

Marketing at a Trade Show Checklist

Industry gatherings, conferences and trade shows can be very effective marketing venues because they bring together customers and potential customers for your products and services. Attending those events provides an opportunity for you to meet those people and exhibiting at the event can be even more effective. Here are some of the issues to consider.

The right trade show

Item	Comments
Make sure the event is worth your time, effort and money.	
Promotional materials should highlight an agenda that will draw the people you wish to reach.	
Is the event in a location and at a time that will draw attendees?	
Ask the sponsor for information on attendees. Sponsors may be reluctant to provide the list, but insist on information that will identify number and positions of attendees. Be sure the number of attendees does not include exhibitor personnel.	
Sponsors will probably provide a packet of materials with information on show manager, shipping, venue description and equipment rentals. Be sure to arrange any electrical, communication, carpet and furniture needs. There are usually discounts for early orders.	

Attendees

Item	Comments
Most sponsors will offer a pre-show list of attendees. Getting this list can be valuable even if you have to buy it.	
Consider a pre-show mailing to make attendees aware of your presence. A personal letter with promotional materials may result in better traffic at your exhibit.	
Review the list before the show and identify attendees that you want to contact.	
Arrange appointments or dinners with existing customers and good prospects.	

Your exhibit

Item	Comments
Make sure your exhibit tells your story and will get attention.	
Simple graphics and text that will get attention can set your exhibit apart from the dozens or hundreds of other exhibits that attendees will walk past.	
Keep your exhibit area neat and sharp looking. You may want to consider having all your employees wear logo shirts or some other form of common clothing.	

Meet your prospects

Item	Comments
Remember that every exhibitor is trying to attract attention and that many attendees walk through the exhibit hall with skepticism.	
Provide a reason for someone to stop and talk to you at the show.	
Many exhibitors offer giveaways or have drawings for electronics, food items and sporting goods.	
Consider an attraction with will create interactions and conversations with attendees. A content to guess the number of golf balls in a jar may be more effective than just asking people to drop a business card into a basket for a drawing.	

Materials

Item	Comments
Be sure to have an adequate supply of materials for attendees to take.	
Many attendees take materials from many exhibits only to toss them out in their hotel rooms.	
To reduce your expenses, you may want to offer a simple summary piece to everyone and have a more complete packet of materials for serious prospects.	

At the show

Item	Comments
Be sure your exhibit is adequately staffed at all times. If the show is long, you may want to have shifts so your employees can be fresh.	
Consider attending the conference sessions. This gives you something to discuss with attendees and you may find the sessions very worthwhile.	
Try to collect contact information from as many serious prospects as possible and keep good notes on their interests. This can be difficult at large shows and you may want to have a form to use.	
After meeting a prospect, immediately determine the type of follow up that is warranted.	

Follow Up

Item	Comments
Few actual purchases are made at trade shows so having an organized plan to stay in contact with attendees is essential.	
You may want to consider a mailing to all attendees afterwards referencing the show and what you learned.	
If you have a good preliminary meeting with an attendee, consider asking them back the next day to further discuss your product or to see a demonstration.	
Consider asking good prospects for subsequent appointments at their convenience.	
Contact all good prospects within a week or so after the show by phone, email or mail.	
If the decision-making process is long, be sure to establish a regular program of communicating with good prospects and adding them to your marketing data base.	

Exhibiting at a trade show can be very effective. However, it can be hard work and expensive. Be sure to have a plan for the show and then execute your plan.