

Tip Sheets

Tip Sheet #1: How to Dress for Tradeshow Success

DRESS TO CREATE A WINNING IMAGE

- How should you dress at an exhibition? Take a cue from your customer – you should be dressed the same or slightly better. The blue “power suit” may not always be appropriate and trends indicate it is being replaced by more casual attire or even a company uniform.
- In certain situations, a more relaxed dress code is in order, especially if most attendees are attired casually. You don't want to appear intimidating – as an army of starched-shirt salespeople – and scare-off potential customers looking to avoid a sales pitch. A casual appearance can make you much more approachable.
- If you choose to create a uniform look for your booth staff, be specific. If you decide to use matching sweaters or colorful shirts imprinted with your company's logo, make sure you are also specific about the color and type of pants, skirts and shoes your staff must wear to complete the look. Give careful consideration to the colors and styles of clothing you use. Keeping in mind the makeup of the individuals who staff your booth – make the clothing age and sex appropriate. For example, choosing pants as part of your uniform could promote an attitude of equality between men and women staffers among your customers.
- A uniform can turn your staff into a network of moving advertisements for your company. Your staff becomes easily identifiable anywhere on the show floor. Take advantage of the unified look to promote a team atmosphere among staff. An added benefit is that your staff is probably more comfortable and therefore more productive. And if your staff is in uniform, you eliminate the inevitable bad wardrobe choices like cheap suits and ugly ties.
- But be careful, the high visibility created by uniforms makes it essential that your staff is on their best behaviour at all times, inside and outside your booth.
- Casual attire is certainly not appropriate for every trade show, but in the correct situation, you can use it to your benefit and have a more productive exhibition experience.

Tip Sheet #2: Exhibitor Etiquette Helps Ensure Success

As important as your pre-show promotion is... as consequential as your pre-show planning... as critical as your booth design and integrated marketing approach... these vital elements can be forgotten and useless if your booth personnel make some all-too-common mistakes. Those mistakes can cost your company business, hurt its reputation, and result in the money and time you spent on your exhibit being wasted.

Your show management professional wants your exposition to be successful. Listed below are some tips on exhibitor etiquette for you to share with your booth personnel. By putting these tips into practice, you can help make the show a success, both for your company and for other exhibitors.

- Stay out of other companies' booths. Not only is your presence in your company's booth absolutely vital to serving your customers and potential customers, but you help set an example for others. Wandering into other booths disrupts exhibitors who are with clients. If you do this, you can expect others to do the same to you.
- Stay out of your competitors' booths. Even worse than wandering into "friendly territory" is going into competitors' booths to take information or to crowd out legitimate clients. This is unprofessional and reflects badly on your company and on you personally.
- Do not solicit in the aisles (known as "suitcasing"). Expositions are designed to encourage a free flow of traffic through the aisles. And, they are designed to enable exhibitors to do business in their booths. Show management usually has rules against solicitation in the aisles, with good reason. Companies that choose not to pay for exhibit booths sometimes attempt to solicit in the aisles. They are taking advantage of the money your company spends to make the exposition happen! They are, in effect, letting legitimate exhibitors pick up their show costs. Be sure to inform show management if you see this happening. Your company deserves to get what it pays for.
- Do not disrupt other exhibitors or visitors. Disruptions such as loud music or announcements, shining lights at other booths, using laser pointers across aisles and the like are annoying to others. Visitors to exhibits are there for business purposes, just like you. But if you engage in disruptive behaviors, visitors will perceive you and your company not as professionals in business, but as people to avoid. So you lose business and the respect of your peers and your customers.

It is just good business to use good etiquette when staffing your company's exhibit booth. You and your company can be highly successful, but you have to be careful not to break the rules of good exhibitor etiquette!

Tip Sheet #3: Demos Make Your Booth Sizzle

The competition is right next to you. The noise level is high. Your audience is easily distracted. They have varying levels of technical knowledge. Can a demonstration really be effective?

Yes! Demonstrations are a key element in trade show strategy, but effective demonstrations require practical skills and expert interactive communication with the audience. Here are guidelines for success.

- Be aware of attendees' first, and frequently lasting, impressions.
Dress at the same level or slightly better than the attendees
- Practice your demonstration.
You'll be better able to respond to specific questions at any technical level.
- Know every aspect of the equipment or product before the show.
Your level of preparedness is a reflection of you and your company.
- Position yourself so that you can see the audience and the product.
Keep people from standing behind you where they can't see you or the product properly.
- Make eye contact.
Convey commitment and interest with your eyes. Acknowledge newcomers to the demonstration.
- Use body language to convey confidence and conviction.
Use gesturing for emphasis and impact or to compare and contrast what you are demonstrating.
- Anticipate questions and prepare answers prior to the show.
Know who on your staff can answer a question when you can't. Restate questions so everyone can hear and if necessary, tone the question down to make it less difficult to answer.
- Adjust to the audience.
For less technical audiences, stress benefits and solutions to problems.
For a technical audience, focus on special features and functions.
- Use the demonstration to qualify sales opportunities and stimulate post-show interest.

Tip Sheet #4: Pre-Show Promotion

Promote, Promote, Promote

Take control! Don't leave your success to chance. A profitable exposition experience depends on what you do before the show to assure your clients and prospects come to you.

First, identify the audience you want to reach, then bring them to your exhibit. Develop a focused and creative approach to attracting attendees.

Statistics prove attendees come to an exposition with a set agenda of exhibits to visit. Your pre-show promotional activity can get you on that list.

Exposition attendees respond to invitations offering compelling reasons why they should visit a particular exhibit. The invitation can be in many forms – direct mail, telemarketing, advertising promotion – just as long as it provides meaningful information (a little creativity helps, too.)

Here are some ideas on how to get your invitation out to your target audience:

- Advertise in trade journals.
- Advertise in the advance show program.
- Add a tag line to all your advertising with the show name and your booth number.
- Issue press releases announcing new products and services, key people attending the show, and special show promotions.
- Hire a celebrity to be at your booth and promote, promote, promote.
- Provide complimentary registration forms to your clients and prospects.
- Mail "personal" invitations two weeks before the show and include VIP cards for access to your hospitality suite or lounge.
- Change your postage metre to announce the show.
- Mail out cards redeemable for a gift in the exhibit.
- Put stickers promoting the show on all company correspondence, including faxes.
- Make telephone calls to your key prospects just prior to the show.

Tip Sheet #5: Integrated Marketing for Exhibitor Success

Expositions (trade and consumer shows) are exceptionally valuable, productive vehicles for marketing. Whether an exposition is used to introduce a new product, introduce or reinforce a brand, or generate market recognition of an established product or service, expositions provide extraordinary opportunities for success. Poorly planned exhibit programs, though, can be a waste of money, time, and other resources. The best planned exhibit programs are those that are integrated with all of your company's marketing efforts. To get the most out of your exhibit program, ask yourself these questions:

- What do I want to get out of this exposition?
- Can I reach my target audience at this exposition?
- What are attendees looking for at this exposition? Check the attendee profile provided by show management to ensure that your products/services match attendees' needs.
- What are the primary concerns of attendees? Your answer to this question will help you craft your message and design elements.
- How does my product or service fulfill their needs? Make sure your participation is appropriate to the show.

Plan an integrated marketing plan by following these nine steps:

1. Define the situation. Articulate what is happening in the market place with regard to your products, the competition, and your position in the marketplace.
2. Identify and research your target audience. Identify the decision makers and recognize the influencers. Learn their needs and challenges. Use this research to help position your products.
3. Establish measurable goals and objectives. Set forth specific objectives that you can quantify, so you can know how successful your participation has been.
4. Develop strategies to achieve the goals and objectives. You must know what you are going to do to achieve your goals.
5. Develop a creative exhibit program to attract and educate your target audience. Use advertising, pre-show promotion, website postings, public relations, etc. to attract the right audience.
6. Ensure all marketing communications are integrated to achieve a consistent message for your target audience. Every contact you have with your audience must be consistent and must emphasize your core message.
7. Design the exhibit and graphics to support the integrated marketing message. Your exhibit and graphics program should be built to support the core message.
8. Conduct a strategic briefing to educate and motivate your booth staff. Make certain that your booth staff know how to act. Be aware of what distracts from their effectiveness, and what message you want to send. Booth staff are critical to your success, so spend time to make sure they are ready.
9. Follow up on leads. Pay attention to leads generated during the exposition, and follow up quickly.

Tip Sheet #6: Nine Ways Not To Greet Attendees

It is critical for your staff to create a welcome atmosphere that makes it appealing for attendees to want to stop by. What you don't do can be as important as what you do.

1. Don't Sit. You give attendees the impression you don't care or you're lazy. Attendees won't interrupt your private time, as they see it.
2. Don't Read. You aren't able to make eye contact with attendees as they walk by your booth.
3. Don't Eat or Drink. It is just plain rude and messy. Potential customers are too polite to bother you when you're eating.
4. Don't Ignore Attendees. If you're busy when someone approaches, either acknowledge him/her or try to include him/her in your conversation. If you're talking with a boothmate, break it off immediately.
5. Don't Talk on the Telephone. Why do you need a phone in your booth? Time on the phone is time away from potential prospects and tells everyone you have better things to do.
6. Don't Be a Border Guard. Don't stand where you become a barricade or block the attendees' view. Stand near the aisle and off to the side.
7. Don't Hand Out Literature Freely. Your catalogues and brochures end up in a bag with everyone else's literature. Be discriminating in who gets literature. Better yet, mail them out to qualified prospects after the show.
8. Don't Underestimate Prospects. Get out of the habit of sizing up somebody simply by the way they look. Qualify them, don't classify them.
9. Don't Cluster With Friends and Other Booth Personnel. Don't be a "street gang." Nobody will approach a group of strangers, it's too intimidating. Be more approachable.

Tip Sheet #7: Promote Your Product & Presence

THREE WAYS TO WIN

A unique aspect of participating in an exhibition is the opportunity to sell your product or service, not just once, but three times!

PRE-SHOW PROMOTION

- It really pays to begin selling prior to the show. You not only promote higher attendance at the event, but more importantly, you are letting your customers and prospects know where to find you at the show. Here are some proven techniques to try.
- Let your customers know you will be at the show and note the location, dates and times of the event.
- Mail special coupons or show admission tickets to your customers.
- Secure the right from show management to distribute free admission tickets directly to key customers before the show.
- Schedule advertising to coincide with the show dates.
- Find out when/where ads promoting the show will appear and buy adjoining ad space.

AT THE SHOW

- Offer price discounts or value added promotions.
- Target customers/prospects on-site and schedule specific appointment times during the show.
- Develop easy ways to qualify new prospects such as collecting business cards or conducting a prize drawing.
- Hand-out unusual giveaway items with your name, phone and fax numbers imprinted on them.
- Distribute discount coupons valid only for a specified time period after the show.

POST-SHOW PROMOTION

- Immediately following the show, contact all prospects/customers who visited your booth.
- Analyze coupon redemption patterns and build a database for future reference.
- Ask for referrals from prospect and customers.
- Begin planning for your next show.

Follow these simple suggestions and discover how powerful exhibition marketing is! Like most projects, however, those who really succeed are those who have a plan. Take some time now to plan your marketing program and then sell, sell, sell.