
TRADE SHOW EXHIBITION

Alan Paoletti (APMagic Event Marketing Solutions)



OVERVIEW

There are a lot of questions a company asks when it comes to Trade Shows, this paper was written as a guide to help you better prepare and execute your plan on the show floor. We will be covering the following topics:

- Deciding on Which Shows to Attend
- Lead Generation and Qualification
- Booth Etiquette
- Thoughts on Premiums/Giveaways
- Post Show Activities

NOTE: Please see the end of this document for a free and handy sales lead form you can print off and use in your booth.

If you've struggled in the past with seeing a positive ROI and ROO on your exhibiting investments, this guide should give you some helpful pointers on how to decide which shows you should attend and how to make the most out of your time on the floor.

Should We Even Be Going to This?

That's a great question, and unfortunately one enough companies don't ask themselves before spending tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars on a show that's wrong for them.

You can find out the answer to this by asking yourself a few other questions like:

- What goals do I hope to achieve from exhibiting at this show?
- Will this show help me reach those goals?
- How will I know if I've met my goals?
- What is my target market?
- Are they going to be at this show?
- What plan do I have in place to bring people to the booth and quickly qualify them?

These are all considerations that must be taken into account when exhibiting. Without them, you can't plan for success, or measure that success (or failure) to take active steps to refine your approach.

Let's turn our attention to lead generation.

LEAD GENERATION

Just showing up is not enough. You can have a beautiful booth and very well-trained staffers who know the product inside and out. If you don't have a way to attract people to your booth you are leaving

the entire enterprise up to random chance. The good news is, you don't have to do that. You have a chance to take control of the situation.

According to a study done by Exhibit Surveys, a prominent market research group specializing in Trade Show marketing statistics, live presentations using entertainment are the most effective technique to draw attention in a trade show environment.

Effectiveness of Attention-Getting Techniques		
Technique Used	Company Identification	Product Identification
Product Demo	16.2%	10.4%
Magicians	13.6%	8.9%
Robots	10.5%	5.3%
Ad Specialties	7.5%	5.3%
Themes	7.2%	3.7%
Contests/Drawings	6.3%	4.9%
PowerPoint Presentation	3.5%	1.8%
Comedy Skits	3.4%	0.7%
Caricature Artists	1.6%	0.8%
Source: Exhibit Surveys, Red Bank, NJ		

If your company makes a widget and it can be displayed at the show, you are in a really great spot. This approach of course doesn't make sense for everyone. If your product isn't visual, too small for large groups to see, too large/expensive to ship to a show, or your product isn't tangible, you can't really go that route.

The second way to draw large amounts of attention to your booth is to have a live presentation.

This could a speaker, or representative from your company delivering a message coupled with an audio/video presentation or you could hire a professional presenter to conceptualize, design and present a company message and/or extoll the virtues of your product.

Just know that if you rely on “How are you enjoying the show?” This approach is being used by nearly every single booth, it’s a weak opener and you won’t stand out.

TRAIN YOUR STAFFERS!

It’s amazing that a company can spend so much money on exhibiting and not take the time to train their staffers on how to engage people and qualify them. Most of the time the people chosen for the task do not have any experience in the tradeshow world and find it difficult to engage people and qualify them effectively.

Role playing is an effective way to build knowledge and confidence before everyone ships out to the show. Not only do the staffers need to know in the event something goes wrong at the booth, say the AV equipment failing. But they also have to be knowledgable about the product and be able to answer questions. When was the last time you were at a store and had a technical question that no one knew the answer to? You end up being passed off person to person hoping that the next one you talk to knows what they’re talking about and can give you the answer. It’s annoying enough when you’re trying to find that double slotted toasted oven, but it’s worse when you’re doing it to someone else who might buy millions of dollars of product from you. We can forgive it when it’s a employee who has to have a general knowledge of thousands of items, but when it’s

your company and you're selling your products, it makes you look really bad when a simple question can't be answered.

Always be qualifying

Assuming you decide not to use a demonstration or presenter, you are left with the least enviable option, but sometimes it's the only route you have available.

All it could take is one new client to completely justify attending a show, but you have to always be qualifying each prospect to see if they are who you're looking for.

Engage with people, make eye contact, greet them and be friendly, but also start qualifying, your time at this show is precious, short, you can't waste it.

Thankfully most of the trade show industry has made it easy to identify buyers, from exhibitors, from vendors, etc. with color coded badges, for instance, if the buyers at a particular show are wearing purple, you know at first you really need to be talking to anyone that's wearing a purple badge, then you ask them about their industry, what products they currently have in place if any and you can begin to qualify. It's not the most efficient way to qualify

Now time is absolutely of the essence, and some people just love to talk. They're being friendly but you're there to do a job and you can't spare time to shoot the breeze. Of course, you never want to appear rushed, or rude, if you are working the booth with other staffers, you might consider working out a non-verbal code for "Come help" that way another on the sales team can pull you away

and give you a friendly excuse to end the conversation if you can't do so yourself.

Booth Etiquette

A lot of this is basic sales, you should probably know these things already, but it's easy to forget that we're really on display at a booth, people halfway down the aisle may be looking at us, we have to put our best foot forward the entire time we're there. Though a lot of these are obvious, it bears repeating, we could all use a reminder.

Don't sit

When you sit, you are below eye level and leads may think either the booth is empty or that you're lazy, neither is very productive.

Don't read

Nothing says "I'm not at all interested in the show" like reading a book. Be in the moment, read the book when you get back to the hotel.

Don't smoke/smell like smoke

Does this one need any explanation? Probably illegal on the show floor and the smell, I think everyone agrees is, off putting.

Don't eat or drink

People are polite, they're not going to interrupt you while you're eating, if you need to take a quick drink of coffee or water, make

sure it is out of sight and that it's a quick sip and the cup is hidden from view when you're done.

Don't chew gum

Smacking gum is distracting and kind of gross, if you need to chew it, do it off the show floor.

Don't ignore prospects

Welcome everyone in with the same warm greeting, ask them question (remember always be qualifying)

Don't talk or text on the phone

Don't be a border guard

Make sure that you and your team aren't standing in such a way that you're blocking easy entrance into your booth, you want to be warm, open and inviting but if you're standing in the middle on the edge of your booth, you will block traffic and make it difficult for people to enter.

Don't hand out literature to everyone

Here's a tip, take a quarter of what you actually think you'll need. This way you're still handing out literature but only to people who ask for it!

Don't chat with other booth personnel

Don't judge a book by its cover

Just because someone doesn't look like a "buyer" doesn't mean they aren't, the mistake has been made before and cost companies dearly as a result. The buyers can be wearing anything they want, experienced buyers will probably be wearing something comfortable because they already know they're going to be on their feet all day.

Do Be Enthusiastic

Do be well groomed

Do use your prospects name

I'm inclined to quote the great Dale Carnegie "A person's name is to him or her the sweetest and most important sound in any language."

Do be prompt and prepared

Procrastination is everyone's enemy, don't put something off and certainly don't think you'll have time to do it later, big problems that take hours to fix can pop up out of nowhere and really put your exhibiting efforts out of commission. You must be on top of everything, if something is delegated have a time limit for it to be completed and have a follow-up that gives you lead time in case of problem. Check your audio/video equipment the night before, and again the morning of the first day and every day afterwards. You must know that things will run smoothly. Proper preparation leads to confidence.

Do get a good night's sleep

Do avoid alcohol

Not only because this probably means you won't get a very good night's sleep, but also because if you over indulge and embarrass your superiors or yourself in front of a potential client. There is a story about a salesman who landed a big client at the show, he went out on the town that night to celebrate and then when he got home and called that client to close the deal, the deal had gone cold. Apparently, the client was at the same restaurant as the salesman and saw how the salesman conducted himself while drunk and the client decided that he didn't want to do business with the salesman anymore. There are many stories like this. Just avoid it for a few days.

Do avoid exotic foods

Nothing worse than gastrointestinal distress or the discovery of an unknown food allergy putting a huge damper on your effectiveness on the show floor. Avoid them.

A thought on Premiums/Giveaways

Giveaways is probably the wrong word, rather they should be considered "enticements" you're using them to try to get people to engage with you and bring them into the booth. They should not be handed out to every passerby.

Not everyone walking by is a potential client/customer, in fact most probably are not, why give them a branded giveaway?

Look at it like a direct mail campaign, you wouldn't send a postcard to every single house and business in a city, to drum up business, it would be extremely expensive and not at all efficient. Why would you give away your prizes to people who will never buy from you?

The attendee should give a little to get a little, perhaps sit for a presentation or share contact information.

Post Show Follow Up

It's the same as in a business setting, when you get a prospects card, and you should always get a prospects card, follow up with them!

Remember you're the one trying to make the sale, you want some of their time, there should be no expectation that the client is going to make an effort to get ahold of you, you have about 2 days until the impression you left wears off and your warm lead goes totally cold again.

Don't hem haw and waste time, 48 hours after contact, call them! This is where all the effort you put in pays off .

The lead form I included in this document has a place for personal comments about client, use this space to write down any identifying or useful facts about your prospect, this could be things mentioned while you were talking with them, things like their spouses' birthday, their dogs name, or a mention about a restaurant the mentioned they were going to try in town, whatever information you learn about

them personally that you can use to help remember them yourself, or show a bit of a personal touch when following up with them.

This is far from an exhaustive guide on the subject of tradeshow exhibition, there are thousands of books on the topic and thousands more yet to be written. Our only hope is that you find some value contained here.

Trade Show

Rep Name

Date

1 2 3

Contact Name

Company Name

Address

City, State

Zip

Telephone

Email

Company Profile

Product Interest

A

B

C

Area of Use

Budget

Buying Time Frame

Other Buying Influences

Name

Title

Name

Title

Requests Personal Call

Date

Requests Literature

Date

Requests Sample

Date

Which Ones?

Comments From Prospect

Personal Comment about Prospect

Recorded by

Mailed Literature Date

Follow-Up Phone Call Date

Turned Over to Salesperson

Follow-Up Reports

Date

Date

Date
