

# **Increasing Your Trade Show/Exhibition Results in 10 Steps**

*compliments of*

## **The Table Drape Store**

With some forethought and advance planning, you can increase your Post show results substantially without needing a second mortgage to make it happen.

If you are a big company that regularly uses 400 square feet or more of booth space, with an elaborate custom booth, you may already know this stuff( but review it anyway- you never know when you might learn something new). However, most shows are made up of exhibitors in 10' x 10' and 10' x 20' booths and a real need for a good ROI (Return On Investment) for every show that they attend.

### *1. Follow Up Your Leads After the Show*

You may think this tip is out of order, but it isn't. I put it at #1 because if you aren't going to do this, save your money. Don't bother exhibiting! Research shows that 80% of trade show leads are never receive any type of follow up. Yes- that's 80%! And 43% of those that receive follow-up, receive it too late; after they have made their buying decisions. That means that only 1 prospective buyer in every 8 that stopped at your booth will receive information from your company in time to be useful in buying what you have to sell.

Before you ever spend a dime in registration fees, booth displays, or promotional materials, decide exactly what you want to accomplish by participating in a show, and have a plan to achieve the results you want. This includes having a specific plan in place to follow up on every lead that the show generates.

### *2. Put Someone in Charge of Pre-show Planning & Post Show Follow Up That Will Do The Job*

Trade shows are expensive in both dollars spent and productivity lost. You can minimize wasted costs as well as maximize your ROI on the show with a good Pre-show plan and excellent Post-show follow up.

If you are the owner and CEO (Chief Everything Officer) and this responsibility falls to you, make the time to do it! If you are a one-person operation, then you will have to do it all. That makes planning even more crucial. Start as soon as possible, and be as detailed as possible.

Unless you are your company's only employee, its best to assign this responsibility to someone with more time and a track record of completing assigned tasks. That doesn't mean you don't participate- just don't be an impediment to success. Stay in the loop. Be copied on the plan as it takes form. Make suggestions and then stay out of the way.

Remember that the plan should cover all aspects of pre-show preparation, the actual show itself and all post-show follow-up. It should be comprehensive and include costs, personnel and duty assignments. If you have assigned staff to be in charge of your company's exhibit, give the show planner the authority to accomplish the plan.

### 3. *Select Your Booth Staff Carefully*

Knowledge Matters! Visitors to your booth are looking for a solution to their problem and they expect to buy it from someone who knows more than they do. Make sure that you bring your most knowledgeable people to be in the booth. Besides being knowledgeable, be sure that they aren't afraid to cold call. Working a trade show booth is all about cold calling.

Bring people that add to the process. A show is a sales opportunity, not a reward trip, no matter where the location is. A successful trade show is the result of hard work during the trip. Leave home the people who complain about the work in previous years or have run out to buy a travel guide for the show location.

### 4. *Train your Booth Staff in Booth Do's & Don'ts*

No matter how much experience people have at trade shows you need to refresh them on booth Do's and Don'ts. They will tell you they don't need training- well they do. There is lots of research on how to make a booth visit a successful experience for a prospect. Below are some rules that you really need to enforce:

#### Do's

Wear your badge on the right side  
Be Assertive  
Smile  
Thank people for visiting  
Be a good listener  
Know your product and your audience  
Be aware of body language- yours and theirs  
Engage Attendees  
Dress Appropriately

#### Don't's

Never eat or drink in the booth  
Never read while in the booth  
Don't sit down  
Don't chat with other booth staff  
Never leave the booth unattended  
Don't use negative body language  
Don't cross your arms while talking  
Don't talk on the phone in the booth

If you are working the show alone, a few of these things, such as never eating or drinking, or leaving the booth unattended, won't be possible for you. Do the best you can. Grab a sandwich or go to the restroom during slow traffic times if possible. Check the show schedule and plan your breaks accordingly. At the very least, have a sign made to indicate that you are on break and will be back soon.

A note about appropriate dress. What you and your staff wears should reflect the nature of your business, and the style of the show. This may be business casual, rather than formal business attire. Whatever the dress code, good grooming is extremely important – fresh breath, clean hair, no heavy cologne or perfume, Comfortable shoes are also a must. Keep in mind that you will spend most of the

show on your feet. Don't wear tennis shoes. There are many professional looking shoe styles designed for comfort and support.

#### 5. *Set a Realistic Budget for the Show*

A show is a business deal. It should make a positive contribution to your bottom line. In order to calculate that contribution you need to know your costs. A show budget should be all inclusive and include travel, lodging, meals, staff salaries, brochures, signs, promotional products, shipping and drayage costs, if applicable.

Find out exactly what your registration fee includes and what you will have to pay for extras. Will there be a table? Draping? Electrical Outlet? Carpeting? If not, what will the cost for these items be? Leave something for miscellaneous or unanticipated costs. There are always some.

If the final budget is more than you want to spend, cut back realistically. Lower the cost of lodging, meals and travel before not updating a ratty looking old booth or using existing materials that don't reflect your audience and your goals. You may find that is more cost effective to invest in fresh lightweight display materials, rather than pay for shipping the old booth. The Table Drape Store's most popular items are possible to hand carry.

To assist with your cost estimates, you will find pricing information for a variety of display materials, as well as web store links on the last page of this document. Once you have completed your show budget, compare it against the estimated additional income that will result leads from the show. Make sure that the final cost can allow you to accomplish the ROI that you desire. If not, you may want to reconsider participation in the show- your marketing money may be better spent in other ways,

#### 6. *Set Booth Staff Goals*

Make sure you have a realistic view of what you want your staff to accomplish during the show. If you are using field sales staff, be sure to schedule time for them to do regular customer follow up- not all of their customers are likely to be at the show. Communicate the goals to the staff and let them know how they will be measured.

Have a short pre-opening meeting every day to discuss the good and bad from the previous day and refine your strategy to reflect show conditions. Collect *all* leads *every* day. Nobody should be holding a particular lead that they want to follow up themselves later! Assign someone the responsibility to create a prospect list every night with contact information as well as notes on the contact. Don't be afraid to have a prize for the King or Queen of the Booth.

#### 7. *Make Sure Your Booth is Up To Date and Reflects the Show Audience*

This really comes back to assigning someone to be in charge of the show. Set up your booth in a vacant space in your office. Does it look old or frayed? Are all of

the parts there? Do the light bulbs work? Does it need cleaning? Is the message or the graphics on point for the show audience? Too often you find out that you are setting up the booth at the show and you are missing parts, or there's a big stain on your table drape or the lights don't work. All of this is correctable on-site at ten times the cost of pre-show correction.

A clean, new table drape and some pull-up banner stands across the back of the booth that are specifically targeted to your show audience will be much more effective than an elaborate old booth that is not up to date on what your company does. I have seen corrections printed out on copy paper and taped over wrong information on a booth, duct tape repairs, water stained literature out for prospects. What message does that send to your prospects? Lots of people size up the looks of your booth before deciding whether or not to stop. Does your booth look like a place they can solve their problems?

In the scheme of costs, booth graphics and collateral are cheap. The old saying "There isn't a second time to make a first impression" is never more true than at a show where you may be making 1000 first impressions over a three day period.

#### 8. *Make Pre-show and Post- Show Contacts with Your Audience*

Every show has three basic audiences passing by your booth: Current Customers, Previous Customers and Prospective Customers. The trick, especially in a big show, is to make them want to see you.

For Current or Previous Customers, contact them in advance of the show by mail or email. Let them know what you are showing and give them a reason to stop by and talk. A show is a great time to give your customer base more in depth knowledge of how you can help them.

Prospective customers are harder. Most shows will work with exhibitors by providing pre-registrant lists. Contact registered show attendees about who you are, what you are showing and why they should take their time to stop. Be to the point and interesting. You are not the only company who will be contacting them.

Post-show do the same thing. Contact show leads or customers who visited with a thank you and information relative to their visit. Contact your customer base, both old and current, who didn't stop by and tell them that you are sorry that you missed them and let them know what they missed. Contact the final show attendee list and offer them a chance to join your email list to stay updated with company information. Make your offer compelling. They will receive many post show contacts. You want to stand out.

9. *Use Modern Contact Technology Before, During and After the Show*

If you don't already, a trade show might be a great time to start a blog, learn to tweet, use Facebook or Youtube. These are effective and especially so if the attending audience is younger. In fact, it will be expected.

Video is particularly effective and can be easily uploaded to all of these formats. Have people join your Twitter group at the show and tweet them about in booth demos or product training. Video them and put them on line for later prospect and customer review as well as letting non-attendees know that they are there. Your imagination is the limit in how you use this technology. It's effective and inexpensive.

10. *Create a Post-show Follow Up Report*

After the show is over take the time to create a report while it is fresh in your mind. This may be the most useful tool you have for planning future events. List the good, the bad, where you won and what could have gone better. Calculate an ROI show it can become the target to beat in future events.

Whether you will be exhibiting at the biggest national show or a local table top event, these tools are effective in increasing sales. I have used them for my own company, helping others with their pre-show planning, right on down to my daughter's Girl Scout Cookie Sale booth. (With a little pre-sale training, we sold thousand's of boxes of cookies every time. Who can resist a Girl Scout with training and a plan?)

We have many products that will increase your ROI at every event, indoors or out. For your convenience, some sample packages are listed below, along with links to our web store.

If you have questions or comments, don't hesitate to contact me at [dakinlein@tabledrapestore.com](mailto:dakinlein@tabledrapestore.com). Good luck with your next exhibit. Let me know how it goes. For your convenience I have inserted links to our trade show specials as well as the site itself. We can help you improve your results!

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Impak, Inc

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