

Tips for Successful Trade Fairs

How should a Trade Fair booth be set up and staffed?

Giveaways combined with a booth that is dressed for success both in appearance and personnel should generate traffic and make the experience pleasant and memorable for your visitors. The best booths create interaction between presenters and the floor-walkers or visitors. Trade Fair booths are six times more powerful than any other sales medium, says the Center for Exhibition Industry Research.

Marketing your booth during a Virtual Enterprise Trade Fair is an important part of attracting potential clients' attention. Attendees at a Trade Fair must cover a lot of ground in a short amount of time. They will likely size up your booth at first glance. Consistent use of your logo is important, from backdrops and banners to brochures and nametags. Your image is at stake here, so enhance it as much as possible! Shapes, graphics, and colors contribute to the visual effect.

Although some exhibitors may go overboard with specific demonstrations and costumes in and around the booth, such effects are usually not necessary. An attractive, well-lit booth with informed, friendly employees can be every bit as successful in capturing attention. You have about seven to ten seconds before a person will either decide to stop at your booth or move on. A business needs to make their booth stand out above the rest.

Booth Size

In most cases the sponsors of the Trade Fair predetermine the size of your booth. The size of the facility in which the Trade Fair is held, the number of booths, the cost of the drapes/curtains and rods, and the number of people expected to attend may all have an influence upon the booth size.

Booth Design

Booth design is important. Your booth should be both attractive and capture interest. A gimmick can be useful if it has mass appeal and is not overdone. Unfortunately, many booths may be designed to create barriers. A table in front of the booth may make the solicitation process intimidating for the potential buyer; therefore, move that six-foot table to the side of the inside of the booth. The result will bring buyers into your booth.

Once you've moved the table and broken down physical barriers, look for ways to get people involved without, necessarily, a hard sell. Start by asking yourself what you want them to remember about you business. Your booth is the perfect opportunity!

The following features will make for a successful booth design and attract buyers:

1. **Audiovisual** - This can be as simple as bringing a TV and VCR. You can display your website on a laptop computer or on a VCR tape; use software to create interactive question-answer flow-charts that help users determine which of your products and/or services best suits them. Generally audiovisual effects are prepared in advance and edited. If the Trade Fair guidelines allow music, play it at levels so as not to disturb the booths around your booth.
2. **Use of Lighting** - Lighting can be used to make something stand out. For example, a row of light bulbs plugged into an outlet can highlight a company name or a

company product. Special lighting, such as halo lighting, can be extremely effective although costly.

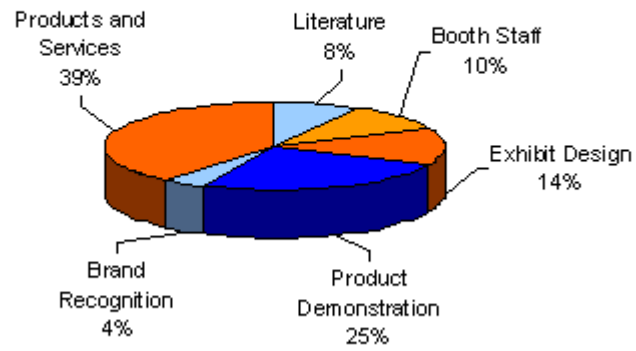
3. **Motion** - Any usual motion can add a positive influence on your booth or display. Examples may include rotating/revolving signs, custom-made props, passing out promotional giveaways, and holding a raffle. Just like lighting, video and sound, motion attracts attention.
4. **Large Graphics** - Don't make it difficult for a customer to see what you are selling. Logos, graphic indicators and pictures should be readily visible. Samples of your product(s) should be on-site. Graphics don't have to be too elaborate. Don't be afraid of white space on your displays. Colors should be bright and noticeable.

Booth Staffing

The staffing of your booth is extremely important for successful Trade Fair results. As you are considering who will staff your booth, take the following into consideration:

1. Select your best people to staff the booth. It helps convey your desired image to prospective customers. Be sure to have informative people on hand at all times or you could lose customers.
2. A uniformed staff, perhaps wearing something with your logo on it, conveys an element of professionalism. Even without the logos, everyone on the staff wearing the same colors can accomplish the "uniform" look. If appropriate, use the company's logo on your clothing. At a show, all of the staffers and other employees are the ambassadors for the company.
3. It should go without saying that good grooming is essential. Unfortunately, some staffers forget such basics as going easy on the cologne (some people can be highly allergic) or using breath mints after lunch. Also, clothing should be neat and shoes polished.
4. Designate a strong leader to be in charge. He or she can make sure that the rest of the staff creates the best possible impression.
5. Don't let the people in the booth just stand around. They should be ready to greet people, introduce themselves, and tell prospective customers anything they want to know.
6. Depending upon your products and/or services, offering samples and demonstrations of what you do is an excellent idea. Use hands-on demonstrations to show your customers how things work, if appropriate. Make people feel welcome the minute they reach the booth. Be approachable and professional, inviting them to come in and take a look at your product and/or service.
7. Collect business cards from those who show interest in your products and/or services. This will aid the follow-up process after the show. Some exhibitors also have a guest book for visitors to sign.

What Draws Visitors to a Trade Fair Booth



Trade Fairs

What are the steps to ensure Trade Fair success?

The Virtual Enterprise Trade Fairs can be a large investment for a company, especially if the company is traveling a significant distance to participate in the event. Frequently, the answer to a successful Trade Fair is not in fancier booths or more expensive graphics. Rather, the solution is found in better staff training and advanced preparation. By following these simple steps, a company can maximize their investment in this great "opportunity" event:

- 1. Establish clear, realistic exhibiting goals and objectives.**

The biggest mistake a company can make is going to a Trade Fair without marketing goals and objectives on how to meet these goals. A simple plan would be to have one major goal and five to six objectives to meet that goal. Also, it is important to devise a thorough follow-up plan and delegate tasks ahead of time. Follow-up materials (form letters, literature, thank-you's, etc.) can also be prepared before the show.
- 2. Build a checklist and stick to it.**

A checklist should include everything from the shipping information, if necessary, down to the materials to be displayed in the booth. The best bet is to appoint one person whose chief responsibility is to make sure everything is carried out to the last detail.
- 3. Promote the company.**

Prior to the fair, the company should send out promotional literature to existing customers and prospects inviting them to the company's booth. If the booth number or location is known, it should always be included in the literature. Invitations, flyers, special catalogs, and order forms are examples of pre-show promotion materials. The company sales representatives should also call and/or e-mail potential customers, individuals and companies. The company's web page is an excellent way to promote the company's attendance at a Trade Fair.
- 4. Train booth staff before the show.**

It should not be assumed that booth staff will naturally use the right method to engage visitors, qualify prospects, and give out information in the most effective manner. One of the biggest mistakes managers make is sending staff to a Trade Fair as a "reward". Proper booth staffing is hard work and should be based on ability, not seniority. The staff should know how to handle traffic, understand local business etiquette and business customs, and be prepared to spend their staffing time on their feet. There should be training in all areas.
- 5. Arrive early.**

By arriving early, the staffers can check out the exhibit and make sure everything that was set up properly and projects the company's desired image. This also gives staffers time to check any electrical equipment and marketing materials. It is important that each company be considerate of their neighbors with their booth display. If any changes need to be made before the show, there will be time to do so.
- 6. Decide upon a marketing and sales message.**

The marketing and sales message delivered via the booth graphics can be one of the most powerful sales tools at a Trade Fair. Companies only relying on bold

colors, bright lights and flashy audio and video will attract attention, but ultimately may confuse the prospective customer with an unclear marketing message. At a Trade Fair, a company has approximately seven to ten seconds to attract a potential customer. A marketing message that is clear and concise will tell customers why they should be interested in your products or service and convey what your company can do for them.

7. Select premiums and giveaways wisely.

Giveaways can add enormous value to your product or service. Placing generic giveaways on a table isn't very effective and doesn't help potential customers remember their experience at your booth. Giving a customer who has spent significant time at your booth something unique can be a very effective marketing tool. A good premium will have a direct link to your company, your product and/or your service. Also, a company may want to consider giving away door prizes.

8. Determine graphics.

The booth graphics are a company's first introduction to a potential customer in that seven to ten second time frame. A customer needs to know who the company is, what you are selling, and why they need it. Understanding your customers and your competition will help you define a Trade Fair objective and craft a message that will attract customers.

9. Show your product, demonstrate your service.

Sixty-four percent of potential customers are drawn to exhibits that have products and demonstrations. Having photographs or videos isn't enough, especially if you're launching a new product. Customers who are serious about buying prefer to see the actual product or service rather than a representation.

10. Cultivate prospects.

Trade Fairs give a company a very targeted, but small window to reach potential customers. This environment doesn't afford sales people the luxury of "taking it easy". The booth staff needs to be efficient in order to maximize the company's return on investment. Talking on cellular phones, talking with co-workers, leaving the exhibit area, or being too pushy puts a barrier between your company and potential customers. Customers do not want to feel intimidated, ignored or that they are imposing.

11. Understand Trade Fair guidelines.

All too often, exhibitors do not take the time to thoroughly read their Trade Fair guidelines. Crucial elements such as electricity, internet connections, set up guidelines, and take down guidelines are explained. Not understanding the show specifics can seriously hinder the effectiveness of the exhibit.

12. Always follow-up.

It is estimated that a large number of exhibitors do not follow-up or do poor follow-ups. Immediately upon returning from the Trade Fair, the company sales representatives should send follow-up correspondence to those potential customers. Also, accounting representatives should send invoices to customers who have purchased products and/or services from the company. The most common error made is failure to follow-up in a timely manner. A quick follow-up e-mail allows the company to touch base with potential customers while the company and the Trade Fair is still fresh in their minds.

13. Debrief and evaluate the Trade Fair.

The Trade Fair evaluation process will tell you if it's worthwhile to attend a future Trade Fair or what to do differently next year. Evaluating the number of leads that

generate into sales is a good place to start. Evaluating your marketing objectives will yield additional information. For example, if you are looking to educate your customers, how many product/service demonstrations did you do? If you are promoting a specific product and/or service, how strong was your pre-show promotion? There is a great amount of marketing information available at the Trade Fair. What you choose to gather and utilize should be directly related to your marketing objectives. After the performance at the Trade Fair has been evaluated, no matter how successful your show was, meet with the marketing and sales team and utilize the information to improve upon future events.

Trade Fairs

What are things to remember when preparing for a Trade Fair?

There are a million things to remember when preparing for a Virtual Enterprise Trade Fair! It is easy for something important to slip through the cracks. Customize this following list and divide the responsibility among the company's team members (those attending the Trade Fair) to make sure all the bases are covered.

1. Name Badges
2. Banners
3. Booth
4. Booth Clothing/Attire/Decorations
5. Bowl for Business Cards
6. Budget
7. Business Cards
8. Business Leads Envelope
9. Catalog Holders
10. Company Brochures
11. Customer Database
12. Display Containers
13. Extension Cords
14. Invitations to Booth
15. Lead Forms
16. Lights
17. Order Forms/Invoices
18. Pencils/Pens
19. Phone Number(s) for Trade Fair
20. Point-of-Purchase Displays
21. Press Kits
22. Press Labels
23. Product Catalogs
24. Product Manuals
25. Promotional Gifts
26. Show Objective(s)
27. Signs
28. Staffing Assignments
29. Supplies (staplers, scotch tape, masking tape, safety pins, etc)

Trade Fairs

What are steps of effective networking or "working the floor" at a VE Trade Fair?

Effective networking, schmoozing, or making contact with people at a Virtual Enterprise Trade Fair means being well prepared. It also means understanding networking objectives, analyzing the event, overcoming the fear of meeting strangers, and developing the right conversational skills. Becoming a master networker is within everyone's reach. It takes patience, commitment and a real understanding of the process.

It also means having effective strategies to work through the obstacles. These few guidelines will make networking or "working the floor" at a Virtual Enterprise Trade Fair more effective.

1. Breaking into a conversation.

The idea of breaking into a conversation can be intimidating. However, sometimes this can be the only way to meet people. Standing around waiting for a conversation to end can be uncomfortable. One solution is to find someone who can provide a personal introduction. Another is to take a "buddy" who can act as a decoy. However, if you are alone, the easiest thing to do is to join the conversation on a nonverbal level first. Simply smiling and nodding your head will be sufficient. Eventually they will include you in the conversation.

If attending a Trade Fair in another country, the company should research the customs about how to enter a conversation in that specific country. All of those attending Trade Fairs in other countries should also be well informed about that country's customs in all other areas that are deemed necessary

2. Dressing appropriately.

Dressing appropriately can be a challenge. If in doubt, contact the sponsor of the event or refer to the Code of Conduct for attendance at Virtual Enterprise events. Also, one should not be afraid to ask questions about what is appropriate and what is not. It is possible that a company may have a specific theme for their booth. If so, those staffing the booth may dress appropriately to carry out that theme (i.e., wearing white lab-type coats if the company sells health insurance).

3. Use of business cards.

Business cards are an internationally accepted way of giving some basic information about yourself and your company. Having a good, clean, easy-to-read business card that you can hand out to an interested party is important. You should not keep your cards in a pocket where they may become dog-eared quickly, instead keep them in a small business card holder. Also, do not write on the back of someone else's card.

4. Walking into a room and networking.

Walking into a room filled with strangers can be overwhelming. The best approach is to walk in confidently and find a vantage point. This gives you time to check out the booths before you begin networking. Mingling is the art of spotting vantage points on the Trade Fair floor, or in the room, and moving from one area to another. Networkers who pick one spot and anchor themselves may miss networking opportunities.

5. Greeting with a handshake.

Shaking of hands is the most common form of greeting. The trick is to have a good firm handshake. Avoid being the "knuckle buster", "limp fish", or the "pump" that never lets go! Once again, if attending a Trade Fair in other country research the customs on appropriate greetings.

Trade Fairs

What are specific things to remember when working in a Trade Fair booth?

How many times have you been to a Trade Fair and possibly seen booth staffers put their six-foot table across the front of their booth space, fill it with literature, then sit down in their chair behind the table? Three mistakes have been already been committed!

The above scenario is often seen at Virtual Enterprise Trade Fairs. Perhaps the reason is not lack of interest, but rather lack of knowledge on how to properly staff a Trade Fair booth. To help with the education of booth staffers, the following 10 steps should be considered:

- 1. Remember not to sit.**
The Trade Fair organizers usually provide chairs; however, do not use them! If your feet hurt after being on them for several hours, take a break. There should be a schedule to rotate staffers because you will lose effectiveness after hours of looking at the same booth across the aisle and saying the same things to dozens of people over and over.
- 2. Remember not to create barriers to traffic.**
This is the classic "table at the front of the booth" scenario mentioned above. Instead, place your table at the back of the booth or along the side. Better yet, if you do not need a six-foot table, use a smaller one. Also, be careful not to use other "props" that might keep people from coming into your booth.
- 3. Remember not to eat or drink.**
The only consumable item permitted in the booths is capped bottles of water.
- 4. Remember not to accost people in the aisles.**
This is generally viewed as a threat to most people. There's nothing wrong with initiating a conversation, but learn the proper ways to engage visitors. Study body language to know when someone feels threatened. You might need to tone down your approach if a person is shy.
- 5. Remember not to visit with your co-workers.**
It is important to remember that you are participating in the Trade Fair and staffing your booth to talk to people that you might not otherwise meet. There obviously may be times when traffic is slow, or you need to communicate something to one another. That's fine. However, remember, when someone begins to approach your booth, cut it off and greet that potential customer.
- 6. Remember not to fill your booth with staffers.**
Remember not to create barriers by filling your booth with too many staffers. You only need a couple of staffers. Once visitors start to come, your booth will fill up fast.
- 7. Remember not to put your hands in your pockets.**
You want your body language to be as open as possible, encouraging potential

customers to stop and talk.

8. **Remember not to put out every piece of literature you have.**

If you have 300 pieces of literature, people probably won't take any. However, if you have 20 to 30, they probably will. You can always put more out; however; never leave just one on the table. No one wants to take the last one of anything.

9. **Remember not to leave early.**

You never know who might come by at the last minute.

10. **Remember to always smile!**

No matter how hard you try, nothing you say means as much if it's not accompanied with a smile!