

Trade Show Tips

It is estimated that approximately 75% of all marketers will attend several trade shows during the work year. Who is a marketer? Anyone hoping to bring their business to the attention of the public and sell their product and/or services.

As a result of extensive research and personal history manning those trade show booths, I've learned that the single most important aspect of your booth is your booth staff! They garner 90% of the positive response that is generated from your booth. Not that the setup or visual image of your booth isn't important, but your people are the key.

A few things to remember about the visual aspect before we move on to your people:

- Use the fewest amount of words and images – your booth should be a bulletin board, not a brochure
- Your booth should have a single, central, visual focus
- Your company name and/or logo should be VERY noticeable

Two years ago, I was one of the vendor booth judges as a local building association's trade show. I was amazed at the number of booth personnel who had absolutely no idea of what booth etiquette is. Here's a brief list of what to do if you want to convince people to avoid coming within ten feet of your booth (and thereby guaranteeing failure at the trade show):

- Eat – sends the message that your mouth is already occupied, thank you, and you really don't want to talk to anyone else
- Talk on your cell phone – see above for message
- Cluster with your co-workers in the booth and chat – see above for message
- Don't smile, don't make eye contact with passersby – sending the message that you really don't want to be at the trade show

When choosing staff for your booth, here's your bible:

- You want the people-people; the ones who love to chat, are always smiling, and genuinely LOVE interacting with others

- You want the people who know the most about your company; hopefully they fit into the previous category; if they don't, go with the people-people
- You want energetic, animated, passionate employees
- You want employees who can focus on the BENEFITS of what your company offers, not the products and services; your booth personnel shouldn't be reciting laundry lists of products/services, they should be passionately sharing what they—and your company—can do for your prospective customers
- You want employees who can ask questions that will engage your prospective customers and get them talking. *What brought you to the trade show today?* Instead of *Can I help you?*
- You want people who can have fun while always keeping in the back of their mind that they are AT WORK, presenting an image of your company, and that image is EVERYTHING in that setting

Happy Marketing!