

“5 Critical Trade Show Staffing Strategies CEO’s Must Implement To Maximize Lead Generation

1.) Hold Pre-Show Meetings and Daily Recap Meetings; Management must be involved.

All too often companies limit their ability to truly profit from trade shows because they don’t take the time ahead of the show to teach the nuances of working in the trade show environment and they don’t communicate their goals, strategies or expectations effectively. Exhibit staffers are told to “get leads” and given no specific instructions. Even if they know the basics, and good behaviors vs. bad ones, it is still too common to see them conversing with each other, talking on their cell phones, getting emails, eating, sitting etc..., all as a multitude of attendees walk by.

The exhibit team should meet a couple months before the show to review show objectives, create the various scripts for staffers, and train the specific steps of the trade show selling process. Successful exhibiting begins with senior management’s participation, so they need to be involved in these meetings. Staffers certainly perform better when they are accountable.

The day before the show, the team needs to meet again, role play the different scenarios and review expectations. Quotas for staffer/attendee interactions should be set for each hour and someone should manage the attainment of these quotas. At the end of the day, a recap should be done to acknowledge/reward those performing well and review what issues may be preventing others from succeeding. Daily communication is essential to a show’s success.

2.) Create Appropriate Handouts and Train their Proper Distribution

Different industries certainly mandate different approaches but as a general rule, I recommend only distributing the following handouts:

- A. 1-Page Company “Brochure” – All too often companies will bring boxes of literature to hand out which is a big mistake. Studies have shown that 80% of literature never makes it out of the exhibit hall. Instead, create a single page that speaks to your value proposition i.e. how your offering alleviates the prospects business pains. It would be also helpful to include customer testimonials in this piece.
- B. Special Whitepaper - A great competitive tactic would be to create a white paper entitled “7 Questions You Should Ask Every Vendor When Evaluating (Your Offering)”. The questions listed must be geared to uncover and

accentuate the value your offering has over your competitors. This tactic will put your competitors on the defensive but should only be distributed when you uncover in your qualification that competitors will be involved. This will very likely be the case if you are attending a vertical industry show.

- C. Other Whitepapers - Another great tool would be to create and distribute white papers that deal with common sales objections you hear. The title of the paper should name the objection and potentially the title of the typical prospect. As an example, if you were an email marketing service and you often heard the objection that prospects wanted to wait to invest in a solution, then you could create a white paper entitled "6 Reasons Why CEO's Must Implement E-Mail Marketing in 2010".

3.) Handling Competitors

Trade shows are breeding grounds for competitive espionage. If you believe you are talking to a possible competitor, ask for a business card early in the conversation. If they don't have one, be cautious but professional. If it becomes obvious that they are the competition, invite them back after hours for a chat or demo and ask them for reciprocal treatment. Explain to them that neither of you are there during show hours to spend time with non-prospects.

4.) Breaks

Make sure staffers get enough break time so they stay fresh and can achieve their hourly/daily goals. If possible, try to give them 15-20 minutes off every 2 hours to re-charge themselves.

5.) Dress Code

Every representative at a show is an ambassador for your company. Their attire should be discussed in advance and it should represent the culture of your company in conjunction with the likely dress of your prospects. It is always beneficial to look like a team so similar colors or a common accessory is always a good idea.