



JANUARY 9-11, 2014 ORLANDO, FL  
ORANGE COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER, WEST HALL

## Top Ten Tips for Successful Exhibiting



Wondering how to plan your exhibit program to maximize your show results? Candy Adams, aka the "[Booth Mom](#)" lays it out in ten simple tips everyone can follow.

### 1. Know your audience and focus your message on their needs.

- Who is the "perfect prospect" at this show for your product or service, and what are their current problems? Your participation as an exhibitor at a trade show should focus on defining which of the show attendees' are in your target market and determining their current needs to offer solutions.
- Make sure your graphics and message answer your target audiences' needs and wants.
- Show Management can provide statistics regarding number of anticipated attendees, and historical data on job titles, purchasing influence, company size or sales volume, and budgets.

### 2. Identify and prioritize the top three reasons why you are going to each trade show.

- To gather sales leads or sell your products or services to attendees and other exhibitors
- Promote new products/product launch; "new" is the most powerful word on the show floor to attendees.
- Enhance your corporate image or corporate message as an industry leader (branding/awareness)
- Educate your audience regarding your products and/or services
- Cement existing client relationships to garner repeat sales
- Conduct business meetings before or after show hours with attendees you can't otherwise reach
- Obtain press/media coverage
- Identify and recruit new distributors/dealers/representatives/employees
- Perform competitive and market research
- Attend educational sessions

### 3. Set strategic, measurable show goals and objectives.

- Your goals and objectives should be in keeping with your corporate mission and integrated with your overall marketing plan, keeping your prioritized objectives in mind.
- Set realistic goals based on show attendance, number of exhibiting hours, exhibit size and staffing, and budget.
- Plan your logistical exhibit timeline based on the tactics needed to support your predetermined goals.
- Allocate your budget to meet your prioritized show goals.

**4. Identify the products or services you will showcase and determine how you will display or demonstrate them.**

- If the show is supporting a new product launch, time is of the essence in having marketing collaterals, training for your exhibit staff and the actual product ready for display or demonstration.
- If you have a large product line, display only a sample, pertinent to your audience's identified needs.
- Trade show attendees want to experience your product or service in your exhibit, not just walk through or past it. Make it as interactive as possible.

**5. Produce an attractive, uncluttered exhibit consistent with your corporate marketing campaign.**

- Use color, light and movement to attract attendees to your exhibit. Retain attendees in your booth using presentations, demos, or "info-tainment", and a well-trained exhibit staff to convey your corporate message and answer attendee questions using active listening skills.
- Keep your exhibit open and inviting; don't block more than 20% of your aisle space with counters, walls, or excess exhibit staff. The rule-of-thumb for staffing your exhibit is one staff person for every 50 square feet of open space in your booth.



**6. Use high-impact graphics focusing on your prospects' needs and wants.**

- The "look" of your graphics should impart your overall marketing strategy (integrated marketing) and specific show message.
- Leverage your best ideas from other media (advertising, print media, promotions, giveaways, etc.) into a consistent presentation to gain brand recognition.
- Plan your exhibit graphics as large, colorful "visual speed bumps" to attract attendees' attention and communicate your message. Don't confuse graphics (billboards) with signage (bulletin boards).
- Effective graphics create an interest in your product or service by telling potential prospects what you can do for them in approximately 3.5 seconds, the time it takes to walk past a 10' x 10' booth space.
  - - Use graphics to state your unique selling position (what differentiates you from competitors).
  - - Use graphics to qualify who you want to meet ("Dealers Wanted") and discourage those timewasters you don't!

**7. Promotion – Pre-Show, At-Show, Post Show**

- Be proactive in inviting the qualified attendees you'd like to visit your exhibit. Focus your efforts on getting your list of "most wanted prospects" to visit your exhibit. Industry studies have shown that an exhibitor can double the number of qualified leads at a show with an effective pre-show and at-show promotional campaign.
- Plan an integrated promotion strategy for all three timeframes of a trade show: pre-show, at-show, and post-show.
- Work with Show Management to obtain a targeted list of pre-registered attendees' names for pre-show promotion: postcards, email, or letter with exhibit floor passes. Contact them multiple times with compelling messages.
- Determine on-site promotional opportunities, such as branded hotel door hangers or room keys, taxi receipts, event sponsorships, show directory advertising, banners, show bags or badge lanyards, etc.
- Pick promotional items that have a high perceived value, will be kept by the attendee and have a tie-in to your message to make it more memorable. Top of desk = top of mind when it's time to order!

- Give promotional items as a positive reinforcement to only those who complete a lead form or attend a demonstration or presentation for higher perceived value. Or use tiered giveaways based on the prospect's business potential.

#### **8. Prepare your exhibit staff for "show business".**

- Trade shows are a different type of sales venue with specific rules and expectations. Just as you wouldn't send an actor on stage without a script, a rehearsal with other actors and props, don't send your exhibit staff to work on your trade show stage unprepared.
- Recruit friendly, courteous, enthusiastic, knowledgeable booth staff.
- Hold an exhibit staff meeting in the booth to introduce the Booth Captain, PR contacts, VIPs and review exhibit layout, lead gathering systems, promotions, presentations, partners, and work schedules.
- Corporate management should sponsor a mandatory off-site exhibit staff dinner or breakfast to:
- Share corporate show strategy and goals with your exhibit staff.
- Conduct product training on your new products and services.
- Review good booth etiquette and body language.
- Train staff how to effectively greet and engage suspects, quickly qualify using open-ended probing questions, demonstrate to prospects, and disengage unqualified attendees.
- The most memorable part of the attendee's exhibit experience is their interaction with your staff!

#### **9. Record all pertinent information on a lead form to facilitate follow-up.**

- Plan ahead with your sales department (or whoever will follow up on your show leads) to determine what pertinent information they will need to follow-up after the show, including demographic data (from the attendee's scanned show badge or business card), product interest, role in purchasing process, timeframe to buy, and requested follow-up. Other helpful information to capture from prospects includes their current supplier, reason they want to change suppliers and the name(s) of decision makers in their organization if they don't have this responsibility.
- Determine if you will rent an official lead retrieval system on site (standard or customized), purchase a customizable system, or customize your own pre-printed forms to be completed manually.
- Determine your lead rating system to prioritize your after-show follow up, such as A=Hot, B=Warm, C=Cold.
- Making good notes on your lead form about conversations with prospects can turn a cold call into a warm one!

#### **10. Provide promised follow-up within 72 hours if emailed; 10 business days by US mail.**

- Fact: About 80% of all printed materials gathered by attendees at trade shows are thrown away before they make it back to the office. Use expensive collaterals in post-show follow-up of qualified leads.
- Write your follow-up letter before the show; reference the show name, your booth theme, key messages, etc.
- Thank them for visiting your booth; reiterate the features/benefits of your product/service in the letter, and mention your agreed-upon follow-up and timeframe.
- Mail this letter with samples, literature, coupons, article reprints, case studies, etc. to reinforce the sale or, if responding by email, hyperlink to your Web site for easy access.
- Follow-up in the requested manner, whether by phone, fax, email, or with promised materials.