

EFFECTIVE TRADE SHOW PLANNING

- Frustrated with rising costs of attending trade shows and a diminishing return on that investment?
- Struggling to maximize the impact of your presence at a trade show?
- Discouraged over the low number of qualified leads generated by your trade show participation?

Selling in a fast-paced trade show environment requires a different approach from that used in more traditional sales settings. It's not unusual for a company to invest thousands of dollars on sending people to work a trade show without adequately training those sent. In this Trade Show Magic™ handbook, you'll learn the secrets of proven approaches to getting the most from your next trade show investment.

Before The Show . . .

TIP 1: Identify specific targets. Think through who is likely to be there. Define who makes a good prospect for your business. Build a list of specific companies and individuals that you want to meet. Update your checklist throughout the day of the show.

Take a moment to identify your ideal prospect in the space below. The easiest way to do that is to describe those clients



who already LOVE what you do. What are the sizes of those companies? What are the issues they brought that you fix for them? What are some components of their company culture that make them a good fit for you?

Prospects with the above characteristics will ultimately turn into the best clients for you. The more detailed you are in your description the better your chance of recognizing a qualified prospect when you see one.

From the list of those attending the show, who do you know that would fit your Ideal Prospect description who could comprise your ***Top Ten Target List?*** Be sure and include both those who are attending the Trade Show as well as those who might be exhibiting in your list.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

TIP 2: Call people in advance. This is a great time to follow up on both hard-to-reach prospects and reestablish contact with old customers. With some you might even reach out and set specific times to meet while at the Trade Show. Does it make sense to call any of those from the previous Top Ten Target List ahead of the Trade Show to ensure your connecting with them?

TIP 3: Sharpen your 10-second commercial: Have a strong 10-second commercial that describes your business and sets it apart from your competition. Focus on prospect needs and not how wonderful you are. Rehearse until it sounds natural and not “canned”.

When people ask “What do you do?” be ready to answer with your ten-second commercial.

By way of example here’s our Trade Show Magic™ commercial:

We work with companies who are frustrated with the thousands of dollars they invest in trade shows in light of the discouragingly low return on that investment.

90% of our clients come from companies who find themselves wrestling with issues in that commercial. If you or your company is not facing any of those challenges, you are not a great prospect for our services.

Like a fisherman dropping baits in the water a good ten-second commercial drops in front of the prospect issues you solve that drives 90% of your business – finishing with the simple question “Do any of those resonate with you?” or “Can you relate to any of those issues?”

Using ours as a template, what would your own company's ten-second commercial sound like?

"I (we) work with companies (individuals) who _____

[illegible]

TIP 4: Set specific goals: Allow each person to set a specific goal on the number of qualified leads s/he wants to gather and then keep track of the business cards you collect. If you go there just to see what happens, all you'll do is collect a few cards from your friends and active

customers. Set the bar, and then strive to achieve or exceed your goal. If you have a team of people that are working the show with you, set up some friendly competition. Create prizes for the person who books the most appointments, obtains the most leads, sells the most product, etc.

TIP 5: Adopt a consistent team strategy: If you have more than one person at your booth, build a checklist of issues, approaches, roles, etc. that everyone working your booth understands. For example, perhaps salespeople act as greeters then pass individuals to technical representatives if they are looking for detailed information. Rehearse a pre-established hand-off from the salesperson in advance. If there are a number of people looking for technical information, the technical people act to include all prospects in the conversation at once. The salesperson is then free to engage new prospects that show interest in the company's booth.

During The Show . . .



TIP 6: Don't expect people to be interested in you until you've shown an interest in them.

"Give before you get" is how Emerson might have said it. Do you have referrals or contacts that might help others at the trade show grow their business? Do you have clients who might need what someone else is selling at the trade show?

We're always amazed how when we lead with this approach the conversation oftentimes quickly turns to what they can do for us . . . and we're off and selling.

It will differentiate you at the trade show too from those who'll be standing behind their booth, brochures in hand – ready to pounce like vultures on the next person coming down the aisle.

TIP 7: Don't use a traditional greeting

Quite often we recommend laying a few brochures and cards out on a table and standing at a distance until you see someone pause to look at your booth or brochures. Approach then

them from behind with a gentle and soft question like: *What makes you stop and look at this booth?*

Avoid hackneyed expressions like, "May I help you?" or "Have you played our game?" After all, that will be the fiftieth time they heard those lines! Their salesperson radar (and we all have one) will be on full alert – making their defenses go up.

One idea as we said in the previous tip is to show interest in them. Do not demand that they have to show interest in you until they are ready. Above all, DO NOT try to force yourself on every person passing by - particularly those who show little interest in what you have to offer. If you do that, the word gets out in about fifteen minutes about the "obnoxious people in booth 3 H." After that, everyone at the trade show will do all they can to avoid you.

TIP 8: Master your follow-up questions.

Pick one of the following questions to adapt as an engaging question when someone stops to look at the booth.

Don't use the first wording of the first two questions. Instead adjust the gist of the italicized wording until you can get comfortable with it. Get the buyer to engage with you by correcting your misperception of their industry/company.

Are you currently happy with the _____ results you're achieving?

In this economy, I bet you're thrilled with the results you're getting!

How is your industry doing?

I've heard your industry is doing great, I bet you are too, aren't you?

What issues are you facing?

What have you tried to do to fix them?

How have those fixes worked?

TIP 9: Keep it brief and maintain an accelerated pace: Avoid extended conversations. You have a lot to do and not much time to do it. At a trade show, most people are in a hurry to identify as much new business as they can. Respect their time. If you do not, you may lose any future opportunity to do business with them.

TIP 10: Seek leads. Don't try to close business: One way to keep conversation short is to focus on lead development. For most businesses, this means initiating your formal sales cycle later. Also, keep in mind that many businesses are there to sell or research, not to buy. This can make closing next to impossible. You can damage an otherwise good lead by aggressive behavior.

TIP 11: Let the other person do the talking: Do not talk. Listen. Do not pitch your product; develop an understanding of their needs and interests. Don't serve as a free educator to everyone. Ask questions to determine who gets your time and energy. At the same time, look for a decision; *even if it's a no*, from the prospects you talk to at the booth. **Remember:** Sometimes it's worse to have too many leads after a show than too few.

TIP 12: Gather market intelligence: Trade shows are an excellent source of competitive information. They are also a great opportunity to gain insight from prospects about your products. For best results, tell people that you would value their thoughts about a specific need or issue; then ask for their ideas in a sincere manner. Sift the prospects from the suspects. You don't have to tell your story to everyone . . . and it's OK to ask questions to determine who is qualified to hear your story.

TIP 13: Quickly sift prospects from suspects: Your ten-second commercial is indispensable here. If the person doesn't have the issues you solve, they are not a qualified prospect.

Avoid being tied up with people who have no real need or interest in your product. Too often we run across people who are looking only to socialize, and we lose a lot of valuable time. Know that

the pace of trade show selling is more accelerated than the standard sales call. While you are selling one prospect, ten more could pass you by.



After The Show . . .

TIP 14: Debrief at the end: If you are successful, the end of a trade show is just the beginning of the work. Not only do you need to prioritize your contacts and follow up immediately, you also need to think back over the experience and think what you could do better next time.

WRITE DOWN YOUR THOUGHTS. Put them in a folder called “trade show effectiveness”. If you don’t, you will forget what you discovered, and you will never get better!

Bonus TIP: Make up your mind that you really want to be there and have fun! Do not be one of those attendees who feel they are there only because they “have to”. Did you ever notice how the boredom and negativity shows through on those people? Would you buy from those people? Have fun, think positively and do not let a negative attitude damage your effectiveness. You must want to work a show, not view it as a duty you’ve been called on to perform. Without the right internal motivation, no one could possibly endure the grueling pace a busy trade show demands. Seek to assign it to someone else if you aren’t up to the task.

Please Let Us Know If We Can Help



We have professionals standing by to work with you to leverage the power of magic to attract an audience to your exhibit, communicate your desired message and qualify prospects to engage with your sales staff.

You may visit us on the web at: <https://theomahamagicalsociety.org>