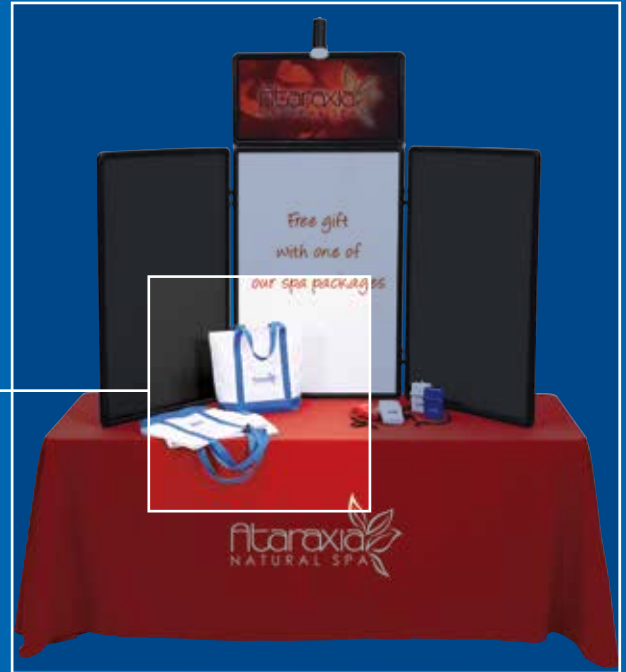


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Trade show displays: Trends for exhibitors— Part 2

Imagine two trade show booths side by side. The companies exhibiting in each booth are similarly positioned in their industry and made equivalent investments in exhibit display components, booth square footage and staff presence at the show. But one booth is buzzing while the other is a ghost town. In the first booth, a steady stream of attendees is welcomed into the booth, where they engage in conversation with booth staff and interact with the product on display. In the quiet booth, attendees are separated from booth staff by a table. Product information mirrors what is already available on the company's website. Occasionally, an attendee wanders by, drops a business card in a fish bowl, grabs a tchotchke and moves on.

It's probably not hard to picture this scenario. You may have seen it yourself. Why do some booths generate activity and others get a cursory look at best? Chances are, the company with the first booth engaged in a pre-show strategy to target its best audience and designed an exhibit that offered those attendees a personalized experience.

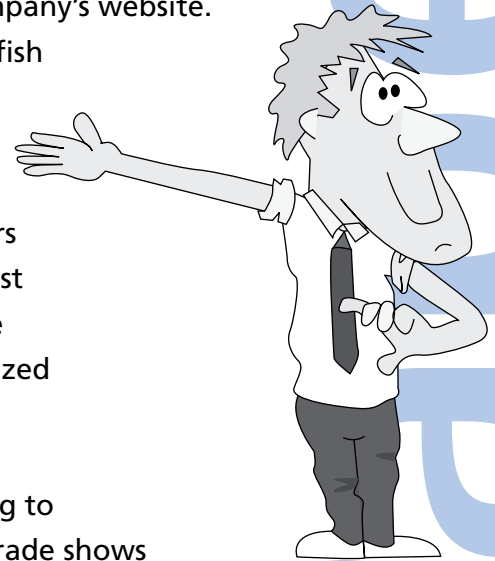
Trade show attendees are more sophisticated than ever, according to Exhibitor magazine editor Travis Stanton. "Few buyers come to trade shows with plans of aimlessly wandering the aisles," he says. "Today, they're able to research your company, view photographs and videos of your products online, download spec sheets and more. Sure, trade shows give them an opportunity to get hands-on with your wares, but that's only a unique value-add if your products are not readily available via other avenues such as retail stores, showrooms, etc."¹

This means that trade show success hinges on crafting a plan to deliver unique experiences to a target audience that can't be achieved through other channels. "Because if all you're offering attendees is a regurgitation of what they can readily obtain on your website, your strategy is woefully insufficient and, in my opinion, insulting to clients and prospects who have invested an inordinate amount of time and money to attend the event," Stanton says.²

How can you drive your best clients and prospects to your trade show booth and make the visit worthwhile to both attendees and your company? The second part of this two-part Blue Paper® series explores strategies for creating personalized experiences before, during and after a trade show to help exhibitors reach their target audience. (Read the first installment in this series to learn about emerging trends for trade show exhibitors.)

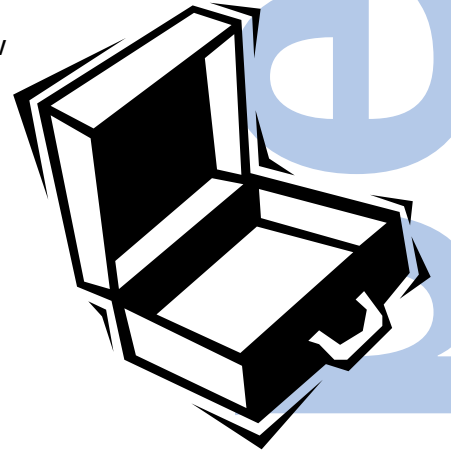
¹ Stanton, Travis. "The Brain Drain." EXHIBITOR Online. Exhibitor Media Group, n.d. Web. 21 June 2015. <<http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=1577>>.

² Ibid.



Pre-show: Know your goals and identify your target audience

More than 70 percent of show attendees plan which booths they will visit before they ever set foot on the show floor.³ Yet only 10 to 15 percent of exhibitors invest in pre-show marketing efforts, according to trade show and event marketing firm Exhibit Systems.⁴ These contrasting statistics make it clear that investing in a well-designed pre-show strategy will help to give your company a meaningful advantage over competing exhibitors. “Many times companies either register far in advance for the tradeshow, and then forget about it, or they’re last minute and reactionary with picking the tradeshow they participate in,” says Tim Asimos of Circle S Studio. “Either way, to do tradeshow right, you need to begin your planning long in advance. Planning for a tradeshow isn’t just about booking flights and hotel rooms for your staff. It should be a very strategic process, where every aspect of your tradeshow—pre-show, during-show and post-show—are all meticulously thought through and tied back to a strategy and aligned with your business goals and objectives.”⁵



In addition, exhibitors err when they rely on show organizers to ensure that their booth is on an attendee’s “must-see” list. “A lot of show marketers leave it to the show organizer to drive traffic on the show floor,” said Ruth P. Stevens, a consultant on business-to-business marketing and president of eMarketing Strategy. “You cannot cede responsibility to the show organizer to get all the traffic you want to get. You need to take aggressive action.”

The first step in crafting a pre-show strategy is to outline goals for participating in a specific trade show. Do you want to generate leads? Nurture existing leads? Build relationships? Train and educate? Raise visibility or brand awareness?⁶ Your goals will help you define your target audience. For example, a goal of generating new leads requires targeting a different audience than a goal of nurturing existing leads or introducing a new product to existing customers.

If your company has a mix of goals, your pre-show strategy can involve differentiated approaches to segments of the audience. The following steps

³ Lagorio-Chafkin, Christine. “How to Boost Traffic at Your Trade Show Booth.” *Inc.com*. Mansueto Ventures LLC, 2 June 2010. Web. 21 June 2015. <<http://www.inc.com/guides/2010/06/boosting-trade-show-booth-traffic.html>>.

⁴ Leung, Sarah. “Trade Show Marketing: Before the Show.” Weblog post. Handshake. Handshake Corp., 10 Feb. 2015. Web. 21 June 2015. <<https://www.handshake.com/blog/trade-show-marketing-show/>>.

⁵ Asimos, Tim. “9 Steps to Revitalize Your B2B Tradeshow Marketing Strategy.” Weblog post. Circle S Studio. Circle S Studio, 26 Mar. 2015. Web. 21 June 2015. <<http://www.circlesstudio.com/blog/9-steps-to-revitalize-your-tradeshow-marketing-strategy/>>.

⁶ “Trade Show and Event Marketing.” *Marketing Mo*. Moderandi Inc., n.d. Web. 21 June 2015. <<http://www.marketingmo.com/campaigns-execution/trade-show-and-event-marketing/>>.

are adapted from a pre-show strategy offered by Sarah Leung of sales order management firm Handshake®:

1. **Build a list of contacts for outreach.** Let your customers, contacts and prospects know that you are going to be at the show, and market the show itself. If you've reserved a booth, you should also have access to a list of registered attendees from the show organizers.
2. **Launch targeted email campaigns.** A series of emails may include invites to existing contacts and prospects, announcements that you'll be at the show and reminder emails right before the show.
3. **Prepare mailings.** Leung says that direct mail, especially postcards with unique shapes and designs, is still an effective way to reach your target audience. "The goal here is to make sure your company, products and sales message are in people's minds before the show even starts so they can make a note to visit your booth," she says. "At the very least, they will already have heard of you and your products by the time they see your booth in person. The copywriting and imagery on the postcard, therefore, should be eye-catching and memorable."
4. **Develop a more targeted marketing approach for your biggest prospects and customers.** This may include providing free show passes or discounted registration offers, setting up appointments and planning a special, private event, such as a cocktail hour or dinner. These strategies should be limited to your most high-value customers and prospects.⁷



While you would ideally cull the list of registered attendees to eliminate those that aren't a part of your target audience, this isn't always possible. Stevens suggests that the language you use in your pre-show campaigns can help to begin to qualify leads. "When you cannot target the list as narrowly as you'd like, the best solution is to craft your direct mail copy to attract the qualified and repel the unqualified," she says. "An example of such a headline might be: 'Attention, purchasing managers! Come find out how you can save time and money in your search for the best widgets.' The creative thrust of the message should be around why the prospect would benefit from a visit to the booth. The postcard should go via first-class mail, and be scheduled to arrive a week to 10 days before the trade show. Note: Plan ahead. There is nothing more wasteful than a pre-show mailing that arrives after the prospect has left town for the event."⁸

⁷ Leung, Sarah. "Trade Show Marketing: Before the Show." Weblog post. Handshake. Handshake Corp., 10 Feb. 2015. Web. 21 June 2015. <<https://www.handshake.com/blog/trade-show-marketing-show/>>.

⁸ Stevens, Ruth P. "How to Triple the Effectiveness of Your Trade Show Marketing Program." Web log post. EMarketing Strategy. Ruth P. Stevens, n.d. Web. 21 June 2015. <<http://www.ruthstevens.com/articles/how-to-triple-the-effectiveness-of-your-trade-show-marketing-program/>>.

Speaking of leads, your pre-show strategy should also involve determining what criteria to use to qualify leads and how that information will be captured, and training booth staff to execute the strategy. Patti Goldenberg of trade show creative agency Live MarketingSM says that most of her clients use five to eight custom lead qualifying questions. "For example, if one qualified lead criteria is identifying what systems they currently use, you'll want to capture that," she says. "Being specific is extremely beneficial—knowing if they're using a competitor's solution versus not having a system in place may result in a dramatically different lead ranking."⁹

Here are more tips for crafting a successful pre-show marketing strategy:

- **Know how your target audience communicates.** How do they prefer to receive information? What social media platforms do they use?¹⁰
- **Personalize invitations for your best customers and most promising leads.** "Based on what you've planned for the show (presentation, promotion, new product launch, demos, free consulting time, etc.), give them a good reason to show up to your booth or session," Asimos of Circle S Studio says. "Also, work ahead to schedule appointments with qualified leads for consultations, presentations, demos or other meetings in advance of the event."¹¹
- **Write a series of blog posts** as a guide to the event on topics such as speakers not to miss, sessions to attend, break-out sessions that your employees are leading and what you are featuring at the show.¹²
- **Initiate the conversation before the show begins.** "Participants don't want to be talked at, they want to be actively engaged in the conversation, and the conversation starts before the event through event hashtags," says Gina McDuffie, executive vice president of global marketing at Global Experience SpecialistsSM (GES). "This continues at the event through smaller, more active sessions with real-time surveys and polling."¹³
- **Think open and inviting when designing your booth space.** "Create a space where people can enter without feeling trapped," Asimos says.



⁹ Goldenberg, Patti. "7 Steps to Avoid the Trade Show Lead Black Hole." *Live Marketing*. Live Marketing, 16 Sept. 2014. Web. 21 June 2015.

<http://info.livemarketing.com/blog/bid/113112/7-Steps-to-Avoid-the-Trade-Show-Lead-Black-Hole>.

¹⁰ Obeng, Kristan. "The Future of Social Media at Tradeshows." *Exhibit City News*. Mr. Tradeshow Communications LLC, 01 Dec. 2014. Web. 21 June 2015.

<http://www.exhibitcitynews.com/future-social-media-tradeshows>.

¹¹ Asimos, Tim. "9 Steps to Revitalize Your B2B Tradeshow Marketing Strategy." *Weblog post*. Circle S Studio. Circle S Studio, 26 Mar. 2015. Web. 21 June 2015.

<http://www.circlesstudio.com/blog/9-steps-to-revitalize-your-tradeshow-marketing-strategy/>.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ 2015 *Trend Tracker*. Las Vegas, Nev.: Global Experience Specialists Inc., 2015. PDF.

“You can create different stations in the space for people to learn about your company and products or services. This subtle practice in ‘feng shui’ will decrease the chance of having people pass you by and increase the likelihood that they’ll step in and make a connection with one of your representatives.”¹⁴

- **Identify top influencers.** Amplify your pre-show messaging by identifying and engaging a show’s top-influencer attendees.¹⁵

Need more guidance? The Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR) offers a free pre-event planning tool (as well as a post-event calculation tool). The pre-event planning tool offers guidance for determining exhibit space requirements and staffing needs based on factors like net attendance, target audience attendance and show duration. The post-event calculation tool asks a series of questions (total inquiries obtained, qualified leads obtained, direct exhibit expense, and so on) to calculate potential return on investment for exhibiting at a specific trade show.¹⁶

Showtime: Maximize face-to-face interaction

The set-up crew is putting the final touches on your exhibit. Attendees are picking up their registration materials, but the floor hasn’t opened yet. Time to take a deep breath? Sure, but it’s also time for booth staff to do a walkthrough and role-play the lead capture process. Be ready to make adjustments to the process now and during the show. “Make it clear everything that needs to be captured (and exactly how to do it if you’re using technology),” says Goldenberg of Live Marketing. “And just as you make sure the rest of your program is running smoothly, keep an eye on how lead capture and sales conversations are going. Recently, a client noticed that not as many leads were speaking with their reps, so he modified a next step question from a yes/no to an open-ended one. This fixed the issue immediately and kept the leads flowing to sales reps.”¹⁷

Everything related to your company’s presence at the show—from the exhibit design and booth experiences to social media strategies and off-floor activities—should maximize engagement opportunities with your target audience. “Putting a bowl out and asking people



¹⁴ Asimos, Tim. “9 Steps to Revitalize Your B2B Tradeshow Marketing Strategy.” Weblog post. Circle S Studio. Circle S Studio, 26 Mar. 2015. Web. 21 June 2015.

<<http://www.circlesstudio.com/blog/9-steps-to-revitalize-your-tradeshow-marketing-strategy/>>.

¹⁵ 2015 Trend Tracker. Las Vegas, Nev.: Global Experience Specialists Inc., 2015. PDF.

¹⁶ “ROI Tool Kit.” CEIR. Center for Exhibition Industry Research, n.d. Web. 21 June 2015.

<<http://www.ceir.org/free-resources/>>.

¹⁷ Goldenberg, Patti. “7 Steps to Avoid the Trade Show Lead Black Hole.” Live Marketing. Live Marketing, 16 Sept. 2014. Web. 21 June 2015.

<<http://info.livemarketing.com/blog/bid/113112/7-Steps-to-Avoid-the-Trade-Show-Lead-Black-Hole>>.

to drop in a business card is a waste of energy," says Stevens of eMarketing Strategy. "The real way to generate good leads is to have a conversation and kick off a business relationship."¹⁸ Here are some ways to start that conversation:

Don't just exhibit; be a speaker. "Speaking on a topic of expertise to a targeted audience provides instant credibility," Asimos says. "It also provides a great opportunity to cross promote your booth happenings and gives your booth staff something to talk to visitors about. The slide deck from your presentation can also be used as content to nurture leads and prospects after the tradeshow."¹⁹

Know how your target audience wants to receive information. Some folks still want to have a brochure or a folder placed in their hand. But there are many options today to reduce the amount of paper materials you have to print and ship to the show. QR codes and digital libraries allow attendees to download exactly the information they want immediately—and it won't be left behind in a hotel room when the attendee decides it's not worth weighing down his luggage.²⁰

Employ hands-on technology. "Touch panel kiosks are a great solution to keep attendees interested in learning more about your products and services while they are waiting to speak to a salesperson," says De-de Mulligan, president of the Mulligan Management Group. "With an intuitive navigation system, an attendee can view videos, photos and testimonials about your organization and email your product information to decision makers back at the office."²¹

Offer mini-sessions related to the brand or product. At the 2015 ibtm[®] america, a showcase of the meetings and events industry, exhibitors offered bite-sized education, health and wellness activities to engage hosted buyers outside of appointment hours. Topics ranged from writing winning proposals to travel workout tips to a headshot lounge where prime attendees could get a new business photo.²²



¹⁸ Lagorio-Chafkin, Christine. "How to Boost Traffic at Your Trade Show Booth." *Inc.com*. Mansueto Ventures LLC, 2 June 2010. Web. 21 June 2015.

<http://www.inc.com/guides/2010/06/boosting-trade-show-booth-traffic.html>.

¹⁹ Asimos, Tim. "9 Steps to Revitalize Your B2B Tradeshow Marketing Strategy." Weblog post. Circle S Studio. Circle S Studio, 26 Mar. 2015. Web. 21 June 2015.

<http://www.circlesstudio.com/blog/9-steps-to-revitalize-your-tradeshow-marketing-strategy/>.

²⁰ Mulligan, De-de. "TRADE SHOWS 101: The Reason, the Value and the Future of the Industry." Mulligan Management Group LLC. Mulligan Management Group LLC, 13 Apr. 2015. Web. 21 June 2015. <http://www.mulliganmanagementgroup.com/entries/clients/trade-shows-101-the-reason-the-value-and-the-future-of-the-industry>.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Reed Travel Exhibitions. *ibtm america. Industry Education and Wellness Merge in ibtm america's 2015 "ConnectZone"*. Reed Exhibitions, 15 May 2015. Web. 21 June 2015. <http://www.ibtmamerica.com/en/Press-Center/Press-Releases/Industry-Education-and-Wellness-Merge-in-ibtm-americas-2015-ConnectZone/>.

Organize off-site activities. Networking opportunities are getting more adventurous, according to the 2015 Trend Tracker published by GES. Marketers are engaging attendees with architecture tours, yoga and running clubs. “We do a walking tour of the Vegas strip to immerse [show] participants in the design experience,” says John Woo, GES vice president of design and creative. “It provides meaningful context—it isn’t just the aesthetics of design, but the rationale and meaning of why it was created.”²³

Let attendees lounge and re-charge. Everyone needs to charge their phones or tablets at some point during the day. Setting up a charging lounge in your exhibit is a sure-fire way to get attendees to your booth and keep them there for 10 or 15 minutes. This is the perfect opportunity to lead a mini-educational session or qualify the attendee.²⁴

Take advantage of mobile apps that customize information and offers to attendees based on their locations. These can be used for instant attendee recognition (eliminating the need to scan a badge), gathering data about attendee traffic patterns and triggering custom messages, such as welcoming your target attendees as they arrive, or offering a coupon or information as they walk by your exhibit. “If you just walked by the Cisco® booth, it might send a message saying, ‘Our next speaker goes on stage in five minutes, so come on back,’” says Andy Greff, vice president and general manager of mobile as a service for PhunwareSM.²⁵

Combine booth fun with product promotion and social media. Arborite®, a division of ITW Construction Canada, included a photo booth in its exhibit at a recent trade show, but it didn’t limit the attraction to goofy glasses and hats. The company laid out the full alphabet in cutout letters made from its line of high-pressure laminates, had attendees pose with a letter and uploaded the snapshots (more than 250) to social media sites.²⁶

And finally, don’t ditch the premiums, but be strategic about them. Often, nothing about trade shows generates more opinions than the giveaways. On the one hand, attendees have come to expect premiums, and they can help to attract attendees to your booth. On the other hand, they lure in unqualified attendees—people on the hunt for freebies—and if the premiums don’t relate to your brand



23 2015 Trend Tracker. Las Vegas, Nev.: Global Experience Specialists Inc., 2015. PDF.

24 Mulligan, Dede. “TRADE SHOWS 101: The Reason, the Value and the Future of the Industry.” Mulligan Management Group LLC. Mulligan Management Group LLC, 13 Apr. 2015. Web. 21 June 2015. <<http://www.mulliganmanagementgroup.com/entries/clients/trade-shows-101-the-reason-the-value-and-the-future-of-the-industry>>.

25 Sorrells, Mitra. “How to Use GPS Tracking at Your Next Conference.” BizBash. BizBash Media, 17 Sept. 2013. Web. 21 June 2015. <<http://www.bizbash.com/how-to-use-gps-tracking-at-your-next-conference/new-york/story/27078/#.VYWhV1VViko>>.

26 “Ideas the Work.” EXHIBITOR Online. Exhibitor Media Group, Nov. 2014. Web. 21 June 2015. <<http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=1750&catID=105>>.

or goals, they may not leave a lasting impression on the attendees you want to reach. (Smell marketing gimmicks fall into a similar category. You may attract and keep a hungry target attendee at a booth a little longer, but you also may find yourself serving cookies to everyone on the floor.)

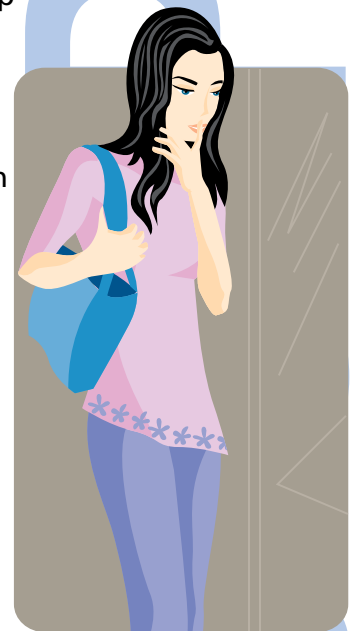
A story from Grace Chan, director of marketing of the Royal Bank of CanadaSM, demonstrates the conundrum of premiums: “As for gimmicks: even though everyone claims they don’t work, I notice that they do end up getting me to stop by and spend some time at the booth,” she says. “A while back I got the cutest stuffed green frog with a little t-shirt on. The company sent me a pre-show teaser mailing with the frog smiling at me, telling me he was at the booth and I could come pick him up. I made a beeline for it. Of course, the fact that I can’t remember the company’s name now tells you something.”²⁷

The exhibitor in Chan’s story was partially successful—its pre-show marketing drove Chan to the booth. But given that she can’t recall the name of the company, either she wasn’t a part of the target audience, the toy didn’t offer a strong connection to the brand, or the exhibitor didn’t further engage Chan once she arrived at the booth. Asimos of Circle S Studio says that when choosing premiums, go for gifts that stand out, that attendees will want to keep for themselves (as opposed to giving to their kids) and that reflect the brand. “Contests, promotions, giveaways and other creative methods can be used to help companies create some hype and achieve their tradeshow goals,” he says. “But it’s more than just swag and iPad® giveaways. You need to have a plan of action for generating conversations, identifying legitimate leads and capturing their contact information through a scanner or landing page. This will be helpful when beginning the lead nurturing process after the event.”²⁸

In addition, Stevens of eMarketing Strategies suggests that if you are offering a gift that will likely be prowled by a lot of unqualified attendees, it is OK to keep the gifts under the table and only hand them out to target attendees.²⁹

Post-show: Follow up and keep the conversation going

The buzz has died down. The premiums have all been handed out. The booth is packed up. You’re headed to the airport, satisfied that you attracted your target



²⁷ Stevens, Ruth. “Trade Show Marketing Do’s and Don’ts: Ways to Annoy Your Prospects.” *Chief Marketer*. Access Intelligence LLC, 22 May 2014. Web. 21 June 2015.

<http://www.chiefmarketer.com/trade-show-marketing-dos-donts-ways-annoy-prospects/>.

²⁸ Asimos, Tim. “9 Steps to Revitalize Your B2B Tradeshow Marketing Strategy.” *Weblog post*. Circle S Studio. Circle S Studio, 26 Mar. 2015. Web. 21 June 2015.

<http://www.circlesstudio.com/blog/9-steps-to-revitalize-your-tradeshow-marketing-strategy/>.

²⁹ Lagorio-Chafkin, Christine. “How to Boost Traffic at Your Trade Show Booth.” *Inc.com*. Mansueto Ventures LLC, 2 June 2010. Web. 21 June 2015.

<http://www.inc.com/guides/2010/06/boosting-trade-show-booth-traffic.html>.

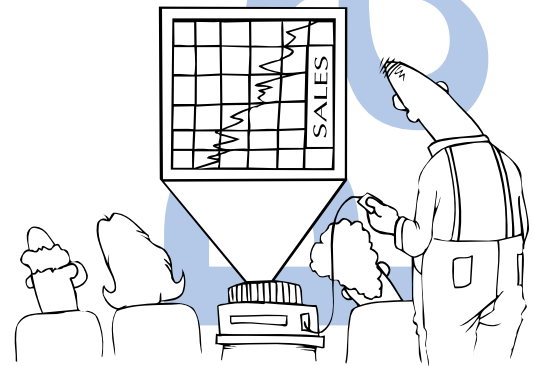
audience. Think your work is done? Nope! This is the point where many exhibitors miss the mark, according to Asimos. "Follow up with the attendees that visited your booth and gave you their contact information," he says. "However, don't mistake all these contacts as warm leads and try to immediately sell to them. Send them an email to thank them for stopping by, offer them a free download of your presentation and try to gauge their interest. By the number of unsubscribes you get from your initial email, you'll pretty quickly know who was interested in your company and who just wanted that iPad you gave away."³⁰

Here again, research shows how a strong post-show strategy can set you apart from your competitors:

- Nearly all trade show exhibitors—98 percent—collect sales leads at trade shows.
- Less than 70 percent have any formalized plan or process in place for how those leads are followed up after the show.
- Only 47 percent of companies track leads generated at trade shows and events throughout the sales cycle.
- A mere 28 percent measure and report the number of leads that ultimately convert to sales as part of their exhibit programs' ROI.³¹

Howard J. Sewell, president of Spear Marketing Group Inc., maintains that, while it's generally preferred that a marketing email focus on one offer and one call-to-action, trade show follow-up emails are the exception. "If the only option you provide attendees is to request a demo, you'll only hear from a small subset of leads, albeit those most sales-ready," he says. "Provide two to three options that appeal to a range of prospects at various stages of the selling cycle, for example: request a demo, download a white paper, subscribe to our newsletter."³² Sewell offers these additional tips for post-show email engagement with your target audience:

1. Have a response campaign designed and ready to launch so that emails go out immediately upon leads entering the system.
2. Qualify leads by offering a range of options for further engagement. "Any response (e.g. a white paper download, a demo request) can help uncover hot leads that might otherwise be missed, or at the very least can help sales prioritize which leads merit being called first," he says.



³⁰ Asimos, Tim. "9 Steps to Revitalize Your B2B Tradeshow Marketing Strategy." Weblog post. Circle S Studio. Circle S Studio, 26 Mar. 2015. Web. 21 June 2015.

<http://www.circlesstudio.com/blog/9-steps-to-revitalize-your-tradeshow-marketing-strategy/>.

³¹ Stanton, Travis. "The Myths of Lead Management." EXHIBITOR Online. Exhibitor Media Group, n.d. Web. 21 June 2015. <http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=742>.

³² Sewell, Howard. "10 Tips for a Successful Trade Show Follow-up Campaign." The Point. Spear Marketing Group Inc., 18 Aug. 2014. Web. 21 June 2015.

<http://spearmarketing.com/blog/10-tips-for-a-successful-trade-show-follow-up-campaign/>.

3. In follow-up emails, always identify the specific show by name, in the subject line and in the first paragraph, at minimum.
4. Make your call-to-action specific. Instead of saying, “to learn more” or “for more information,” provide the prospect specific, tangible options: “download our free white paper,” “request a personal demo,” or “watch our 3-minute overview video.”
5. Remind prospects of announcements you made at the show. “But don’t overdo it. The last thing a prospect wants to read is a re-hashed press release,” Sewell says.
6. Personalize each email with the name of the assigned rep for that prospect, and include the rep’s phone number and personal email address at the end of the email.
7. A photo of your booth, crowded with prospects, can help remind attendees which exhibitor your company was. “Just keep the photo relatively small so that it doesn’t force more valuable selling copy down the page,” he says.
8. Have a specific, tailored plan for ongoing nurturing to follow your initial follow-up email. “Don’t just dump show leads into your marketing database or sign them up for your monthly newsletter indiscriminately,” Sewell says. “At the very least, point leads into an email track tailored for their specific product interests or vertical market. Consider a triggered program of two to three emails in the days following the show (offering varying types of informational content) so that prospects don’t wait weeks until they next hear from you.”³³



Post-show communication isn’t limited to email, however. The GES 2015 Trend Tracker notes that trade show communication with attendees can be continued year-round through social media and blogs. The on-site show experience can live on digitally, both for those who couldn’t attend and those who want to recall the experience, according to the report.³⁴ (And, just as Sewell notes that email responses may uncover a hot lead that was missed, pay attention to who is commenting, sharing or otherwise engaging with your post-show social media campaign. You may unearth a missed lead or a prospect who for whatever reason didn’t make it to your booth.)

And finally, as with any marketing campaign, a post-mortem debrief is in order. “It’s important to get a 360-degree download of the show: successes, failures,

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ 2015 Trend Tracker. Las Vegas, Nev.: Global Experience Specialists Inc., 2015. PDF.

shortcomings, the good, the bad and the mediocre,” Asimos says. “The reality is that sometimes your best ideas may fall flat when put into practice or your team is forced to improvise or adjust for one reason or another. Post-mortem debriefs are helpful to identify any lessons learned and action items that need to be taken to improve the success of the next trade show.”³⁵

There’s no mystery or luck behind a successful trade show exhibit—just a well-crafted strategy that starts long before the show floor opens. Know your goals, identify the target audience, and begin to engage the audience before the show to let them know that a face-to-face conversation and a unique interactive experience awaits them at your exhibit. Continue the engagement during and after the show, and your company’s bottom line will buzz as much as your booth.



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³⁵ Asimos, Tim. “9 Steps to Revitalize Your B2B Tradeshow Marketing Strategy.” Weblog post. Circle S Studio. Circle S Studio, 26 Mar. 2015. Web. 21 June 2015. <<http://www.circlesstudio.com/blog/9-steps-to-revitalize-your-tradeshow-marketing-strategy/>>.

Trade Shows