

The Business Monthly

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Tips For Trade Show Marketing

Checklist:

- Show Selection—Determine your criteria for participating in a show; also your objectives (visibility, sales, etc.). Consider a cost-benefits analysis in which you weigh the costs (labor, display, exhibit space, etc.) vs. alternatives that may achieve the same objective with less cost. Research the promotional/marketing plan of the show promoters if it is a new show to be sure they'll attract people. Inquire about availability of an attendee list as a value-added for exhibitors.
- Site Selection—Choose a space that is in a high-traffic area with good visibility if possible; corners are good. Ask the promoters about location of key competitors. Also ask who is around you. Other well-done booths may attract attention to your area.
- Workshop—Inquire with show promoters if you can present a workshop. This provides added credibility and an "excuse" for a press release to the media; make announcements in your marketing materials.
- Design booth to attract attention—map it out on paper
 - large banner in place of small cardboard sign provided by show
 - balloons or streamers to create "motion" to attract the eye
 - avoid barrier at front of booth; encourage traffic IN your booth
 - plants make it warmer and inviting
 - photos attract attention
 - consider Velcro display for easy updating; you can rent these
 - avoid a lot of copy on your display panels; people see your booth as you do a billboard on the road. Grab them with emotion or benefits, not a laundry list.
 - professionally produced display panels for backdrop or easels (avoid foam core because they get bent on the edges and look bad)
 - consider having a character distributing literature for added attention.
 - a continuous-loop DVD/video may cause people to stop (or to stay if you're busy with another customer), especially if you have a visual business; You can also provide video or virtual tours of facilities if appropriate
- determine what you will give to booth visitors—fliers, brochures, samples, imprinted giveaways, etc. (If you do imprinted items, think of something that is visible—coaster on a desk versus a first-aid kit that gets put inside a drawer or purse). Avoid cluttering your booth with too much that confuses the visitor.
- think about doing something fun or entertaining (caricature artist; demonstrations) that is memorable.
- If you want to build a database or track visitors, offer a sign-up (bulletin, specials, etc.)
- Booth Staffing—Determine who will staff your booth and make sure they are outgoing and a positive reflection on your organization. Encourage them to stand at the front of the booth and greet people as they pass by (versus sitting in the back on a stool and waiting or talking to each other). A "uniform" is recommended so the workers stand out and serve as "walking billboards" when they walk around the show. It could simply be matching golf shirts with your logo, but it creates a cohesive look.
- Plan your pre-show marketing.
 - how and who will you invite to "visit your booth"?
 - give an incentive (send a card they need to bring to the booth to get X)
 - announce your show participation in any marketing pieces (newsletters, website, mailers, emails, etc.)
- Show Special—Devise a way to get people to commit to an appointment or purchase at the show if sales is an objective; build database for follow-up marketing. Track the inquiries after the show, too, to determine if the show is worth repeating.
- Follow-Up—Pre-plan how you will contact the people who visit your booth. Do it! This is where most trade shows flop.

CARDINAL RULE:

Avoid the do-it-yourself look that can quickly tarnish your image! Your booth, your staff, and your giveaways should not indicate your budget or size of your organization.