

# TRADE SHOW & EVENT MARKETING

## What to Do Before You Go

Trade shows and other events are an excellent opportunity to make sales, build relationships and collect qualified leads. To maximize your participation, consider the following before you're off and running.

**Set Goals** – Have a plan outlined – strategic and tactical – with measurable goals. Are you introducing a new product or announcing an enhanced service? Prospecting for new business in a specific industry? Set your objectives (i.e. 10 new orders, 50 contacts, 25 qualified leads, three articles in trade journals, etc.) and track your results.

**Develop a Follow-Up Plan** – Have a lead fulfillment system in place. You might “pre-stuff” a follow-up package with a high-quality capabilities brochure that's set to mail upon your return. Include a pre-drafted generic letter that can be personalized with a hand-written note reinforcing your initial conversation at the show. Industry statistics reveal that 89 percent of exhibitors go with the intention of gathering leads, but only 21 percent of the leads are followed up on. Preparing your materials before you leave will help to ensure timely follow up.

**Build Pre-Show Interest** – Know your audience. Request a registration list from the event organizer and try to identify quality prospects by industry. Create “buzz” about your participation prior to the event by sending a direct mail piece to these targeted prospects. Include a simple card that can be redeemed at your booth for a prize. Or, mail the first half of a two-part premium. You could send a note pad, for example, mentioning the pad holder or matching pen can be picked up at your exhibit.

**Use Public Relations** – Many organizations will publish an attendees' guide that includes exhibitors' profiles. Contact the event organizer well in advance to see if and how you might be featured. Seek out the editor's name and forward a news release focusing on what's new about your products or services, providing industry trends and statistics. Be sure to follow up with the editor to offer additional information if needed.

**Select Print Materials** – Gauge quantities of business cards, brochures and flyers you want to have on hand. Set out flyers for general distribution; save your high-quality brochures that show off your capabilities for qualified leads or a follow-up mailing. Rather than “giving it all away,” build in a reason for further contact.

**Pick Premiums** – Some shows are marketed with a theme. You can tie into the overall theme or create your own. Your giveaways should be memorable and naturally complement your marketing message or theme. It's best if they are used as a thank-you for participating in a demonstration or survey. Avoid leaving them out on a table for anyone to take. You're trying to reach customers and prospects, not the masses.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Your staff is one of your most important sales tools at a trade show or event. Here are a few tips to consider when choosing your staff:

- Your staff should be readily identifiable through dress and present a professional, enthusiastic and unified image.
- Use your top salespeople who know how and what to communicate.
- Encourage personal goals and have rewards and recognition for a job well done.



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