

Getting the Most from Trade Shows: Top **5** Tips for Success



Some view attending trade shows as a gamble. But as many poker players will tell you, it's not a gamble if you know you're going to win.

There's no denying that setting up shop at a trade show can be a big investment. But when done correctly, it's worth every penny.

Trade shows are a great way to meet and greet large numbers of prospective customers in a relatively short period of time – more than you could ever hope to reach through traditional prospecting techniques or sales calls.

Your company's presence can also help strengthen relationships with existing customers by providing you with another way to interact with them face-to-face.

These best practices will maximize returns you generate from attending a trade show:

1. Promote your presence pre-show

Attendees often make a list of who they want to see at events before they arrive, and your company needs to be on it. That means prior to the event even taking place, you've got to give attendees a reason to drop by your booth/exhibit.

The best way to do that is to send attendees a series of pre-show emails or direct mailers that answer the five W's:

- Who you are
- What event you'll be attending
- Where prospects can find you at the event
- Why they should stop and see you, and
- When they should swing by your booth.

This is when "lumpy" mailers are ideal. Send a direct mailer with a lumpy prize inside. It's sure to grab prospects' attention. Then offer a corresponding item at your booth.

Example: A clever software company sent trade show attendees a branded letter opener in the shape of a CD, along with a note asking them to stop by its booth for a free CD case.

Result: 72% of recipients stopped by its booth for their CD cases.

2. Set quantitative goals

Are you looking to generate leads at the event? Close sales? Set up future meetings? If so, be sure your company's trade show representatives know how many you need, and be very specific.

Having trouble closing in on a specific number? Look at your closing rate and ask yourself: How many prospects, qualified leads or meetings must we come away with to achieve a positive ROI?

Specific goals are needed to keep your company's sales team focused and on task.



3. Send your best

Some companies send their B-team to represent them at trade shows, thinking they just need greeters to distribute catalogs. Plus, they don't want to pull their A-squad away from doing what they do best – selling.

This is typically a waste. You want to pick your team carefully and bring your best, most extraverted sellers.

No matter how good your products are, your event presence will only be as good as the people you send to represent your company.

4. Send your team to 'booth camp'

After picking your best recruits, hold a meeting that sets your expectations for the event and lays out some ground rules.

Some do's and don'ts your sales team will need to know:

- **Skip the technology.** Tell your reps to turn off their laptops and cell phones, or better yet, leave them behind. They're a distraction, and they turn prospects off.
- **Don't sit.** The only chairs that should be at your trade show booth are ones for your prospects and customers. Sales reps who sit project low energy and a lack of enthusiasm.
- **Don't eat.** Reps should also never eat, drink or chew gum in the company booth.
- **Blend in.** Reps should wear what attendees wear. It makes your booth look crowded.
- **Hold a notepad.** It looks better than having your reps' hands in their pockets or their arms crossed.

5. Reduce obstacles

Do attendees have to talk to one of your reps to get specs/prices on your products? If so, that's a roadblock that could cause prospects to turn around and walk away.

Many prospects just want to grab info and go. So pricing and other product-specific info should be hung at eye level.

Also, if you're going to have a table with literature or promotional items on it, it's crucial to put it at the back of your booth.

A table at the front of your booth creates a barrier between your reps and the event's attendees. A table at the back invites prospects in.

Summary

Attending a trade show can be a cost-effective way to generate new business and strengthen existing relationships. But success lies entirely dependent upon you – the exhibitor.

Following these five best practices will set you on a path to achieving maximum ROI from your next trade show appearance.

About this report

This white paper on trade show best practices was researched and written by the editor of The Selling Advantage.

The Selling Advantage is a well-respected source for authoritative, actionable sales information.