

TRADE SHOW & EVENT MARKETING

How to Choose an Affordable and Attention-getting Display

There are many display options available today. How do you choose the one that's right for you? Answer these simple questions to find out:

How often do you exhibit at a trade show or event?

- A. 1-3 times per year
- B. 4-10 times per year
- C. 10 or more times per year

What are your graphic needs?

- A. Small and easy to assemble display with company name, logo and tagline
- B. Mid-sized display for company and product/service information
- C. Large display for company information and messaging, product/service information and images

How many employees typically attend your trade show or events?

- A. Just one employee
- B. One to two employees
- C. Three or more employees

If you answered mostly A's, then a **banner stand** may suit your needs. These retractable stands are free-standing and can be set up within seconds, with one person – simply set up the pole, pull up the graphic and hook. Average size of these banners is 2' wide by 6' tall, so they don't require a lot of floor space. A banner stand design could incorporate the company logo and tagline along with some other basic information.

If you answered mostly B's, then a **table-top display** could be right for you. Table tops are great for those who exhibit a few times a year and are looking for a professional yet cost-effective display to be used again and again. Table-tops provide a large graphic area allowing you to display your branding along with a list of your key products or services. These displays are especially ideal for small areas as they simply sit on the back edge of a table, allowing you plenty of room to display your printed materials and promotional products.

If you answered mostly C's, consider a **pop-up display**. These displays use a frame that is constructed in such a way that the unit will "pop up," making assembly a breeze. The displays come in various sizes with the most common being 8' and 10' wide. They are ideal for anyone who is a regular trade show exhibitor due to their compact size, professional appearance and easy set-up. Pop-ups are covered with fabric panels that accept Velcro® backed graphics or printed graphic panels that attach directly to the pop-up frame. These displays offer the largest graphic area for you to display your message. Once they are set up, the pop-up display forms a curved or angled wall that serves as a back wall for your booth.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The average trade show has more than 400 exhibitors.
- About two-thirds of all exhibitors are in a 10' x 10' space and another 18 percent are in a 10' x 20' or 10' x 30' space.
- The average trade show attendee will spend 7 to 8 hours on the floor over a period of 2 to 3 days visiting an average of 25-31 exhibits – leaving just 5 to 15 minutes per visit!

Source: Exhibitor Online



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Driving Results During and After the Event

You're on your way! You've set your event goals and all of your staff should know what it's going to take to achieve them. Simply showing up and setting up won't do. Here are some tips for what to do while you are at the event – and what to do once you get home – to maximize your participation.

It's Show Time!

Pump Up Your Marketing Team – Remind your team to sell instead of tell. Avoid overcrowding the booth with company representatives. Of course, you shouldn't eat or drink while in your booth. Be careful to limit your time with unlikely targets. Remember why you are there.

Qualify Prospects – Ask questions. Find out immediately who you are talking to, where they are from and what organization they represent. First you might ask, "Tell me about your current projects." Then, move on to more targeted questions like, "What are your top three criteria for buying?" Finally, to define your follow-up action, ask "How does your company decide which vendors to work with?"

Study the Competition – Use staffers who are not scheduled in your booth to collect information on the event floor from your competitors. Where else can you get a first-hand look at new products, services and pricing?

Watch For Press – Encourage your booth staff to be on the lookout for press badges so they can make a proper greeting. And don't let the press get away without a giveaway.

A Process-Driven Post Event

Follow Up – Don't be lulled into a post-event wind down. Develop a measurable, systematic follow-up campaign with timelines. Be sure to schedule face-to-face meetings immediately. If you receive an attendee list, contact people who did not visit your booth. They may not remember all of the exhibitors they spoke with and will welcome contact from you.

Evaluate – Based on your objectives, you should have a way to evaluate your results. Is it number of leads? How much press coverage you received? Was the event a good match? Take notes so you'll know what you can improve upon the next time out.

Poll Staff – Include staff experiences in your evaluation. Were they prepared to answer questions or do they need more training before the next event? Did they have enough printed materials and giveaways? Did they meet their personal goals?

DID YOU KNOW?

According to industry surveys...

- 95 percent of decision makers look for their current vendors at shows.
- 87 percent share information they learned at shows; 64 percent talk to at least six other people.
- 77 percent found at least one new supplier at their last show.
- 72 percent say show attendance influences their buying decision.
- 71 percent of attendees can authorize purchases.



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Preparing for Success: What to Do Before You Go

Trade shows and other events are an excellent opportunity to make sales, build relationships and collect qualified leads. To maximize your participation, consider the following before you're off and running.

Set Goals – Have a plan outlined – strategic and tactical – with measurable goals. Are you introducing a new product or announcing an enhanced service? Prospecting for new business in a specific industry? Set your objectives (i.e. 10 new orders, 50 contacts, 25 qualified leads, three articles in trade journals, etc.) and track your results.

Develop a Follow-Up Plan – Have a lead fulfillment system in place. You might “pre-stuff” a follow-up package with a high-quality capabilities brochure that's set to mail upon your return. Include a pre-drafted generic letter that can be personalized with a hand-written note reinforcing your initial conversation at the show. Industry statistics reveal that 89 percent of exhibitors go with the intention of gathering leads, but only 21 percent of the leads are followed up on. Preparing your materials before you leave will help to ensure timely follow up.

Build Pre-Show Interest – Know your audience. Request a registration list from the event organizer and try to identify quality prospects by industry. Create “buzz” about your participation prior to the event by sending a direct mail piece to these targeted prospects. Include a simple card that can be redeemed at your booth for a prize. Or, mail the first half of a two-part premium. You could send a note pad, for example, mentioning the pad holder or matching pen can be picked up at your exhibit.

Use Public Relations – Many organizations will publish an attendees' guide that includes exhibitors' profiles. Contact the event organizer well in advance to see if and how you might be featured. Seek out the editor's name and forward a news release focusing on what's new about your products or services, providing industry trends and statistics. Be sure to follow up with the editor to offer additional information if needed.

Select Print Materials – Gauge quantities of business cards, brochures and flyers you want to have on hand. Set out flyers for general distribution; save your high-quality brochures that show off your capabilities for qualified leads or a follow-up mailing. Rather than “giving it all away,” build in a reason for further contact.

Pick Premiums – Some shows are marketed with a theme. You can tie into the overall theme or create your own. Your giveaways should be memorable and naturally complement your marketing message or theme. It's best if they are used as a thank-you for participating in a demonstration or survey. Avoid leaving them out on a table for anyone to take. You're trying to reach customers and prospects, not the masses.

DID YOU KNOW?

Your staff is one of your most important sales tools at a trade show or event. Here are a few tips to consider when choosing your staff:

- Your staff should be readily identifiable through dress and present a professional, enthusiastic and unified image.
- Use your top salespeople who know how and what to communicate.
- Encourage personal goals and have rewards and recognition for a job well done.



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Promotional Products that Build More Interest

The Proof is in the Numbers

Promotional products are memorable and effective ... one of the few forms of advertising that people say they feel good about getting!

Here are the highlights of a recent poll*:

- 84 percent remembered the advertisers of the promotional products they've received.
- 42 percent had a MORE favorable impression of an advertiser after receiving the item.
- 62 percent have done business with the advertiser on a promotional product after receiving the item.
- 81 percent of promotional products were kept because they were considered useful.
- More than three-quarters of respondents have had their items for more than six months.

Your employees, donors, customers and patrons will agree – an imprinted gift from you is a real keeper. Here's how to do it:

Build Pre-Event Buzz

Objectives may be different, but the goal of hosting a booth at any event is to attract visitors. How are you building "buzz"? Most event coordinators will provide you with a list of attendees before the event or allow you to place branded promotional items in the event bags. Use this opportunity to entice your best prospects to visit you. If the event has a theme, be sure to play off of that. Here are a couple of quick ideas:

- Affix a poker chip to a postcard, and tell prospects to visit your booth for a chance to spin a prize wheel.
- Include a themed pin on a flyer, and ask prospects to "show us your pin" to be entered into a grand prize drawing.

Attract Visitors During the Event

Your booth will attract attention if you give away some useful items for visitors to use during the event. Remember, don't just hand them out. First, walk prospects through a demonstration, have them take a survey or get their business card.

- Bottled water with your logo on the label is always appreciated.
- If your event is in a hot locale, sunscreen packets may be a good choice.
- Branded chocolates may serve as a nice pick-me-up snack.
- Mint tins are also popular and handy.

These inexpensive items will generate traffic, but you should have higher-end products available to distribute to prospects that offer high potential for future business. Items such as a USB flash drive or a leather portfolio will keep your name out in front of your best leads long after the event.

Show Them They're Remembered After the Event

A simple gift that is functional and sent with a personal letter will be unexpected and appreciated. Make a positive impression with letter openers, pens or highlighters, just to name a few.

*Source: Advertising Specialties Institute

DID YOU KNOW?

Promotional products generate more sales referrals. Research done by Baylor University indicates that salespeople who give promotional products to their customers received 22 percent more referrals than those who did not use any ad specialty items.

Promotional products increase customer satisfaction. A survey conducted by Dr. Richard Beltramini of Wayne State University found that customers who received a promotional product with a "thank you" letter were 43 percent more satisfied with the company than those who received the letter alone.

Promotional products improve direct mail response rates. According to a study by the Dallas Marketing Group, a direct mail campaign that included a promotional product generated a 9.55 percent response rate. The same mailing without the product received a 0.7 percent response.



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