



Don't Put Trade Show Success to Chance:

Tips and Considerations for Getting the Most Out of a Trade Show

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If you have ever prepped for a trade show, you know that it can be overwhelming. There are so many loose ends and moving parts to consider, it can begin to feel like a full time job or a test of your project management skills. However, with careful planning, the right execution partner, and the mentality to think of the trade show from a pre, at, and post-show standpoint, it is possible to pull off a successful trade show without ignoring your day job.

Pre-Show

The foundation for a successful trade show begins weeks before the show. You should think about your team's strategy in terms of goals, objectives, tactics, and lead tracking. Defining goals for each of these points before the show will shift your efforts to be more focused on what you are trying to accomplish by participating in the trade show. Make sure your plans for each are quantifiable, timely and realistic.

Hiring the right partner to help you execute your goals is critical. Look for a partner that has experience with trade shows. They should be able to help your team find the perfect promotional products, design a booth that is both inviting and eye-catching, and develop a pre-show communication plan to drive booth traffic. All of this expertise should lead to increased trade show traffic, ultimately helping your brand achieve your goals. Choosing the right partner can make the task of managing less daunting, and can help ensure you get the ROI you expect from participating in the trade show.

Case Study: Driving Traffic Through Promo

Curtis 1000 was able to drive trade show traffic through a promotional product offering. By emailing the list of attendees before the show began, we offered an opportunity for attendees to have custom phone cases made for free. This email gave a coupon code to use on our online store and our booth number so that attendees could pick up their customer order at the show. Using this strategy increased booth traffic by more than 10% from the previous year.



Additionally, there are a lot of logistics to work through, such as:

Booth Location

Consider paying extra for a well-located booth. This decision will increase the amount of traffic your booth receives, which will increase your brand awareness.

Booth Design

In addition to the location of the booth, it is important to make your booth stand out from the crowd. Spending the effort to customize banners and tablecloths will pay off with the amount of attention your booth receives. If you are able to bring your company's identity and personality through to the booth space, it will draw a crowd.

Travel Logistics

Have the logistics of travel and hotels double checked before you arrive at the show. It can save a lot of time and money in the long run.

Booth Workers

Be sure to bring the best employees to speak about your brand and your products. They should be confident and knowledgeable enough to answer potentially complex questions. Make sure they are aware of the goals you set for the trade show, specific products you want to highlight and your brand's messaging. Having under-prepared workers will make a poor impression of your brand on visitors to your booth.

Traffic Building Strategy

Consider offering a discount on your products or services if attendees stop by your booth or interact with you on social media. Use a custom hashtag for your brand, and offer promotional products (make sure they are relevant to your brand and useful to your customers) or a discount to customers who use them. Having branded snacks and drinks will also draw attendees to your booth.

At the Show

Once at the show, be sure to engage with your audience. Be confident in your experiences, ask questions and really listen to the answers. Providing time-sensitive offers is a great way for attendees to break the ice with your brand, and bring excitement to your booth. Some companies will hire an entertainer, whether that be a model, comedian or singer, to help draw attention to their booths. These people should be able to answer simple questions and direct attendees to the employee that will be able to answer more detailed questions as well.

Additionally, having plenty of friendly, experienced booth workers available to speak with attendees and answer their questions is important. While some attendees will seek out the face-to-face interactions, others will want different media, such as videos and pamphlets to learn about your company and products. If you choose to use a video, keep it short, simple, engaging and memorable to create interest in your product or service. Be sure to share this video on social media outlets as well. Those not attending the trade show will be able to learn about your new product through these channels.

To encourage attendees to make purchases while at the show, offer a discount or a special offer available only at the trade show. Make sure the information is easily visible on your booth so that people will stop at your booth to take advantage of the offer. Contests, promotions and prize drawings will draw crowds as well. Have attendees fill out a contact form or give you their business card to be entered to win a prize from your booth. You will have email and phone contacts, and create higher brand awareness from these events. Social media can be incorporated into this strategy as well. Encourage people to check in at your booth, and engage with them using social media.

Many attendees to trade shows are unaccustomed to walking for long periods of time (the average attendee spends over 8 hours looking at booths at trade shows.) As mentioned above, offering branded snacks and drinks will be sure to bring traffic to your booth. Place these items near the middle of your booth so that attendees will experience more of your company instead of just passing by. Additionally, be able to offer information about trends in your industry, top 5 lists, new products and more so that people will come to your booth looking for industry information as well.

Promotional products are a critical component for a successful trade show. Make sure your items are kept and used by combining relevancy to your brand with usefulness to the consumer. This combination will make sure that the product is kept for as long as possible, and used often as a reminder of your brand. Another factor to keep in mind is that 78% of trade show attendees travel over four hundred miles to be at the shows*. These people are parents, aunts and uncles, and often their children may expect a souvenir from their trip. If you provide t-shirts, offer children's sizes or kid-friendly toys as well.

Another important aspect to consider happens after the trade show floors close for the day. After-hours events, such as happy hours and dinners, can be just as critical to making lasting connections as the show itself. Everyone from customers, prospects and partners are in the same location—take advantage of this opportunity. Use this time to socialize, and explore potential deals and partnerships. Having a social connection with attendees will make them more likely to do business with your company.

Got Promo? Why Leveraging Promotional Products is Critical to Trade Show Success

- According to PPAI, almost 6/10 consumers received promotional products from a business establishment or at trade shows. **
- 71.6% of attendees remembered the name of the company that gave them a promotional product. †
- When surveyed by PPAI, 83% of American consumers like receiving promotional products, and 48% of consumers would like to receive promotional products more often. ‡
- While at a trade show, almost 70% of attendees would pick up a promotional product if they found it to be useful. ‡
- Speaking with attendees and giving them a promotional product individually increases your brand's perceived value and effectiveness of advertising: Simply piling all of your products on the table in your trade show booth diminishes the value of the products and your brand.

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Post Show

After weeks of planning and effort, it is natural to take a deep breath post-show. But developing a coordinated and proactive post-show plan is critical to driving a strong trade show ROI. Be sure to follow up with your new leads and connections. Follow-ups can be anything from a handwritten note or a personal email to a LinkedIn invite to connect or social media post. However, don't just follow up — add value. Answer questions that may have been posed at the show, or share some of your work examples that they will find value in. Be sure to not overwhelm contacts with emails, but don't remain silent, either. Create a schedule of when to keep in contact and stick to it.

Why You Should Exhibit at a Trade Show.

While social media marketing is a powerful tool, it can't replace face-to-face interactions. Customers want to interact with you and your products, especially new products. 92% of trade show attendees are looking for new products to purchase*, and trade shows are a great opportunity to do this.

Trade shows are able to put you and your brand face-to-face with a lot of buyers in a short amount of time. There is a national audience at trade shows as well — 78% of trade show attendees travel over four hundred miles to be at the shows*. Trade shows put the products in front of possible customers as well. They are able to see and touch the product, and you can demonstrate any additional features of the new products to buyers immediately. Since 81% of trade show attendees have purchasing power*, there is a perfect opportunity to generate leads, and even sales, while at the show.

* <http://www.skyline.com/blog/category/why-trade-shows/posts/16-powerful-stats-on-the-value-of-trade-shows>

** [http://www.ppai.org/inside-ppai/research/Documents/2012%20Influence%20PP%20Consumer%20Behavior%20-%20Summary%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.ppai.org/inside-ppai/research/Documents/2012%20Influence%20PP%20Consumer%20Behavior%20-%20Summary%20(2).pdf)

† http://www.ppai.org/inside-ppai/research/Documents/EFFECT2_Sales%20Power%20Tool.PDF

‡ <http://www.ppai.org/inside-ppai/research/Documents/EffectiveMediumPowerTool.pdf>