EXHIBIT PARTNER

Selecting the right exhibit house to partner with is an important decision in making sure your trade show program runs smoothly. Here are seven qualities you should look for in a potential exhibit house:

1. THEY TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Yes, we are all human and things happen...especially on the trade show floor. However, when it does, you need an exhibit house to take responsibility, own up to the problem, and quickly move on to plan B.

2. THEY HAVE ON-STAFF DESIGNERS

Many marketing departments have graphic designers on staff. Having the option of getting design help from your exhibit house is huge, so you can reduce your designers' workload by keeping some projects in-house, and giving others to your exhibit house.

3. THEY PROVIDE LEAD GENERATION ASSISTANCE

Timely marketing initiatives for trade shows are imperative, but many marketers are already doing so much that it's nearly impossible to squeeze in pre-show mailers, post-show emails, calls, brochure follow-ups, and the full works. To fit those projects in, sometimes, other tasks need to be pushed aside, or you could outsource them.

4. THEY ARE INNOVATIVE

Marketing Directors are like circus clowns, constantly trying to keep all the balls in the air. They are so focused on all the moving parts, that it's difficult to also keep one eye on innovation and forward-thinking. It's important that an exhibit house be continuously up-to-date on industry trends and bring creative solutions to the table. You want your brand to be relevant and appealing for many years to come with the ability to change and easily update to grow with technology.

5. THEY FIT YOUR PERSONALITY

Let's face it, working with someone you like is important. You want to be comfortable calling someone after hours or on the weekend, and be welcomed with a smile and willingness to help. A jovial sense of humor helps make the work day less stressful too! Trade shows are not Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. So, knowing you can count on your exhibit house to be there for you anytime makes the trade show world so much easier.

6. THEY HAVE A WORLDWIDE PRESENCE

If I had a dime for every time I heard the phrase “this never happens” while standing on the show floor, I’d be a rich woman. Coming up with an immediate solution for a sheer graphic that a forklift just went through, or a last-minute idea to add more branding, is a true talent. Having printers and hardware options at various locations across the United States and other countries is key. If you have an issue in Hawaii, chances are the office on the East Coast is either closed or just about to be. An exhibit house with a worldwide presence and vendor network to provide last-minute assistance to get things fixed is easier, and a big safety net for marketers.

7. THEY HELP YOU STAY ON BUDGET

Chances are, you’ve already set a budget for your tradeshow. What happens when your exhibit house sends you an additional invoice after the show for incidentals, problems, or overtime (AKA a post-show-invoice)? Where do you pull those unplanned costs from? Advertising? Are you going to cancel your next mailer or pre-show initiatives? Why not stop the chaos and partner with a company who gives you an invoice PRIOR to the show, and takes full responsibility for the project (incidentals, shipping issues, damage, marshalling yard issues, late starting labor, etc.)? This way, you know PRIOR to the show how much you’re spending, and you won’t have to go through the stressful procedure of “finding” an unnamed amount of money after every show. We’d venture to guess that you also have difficulties juggling everything you do, and *want* to do, in your marketing department. Be sure to lean on your exhibit house as much as possible so you can focus your time and efforts on projects best left in-house. We guarantee you will be happy you did.



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***SHOW SPECIALS
MAXIMIZE
YOUR CHANCES
OF CLOSING
A DEAL***



TIP #4

MONEY DOESN'T GROW ON TREES

Budgets don't grow on trees - we're sure we don't need to tell you that. It doesn't matter how awesome trade shows look on paper. If you can't afford the price-tag, it's meaningless. Remember that booth space costs are only scratching the surface of your budget. You'll also have to cover show services, travel and accommodations for traveling team members, promotional material, shipping...it goes on.

One of the most important things you can do for your upcoming trade show is to set a budget. Costs add up fast, so be sure to do your homework ahead of time to avoid unpleasant surprises.

SAVE MONEY AT TRADE SHOWS BY...

Renting. Some large shows only happen every 2-3 years, so renting is an obvious solution. However, if you're only exhibiting in large spaces 2-3 times a year, renting modular displays could save you big bucks. You'll save on upfront costs, while avoiding the need to pay for repairs and storage.

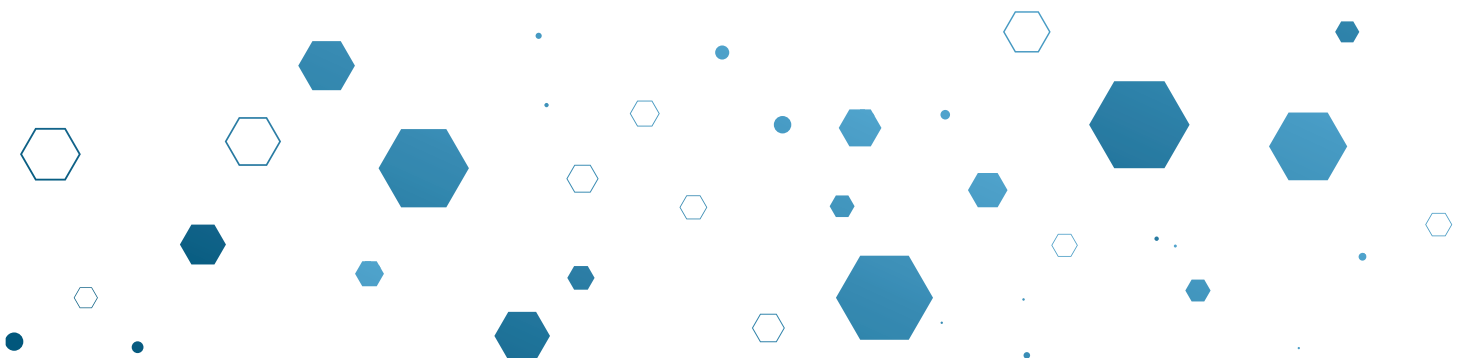
Travel Smartly. If you or any of your team members have to travel for a trade show, debate if staying near the convention center makes sense. You'll save on car rental and UBER/LIFT costs if everything is within walking distance. Take San Diego for example: restaurants, a hardware store, and a plethora of hotels are near the convention center. The hotel might cost a little more per night, but you won't be paying for your car, parking, or ride services on a daily basis.

Also, don't be scared to negotiate deals with hotels. Many are willing to include breakfast without charging extra, and don't forget to check out all of the travel websites with packaged deals for flights and accommodation. Travel costs add up quickly.

Designing Graphics Strategically. By keeping at least 80% of your graphics non-show specific, you can avoid costly changes every time a new show rolls around.

Switching from print to digital graphics? Even better. Changes are easy to make digitally, but you still need to make sure they can be done easily, and without the need to bring in outside graphic designers for every show. Brand consistency also helps establish a coherent voice consumers will remember better.

Ordering Early. Place your show orders prior to the early bird discount so you won't waste money on your show services, such as: material handling, electric, booth cleaning, rigging, etc. You need those services regardless, so being timely can save you hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars.





TIP #5

BE THE HERO

Chances are, you love a good deal. A desire to save money is ingrained in our DNA, and your trade show customers are no exception. By making your products easy to get, with significant savings, passersby will flock to your stand like moths to a fire. After all, trade shows are expensive places, and people usually end up spending more than they budgeted. By helping attendees save money, you can help them take a sigh of relief too. Here are some ways you can help trade show guests save, and fall in love with you (and your product!).

Free Entry Codes. Make your guests feel exclusive by making sure your pre-show marketing strategy includes free, or at least discounted, entry to the show you're inviting them to. Show them how passionate you are about your industry and business; so much so that you're willing to cover their entry costs "without expecting anything in return".

Show Discounts. Show specials maximize your chances of closing a deal. There are countless concepts for giveaways and promos out there, so you'll need to see which works best for you, but some ideas include free products, raffles, exclusive discounts, and more.

Giveaways. Not just any giveaways - giveaways that tie into your marketing message. Make sure the item you're giving away is memorable, ensuring the winner always thinks of your business when they look at it. Chances are, they'll return for more.



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***...BEING A LITTLE
DIFFERENT & UNEXPECTED,
YOU'LL TAKE GUESTS
BY SURPRISE AND
BE THE ONE
THEY REMEMBER***



TIP #6

PLAN AHEAD

Finding the time to plan thoroughly isn't easy, especially with our busy schedules and lifestyles - but by *making* the time, you can save yourself a ton of stress and trouble as the event draws closer. So, when should you start planning? In a nutshell, the sooner you start, the better. In fact, you should probably start planning several months in advance. It's actually easier to set aside a short amount of time each day, to do a little sooner, so you can avoid having to spend hours and hours on planning closer to the show date. After all, you've got your work cut out for you having to:

- Design an inviting, open booth
- Order your booth location
- Order show services
- Order supplies for giveaways, brochures, etc.
- Create your artwork
- Revise your artwork
- Submit your artwork
- Schedule shipping and I&D (Installation and Dismantle)

DON'T FORGET TO ALSO MAKE PLENTY OF TIME TO:

- Read the show manual
- Define your objectives and goals
- Write down show plans
- Design PowerPoint Presentations and demos
- Train exhibit staff

We both know how much you have to focus on when the big day arrives, not to mention afterwards. Planning lets you control the machine with confidence, knowing everything is well-oiled behind the scenes.



TIP #7

PUT YOUR THINKING CAP ON

Trade shows are usually pretty predictable. Guests expect to be ambushed by 1001 vendors all vying for sales. Unique tactics are pretty hard to come by, so by being a little different and unexpected, you'll take guests by surprise and be the one they remember. AKA, you'll be the one they're more likely to purchase from.

So, what do we mean by 'unique tactics'? Allow us to give you an example. We know of a mattress company that makes millions annually...by exhibiting at county fairs! Yes, it's true. How? Their secret is bringing mattresses and a few backwall graphics to a location where there is absolutely no competition, but reaches a lot of people on their feet - a simple yet genius move that's secured the business's success.

If you don't run a mattress company, don't worry. There are thousands of ideas for you to use. All you need to do is put your thinking cap on and be unafraid to get creative. Do something you can't imagine your competitors doing. If *you* can't picture *them* doing it, chances are, *they* won't see it coming from *your* end either.

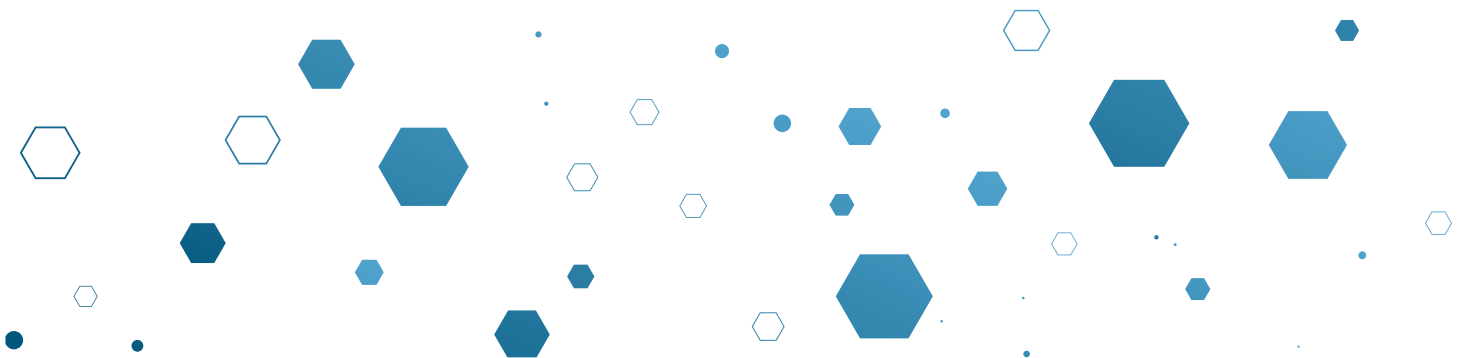
IN CONCLUSION:

Preplanning your way to success takes research, being social, a good partner, smart money, being enticing, creativity, and time. By utilizing these unique approaches, your new marketing strategies will ensure that you dominate the trade show floor.

Of course, what you do AT the show, and AFTER the show, is also super important to your success, but that's an eBook for another day. =)

Dominate that trade show floor, and here's to your immense success!

Heather





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Heather's marketing career started almost 25 years ago with a focus on trade show planning and execution. Her long-standing role as a Senior Exhibit Consultant at Skyline TradeTec allows her to work with various companies and industries on their trade show needs, from design to implementation to asset management. Heather strives to provide the best customer experiences possible, relieving her clients of stress and preventing wasted time and money. She is also the author of the free weekly "30-Second Trade Show Tip" publication, among numerous blogs and eBooks.

For more information about Heather, or to be added to the weekly
"30-Second Trade Show Tip" mailer, visit
www.DominatingTradeshows.com today.

