

Marketing Your Product or Service

How to Get the Most From a Trade Show Exhibit



Despite all the advances in online communication, trade shows still play an important role for small businesses looking to expand their reach. But you can't just show up with your product and a box of tchotchkes and expect success. Exhibiting at a trade show is a big job—one that requires substantial investments of time and money in order to score the best sales leads. Follow these tips to get the most from your next trade show exhibit.

Invest in the display. Trade show displays can be pricey, but if done right, they can help attendees take notice of your business. That means visible logos, good lighting and appropriate use of color. If you're worried about the cost of a custom display, look for something you can travel with and set up easily once you're at the trade show. Also, make sure the design of the display is flexible. You want it to be able to accurately reflect your business now and in the future, like when your company has a new logo or offers additional products and services.

Be on your best booth behavior. A splashy display will help draw attendees in, but it's you (and your employees) who will keep them there. Start prepping your trade show team weeks before the event, covering topics like communication skills and talking points about your products and services, as well as dress code and other rules. Also, resist burning out during the last hours of the show. Be available and engaging at all times—you never know when your next customer is going to walk up.

Rethink giveaways. A decade ago, giveaways meant handing out things like stress balls and mouse pads emblazoned with company logos. These days, giveaways also include drawings for iPads and other in-demand gadgets, in exchange for contact information. The problem with these giveaways is that while they might lead to a few serious sales leads, they'll definitely lead to lots of no leads—i.e., people who just want the stress ball or a shot at the gadget. If you want to offer giveaways, do your best to tie them back to your product or service. That will help ensure that attendees who visit your booth are truly drawn to your business.