

## **How To Prevent Salespeople From Failing On A Tradeshow Floor – A Simple 5-Step Process**

***You must train your staff differently for this unique selling environment. Follow the “M.U.S.T.-C” approach. (Meet; Uncover; Sell; Test; Close)***

There is a great disparity between trade show selling and field selling and salespeople must change their approach completely when on the exhibit floor. The primary distinctions stem from the fact that it is the only time the customer is coming to you, and you have a limited time in which to meet as many prospects as you can, qualify them, and move the sales process forward. This dissimilarity forces you to re-train your current sales team so they can maximize their success based on your trade show objectives.

In a normal field selling situation, a sales rep could spend anywhere from 30 minutes to 2 hours with a prospect, carefully reviewing their needs, presenting multiple solutions, demonstrating as required and seeking a commitment. On an exhibit floor, they need to move the sales process forward in 10 minutes so they can get to the next 10 people passing in the aisle. Remember, your company spent a lot of money and resources to maximize the number of qualified leads you can uncover. If you spend 30 minutes or 2 hours with a prospect, the opportunity cost of missing other potential candidates is too great. I am not saying you should ignore a prospect who wants to spend more time with you, but you need to re-direct that time to a time when the show floor is closed (i.e. at dinner, over a drink, the following week in their office, etc...). A different approach must be followed to maximize leads. In addition, it is common for non-salespeople to be employed to work a trade show for their company. These individuals may have no selling experience at all and they need to be trained for the environment as well.

The approach I recommend follows the acronym “M.U.S.T.-C.” The first step is to meet or engage attendees. If you were not successful in getting them to set up a pre-planned appointment, your job will be to stop them and find out if they are a potential prospect. If they are an “active” attendee, they will come right into your exhibit space and make your job easy. You’ll be able to begin qualifying them right away. If they are “inactive” and keeping their distance in the aisle, then you must attempt to make eye contact with them and offer them an open-ended question to get them talking. A great question to ask is “What brought you to the show today?” Their response will quickly tell you if your company’s products or services may be applicable. If their answer indicates that they are not a prospect at all, then you should immediately disengage. Every minute on the show floor is valuable and you need to move on. You can do it professionally and politely by just telling them to enjoy the show or if you know, you can direct them to an area that may address what they were looking for.

If their response indicated that you may have something to offer them, then you need to move to step 2 which is the “Uncover” stage. It is in this step you will ask a series of

scripted questions that will determine if they have a potential purchase probability. In other words, are they qualified. These will cover areas such as what is their business need, timing, decision makers, budget, etc... These questions should be created by the field reps that will be following up the leads after the show, so they provide the information that they need to move the sales process forward.

Once the needs are uncovered, they need to “Sell” your company’s value proposition by focusing on benefits to the end user. This is not the time to pitch the company history or get into a detailed feature analysis. The purpose here is give them enough of a reason to want to continue speaking with your company to learn more. In fact, I recommend creating and practicing 3 different versions of this presentation based on the needs you uncovered in Step 2. These versions should be approximately 1- minute, 5-minutes or 15-minutes in length. As already discussed, if they’re not a prospect, they get the 1-minute “it’s time to move on” presentation. If they show some level of interest but no strong requirements came out of Step 2, you don’t want to discourage them but this is where you give the 5-minute version and lastly, with clear prospects, use the 15-minute presentation. If the prospect wants to hang on for a lengthy demonstration, this is where it’s best to set up a private meeting with them outside of show floor hours. It will make them feel special and give you the opportunity to really concentrate on them individually.

Once you have presented your value, you need to move to step 4 which is “Test”. In this step you are going to ask the prospect how they could see your solution helping their company. You also will want to ask for a future meeting to continue your discussions. You are actually testing their true interest level by gauging their response to this request. If they are not yet interested, then you need to probe further to understand the reasoning. Prior to the show, in addition to scripting the qualification questions used in step 2, the sales team should also provide a list of the most common objections and have strong answers to each of them. You may need to use them here to turn around any invalid reason for possible disinterest. Another good “Test” question is to ask the prospect “How would you like us to follow-up?” Their response to this will also gauge their interest level and whether you need to uncover anything else.

After you’ve finished the test (and any re-testing), it is time to “Close” the interaction. Just remind them of your business value, summarize your next step and end the conversation so you can get on to the next prospect. It is imperative that you maximize the number of attendees you can meet. If your company sends an electronic newsletter or other offers, this is a good time to also confirm with the prospect that you have their permission to send them these emails. You can note their “opting-in” on the back of their business card.