

SALES

Stand Out Before/During/After a Trade Show



Lisa Maini

Trade shows are an incredibly effective promotional and sales tool. Here are some helpful tips to maximize your time and financial investment — and generate new business opportunities from any trade show you attend.

1) Set Goals. What do you want to achieve by attending the show? Sell a certain amount of inventory? Launch a new product? You can have more than one goal, but make sure you're clear about what you want to achieve.

2) Be Selective. Only participate in trade shows that will give your business the best ROI for your goal. Find out what the trade show's objectives are — investigate and evaluate the audience. Participate in trade shows that target your audience and have the best chance of achieving your goal.

3) Advertise in Advance. Invite clients, prospects, suppliers, media and other contacts to stop by your booth. Advertise the date on your Web site. Contact the media covering the trade show to find out their angle. If it's a good fit with your goals, ask them to include your company's name as an example or third party resource.

4) Think Neatness and Visibility. Make sure your booth is organized and tidy, and your prices are clearly marked. Display some of your products at eye level to draw prospects to your booth.

5) Build the Impression of Demand. Prospects are more likely to want your products if they think they're in high demand. Place a strategic "sold" sign on one or two items. You might even leave a

display spot empty to give the impression that you've been too busy to restock.

6) Pull a Crowd to Your Booth. Use an interactive display, such as a quiz, computer game, a contest drawing (a great way to collect contract information) or a scheduled demonstration.

7) Give Away Promotional Items. Small, useable items are best, printed with your company's name and telephone number. Make sure prospects have to walk through or into your booth to get the item.

8) Make Information Easily Available. Use signs to communicate pricing, minimum orders and other basic information. This will save time and prevent prospects from leaving your booth if

you are occupied with another customer.

9) Be Ready to Do Business. Have a good supply of order forms, pens, credit card slips, and anything else you need to conduct sales and track orders. Your promotional literature will make it easy for prospects to find you after the show.

10) Actively Engage Your Prospects. The trick is to draw prospects to your booth without

intimidating or overwhelming them. Make sure your body language is friendly (i.e. don't cross your arms). Find out what aspect of your business they're most interested in and be prepared to offer specific solutions. Make sure someone is working your booth at all times.

Last, follow up promptly. Write, e-mail or telephone prospects as soon as possible after the show. The faster you follow up with prospects the more your business will stand out from the rest.

Lisa Maini is president of myMarketingManager, Arlington, a full-service marketing outsourcing firm that specializes in developing both strategic and tactical marketing programs for start-ups and small to mid-sized companies.

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