



## The New for 2009 Top 12 Trade Show Tips

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February 14 2009

Okay – so the rules have not changed with the top reasons for participating in trade shows

- They are your opportunity to captivate your audience
- People come to you, you get face to face time with a LOT of people in a SHORT time frame
- Great way to introduce new products and get immediate feedback
- Generate sales leads immediately
- You can test and measure your ROI very easily
- Acquire knowledge about your area of business with other vendors
- Good way to reinforce existing relationships and make new ones

What has changed is we know we have to be very careful on how and where we invest with trade shows. Here are some tips to take you through 2009 without cutting back the number of shows you're doing or diminishing your presence in your marketplace.

- 1) Remember to do your homework first. Make sure the Trade Show matches your target demographics, and get history on attendance. Do your homework with planning as well, there are many online templates available to plan and budget your event - use them.
- 2) Write down clear concise objectives for your most desired outcome. Make a strategy to reach that objective or goal, and then communicate this to any staff involved.
- 3) Pre-show promotion - Utilize online social networking (e-mail, sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, twitter etc) to promote your attendance at a show or display. When possible, also take some time to hand write invitations, it's a nice personal touch - (for a really special touch, add an RSVP and provide a thank you gift when that person arrives at the show).
- 4) Consider being more "green". reusing your existing displays and revamping your display by updating your graphics. If you need to purchase a new display, find one that's upgradeable, or have easy change graphics so you can use it for multiple purposes.
- 5) Your display - less is more! Keep your graphics simple, keep text to a minimum. Often people try to jam too much information that's not necessary to have on

their display (like their web address or contact information). Remember - you have 3 seconds to make an impression to passers by - use your images and text for one purpose only - to grab their attention in a very short time period. People need to be caught by surprise - what makes you stop and look at things, or pick up a magazine - what grabs your attention? Think of this when coming up with your display. Also, when laying out your display, avoid tables with marketing materials all over them, and make sure you've planned a smooth entry and exit access to ensure easy traffic flow.

- 6) Do not be afraid to ask the venue for added value. If display attendance is down, the venue might want to give some vendors extra space to fill in the gaps, however, you must be one of the few bold enough to ask in order to receive it.
- 7) Have your staff working the booth think outside the box for attracting attention. Instead of standing around waiting for someone to approach your staff (or even worse - your staff lunging into the aisle to pull someone in) try something different, juggle, balance something on your nose, pick a theme and wear an outfit based on that theme - make it funny, but still professional. You will notice many more people attracted to these things, and your booth traffic will far surpass those using traditional methods.
- 8) Collect contact information for your prospective clients, you can do this by running a promotion of give-away, or once there is a clear interest, just ask. However you do it, make sure it's complete.
- 9) Take some time to mingle with other exhibitors, don't fish for business, focus on building relationships. Getting to know other exhibitors is the best way for them to get to know and like you. You'll be pleased with the amount of referrals that will transpire. Don't forget to get their business card, and don't just leave it in a pile on your desk, start a filing system that will make it easy for you to give referrals.
- 10) Be prepared with the proper marketing tools like brochures, business cards etc., have them on hand and make sure they are consistent with your message. Don't just pull whatever you have at the last minute. You're better off sending a post-show package than giving away outdated marketing material.
- 11) Follow up with all leads no later than 1 week after the event with a personal handwritten note, then follow up again after 2 weeks with some information about your product or service. Do your very best to keep each correspondence personal, don't use phrases like "Dear Sir/Madam" or "Hi!".
- 12) Test and measure. Again - there are many free online templates you can use along with your original planning process to test and measure your results. Go over your successes with each staff member involved. Make any notes and keep them filed in an appropriate place that is easily accessible for next time.

Follow these 12 basic steps, and you'll be sure to have a successful show!

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