

# Tradeshow Tip Sheet

## This month: Tradeshow Salesmanship

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### You're at the Show to Bring Home Business

There are a lot of different reasons to exhibit at a tradeshow. The validity of each reason depends on the company's objectives and goals for each specific show. For instance, you may want to connect with your current suppliers. Or you may have a new product to launch and having the trade media at the show is a perfect time and place to get them to see and write about that product. You may be presenting a new image to the marketplace and that new booth of yours shows all the industry players what that powerful new image is.

But all of those activities point to the overall goal of marketing – any kind of marketing – to grow your business. Tradeshow marketing is extremely effective mainly because it brings key industry buyers and decision makers under the same roof at the same time, giving you an opportunity to reach all of those people much more effectively than you could ever hope to do one at a time.

When all is said and done, you want to increase sales. Tradeshows are a great place to do just that. So let's focus on the specific sales elements

that relate to tradeshow marketing: your staff, lead generation, and your booth presentation.



Your tradeshow staff are your front line— your company's public face. Do they have the tools to do their job efficiently?

### Is Your Staff at the Top of Their Game?

If you crunch the numbers after your next tradeshow and come to the conclusion that you should have closed more business, the first place to look is your front-line: the booth staffers.

Are they asking the right questions? Are they looking to up-sell customers who have committed to one level of your product or service? Are they engaging visitors in such a way to determine if they are in the target market, and if so, are they 'peeling the onion' to learn what problems they're facing?

In a sense, tradeshow selling is like any other kind

of selling. You're uncovering problems and looking to offer your product or service as an effective solution. Flip the coin, though, and tradeshow selling is unlike almost all other kinds of selling. The tradeshow floor is often chaotic and noisy. You have just a few seconds to ask pertinent questions and either qualify or disqualify the visitor.

If your booth staff is falling short, it may not be their fault. It's management's job to ensure that all of their 'front-line' representatives at a tradeshow have the proper training and mindset to work the show.



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**When designing a tradeshow booth floor plan, ensure that it functions properly to show samples and gather leads.**

## Lead Generation 101

Need more sales? Then you need more leads. Quality leads, that should be. You get more quality leads by doing two things well: getting more people to your booth, and asking quality qualifying questions when those visitors arrive. We've talked about your tradeshow staff and how they need to be prepared with good questions and a welcoming attitude. The other half of that equation is to ensure that more people come to your booth.

Several factors play into your overall booth traffic: booth location on the showroom floor, overall traffic created at the show by show management, pre-show marketing, in-booth promotions and attractors, and a growing tendency of companies to use social media to drive traffic to their booth. Of course other factors can affect booth traffic as well.

Lead information entered into a database – at minimum – should contain the person's name, title and contact information; product interest level (cool, warm, hot), specific follow up time, what should happen at the follow up, and any specific problems, concerns or interests the prospect has. Your lead sheet should be designed to ask those questions and make notes so that your sales team can follow up immediately following the show.



## Positioning Your Booth for Seamless Selling

You'd think that a tradeshow booth purchased just out of the box would be perfectly set up to help execute seamless selling, but that's usually not the case. Every company is different. They have different products and services and use different methods to demonstrate those items. So it makes sense that what booth design and function works for one business may not work for your business.

If designing a booth from scratch, one driving design point should be to make sure that the layout includes all the proper elements to help you show off or sample a product and capture a lead. That may mean you need three laptop stations, or five food

sample stations, or a private room for client meetings. Those specific functions are should be determined by the tradeshow manager in conjunction with management's goals. Your booth design team will help you put those elements into a functional and hopefully elegant booth, taking into account such things as traffic flow patterns, expected amount of traffic, company imaging and other important items.

A poorly designed booth offers challenges for even the best-trained staff. A well-designed booth makes that job much easier moves your operation closer to seamless.

## Bottom Line

Tradeshow selling, even though unlike other kinds of selling, has a specific discipline that once accomplished, can pay great rewards. From the ability of the staff to meet and greet visitors and ask engaging qualifying questions, to the overall look and function of the booth itself along with lead generation and sales crew follow-through, your tradeshow sales and bottom line will either grow or wither depending on your implementation and execution of those elements.

Remember that a little bit goes a long way: having a trained staff opens the doors to increased leads and quality of leads. A superior lead capture form gives the sales team more accurate information to follow up with. An attractive booth brings in more visitors. Pre-show promotion tells more people about you ahead of show time. And in-booth promotions that draw a crowd will attract even more people wanting to know what's going on.