



## Tips for Effective Trade Show Marketing By Melissa Wall

Here are some ideas to maximize any trade show marketing efforts:

### Pre-Show Planning

1. **Should You Exhibit?** First, check the audience. Are attendees in your target market? Ask the show organizer for a list of prior exhibitors and attendees. There are many good reasons to participate in a show...advertising, networking, checking out competitors, building mailing lists, allowing potential buyers to experience your product/service. It's not just about immediate sales.
2. **Booth Selection.** Most shows are configured to offer good traffic flow. Look for highly trafficked areas like entrances, ends of aisles, and food courts.
3. **Tabletop Exhibit.** This is a major investment for most small businesses, but one that heightens professionalism if trade shows are a regularly used marketing tactic. If you do only one or two shows a year, consider buying a table cloth imprinted with your logo or company name. Plan early – any option takes time to create.
4. **Advertising/Mailings.** If a show requires attendees to pre-register, get a registration list from the organizers. Send a postcard to registrants, customers and prospects inviting them to stop by your booth to see the new product, receive a free guide, etc.

### At-Show Activities

5. **Get There Early.** Allow time to set up and work out any technological problems. Walk around and meet other exhibitors – they could be potential customers too. See what others are doing.
6. **Attract Attention.** Do you have an animated display? A PowerPoint presentation that runs continuously? A sampling of products to handle or demonstrate? No? Create a tantalizing sign. It should be relevant to your product or service. If you cite a problem, make sure your business is the solution. Note: Candy only attracts people looking for candy, unless that's your product and you want to offer samples.



7. **Make a Connection.** Make eye contact, smile and be engaging, but don't overdo it — buyers are turned off by over-eager sellers. When someone inquires about your company, answer succinctly in 30 seconds. Practice this "30-second elevator speech" until you can say it without hesitation. It's good for any prospecting situation.
  
8. **Sales Collateral.** If you don't have any, make some. Staples has an excellent selection of laser printable paper that gives your collateral a professional look. Clearly state a problem/solution with contact information. Proofread your materials *before* you print them to catch typos or make clarifications. Make about 50-75. If you run out, get a mailing address; if you have any remaining, send them to prospective customers.
  
9. **Build Contacts.** Collect business cards at the show and offer some useful information in exchange. If there is a registration list, make sure you ask for it.

### **Post-Show Marketing**

10. Reflect on what went well and what you would change. And don't forget to follow up with prospects after the show with letters, mailings and phone calls.

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