

## Attracting Buyers to Your Exhibit

Participating in a trade show is always a tough marketing decision. The fear with not participating is that it takes you out of the game, as people in the industry will read your absence as a sign of weakness or apathy. The fear with participating is that there are high associated costs (travel, HR, materials, cost of booth and participation) that never seem to get directly recovered from the business closed at or from the show. Yet every year we pack up to some highly appealing destination (Vegas, anyone?) and participate in shows we feel we have to be at, but think are a waste of time (from a business perspective anyway).

To take the edge off the dilemma of the trade show, Tudog has decided to share 9 things you can do to make your trade show experience more successful, attracting more buyers, and recovering the costs of participation by cutting sales on the spot. The 9 suggestions are:

1. **Train Your Staff** – too often we select who will represent us at a trade show by determining who most deserves the trip, as if this is some sort of vacation. Then we do not properly train them and wonder why their performance was under par. First, only people who are good at sales and have strong people skills should be sent to a trade show, even if someone really deserves a treat. Second, training should be a prerequisite for everyone, so that everyone not only knows everything there is about the company and its products, but also knows how to respond to questions. Training also should provide some people skills, such as how to draw someone in, how to tell when someone is genuinely interested (and not there for the m&m's or t-shirt) and how to close on the spot if the indications are there.

2. **Compare to Competitors** – there is an excellent chance that even if your target market does not know your company, they do know one of your competitors. By comparing yourself to a competitor (positively, of course) you provide the point of reference many trade show attendees need to feel instantly comfortable with your company and interested in learning more.

3. **Focus on Benefits** – people do not have a lot of time to discuss your product and you have to be able to give them the “why” to the buy question very quickly. The way to cut to the chase is by focusing on benefits and giving them the reason why your product/service delivers the solution they are seeking,

4. **Speak Plainly** – many industries have their own jargon and going to a trade show can often be like visiting a foreign land as the language spoken is techie or some other derivative of English. You can assume that most of the people you are seeing come from the same industry as you and therefore speak your language, but chances are they will not ask you what the acronym you are throwing around means, and that translates to a disrupted communication. Speak plainly. Everyone will understand you. That's what you want...to be understood.

5. **Display Customer Endorsements** - once again, one of the toughest challenges is getting someone to stop in your booth and give you the chance to share your magic. If you have customers who have said nice things about your product (you can solicit comments before the show), use them boldly. There is no reason why these great

comments and testimonies to your brilliance should not be proudly and prominently displayed.

**6. Have a Show Promotion** – nothing helps close a sale as well as the prospect that the offer on the table will disappear once the show is over. You need to make the show promotion valuable enough to drive the sale, but not so appealing that it either diminishes the perceived value of your product or makes the idea of buying afterward (when the offer is no longer valid) seem too expensive.

**7. Go Light on the Giveaways** - you want your presence at the show to be about your company and its products, not t-shirt giveaways, free pizza, or a chance to win an ipod. You're correct in assuming that most people are drawn in by these giveaways, but they are not qualified people genuinely interested in your products. The idea is not to get as many names as possible, but rather as many quality leads as possible.

**8. Have an Exciting Booth** – keeping in mind there is a difference between having an exciting booth and causing sensory overload, the more to see in your booth, the longer your guest is likely to stay. The images and videos need to be about your company and relevant to your overall message.

**9. Have Fun** – while not the sole reason for attending, people do come to trade shows with a sort of festive attitude. They are out of the office for a few days, in a city that is usually known for fun, and armed with a (usually small) expense account. This atmosphere is inconsistent with someone who is too serious and comes off as all business. You need to be all business but appear like you are actually a fun person. You can do it...if you try.

Trade shows offer you only a few seconds before someone makes the “stop - no stop“ decision and walk into or past your booth. People have a lot to do while at the show and they are rushed. They genuinely want to get some business done, if for no other reason than they can justify the great dinner they plan on having on the company dime. Your job is to make them see that visiting your booth, and buying your product, are all part of the business/party environment that will make not only your show experience, but there's too, complete.