

Tips & Tricks for Attending Trade Shows as a Business Owner

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PURPOSE



Networking

Trade shows are great for meeting industry peers, customers (existing and new), suppliers, and potential partners. Building relationships at trade shows can help lead to future business opportunities.



Market Research

At trade shows, business owners can see new things happening within their industry and how their competitors are marketing themselves and their products or services.



Education

Many trade shows have sessions, workshops, and keynote speakers on topics relevant within the industry. Attending these can help business owners stay informed about the latest developments, best practices, and regulatory changes.



Sales Opportunities

Trade shows are a great place to find new customers and make sales. Meeting people in-person allows business owners to pitch their products directly and address concerns anyone may have, which can lead to immediate or future business.

ATTENDING AS AN EXHIBITOR



Brand Visibility

Setting up an exhibit booth or sponsoring an event at trade shows can help more people learn more about your company, which can bring in new leads or referrals.



Product Launches & Demonstrations

Trade shows are perfect for showing off new products or services and creating buzz about your brand.



Lead Generation

By talking to visitors at the booth, getting their contact information, and assessing potential interest, business owners can build a pipeline of potential customers to follow up with later.



Customization & Branding

Exhibitors can personalize their booth to match their brand and marketing goals. This involves using visuals like signs, graphics, videos, and promotional materials and giveaways to create a memorable space at the trade show.



Access to Attendee Data

Many trade shows provide exhibitors with access to attendee lists, which can be valuable for post-event follow-up and marketing efforts.

ATTENDING AS A WALKING PARTICIPANT



Cost Savings

Attending as a walking participant saves money since you don't need to pay for booth space, design, shipping materials, and extra staffing, which can be especially beneficial for smaller businesses with limited budgets.



Flexibility

As a walking participant, you have the flexibility to explore the entire trade show floor without being tied to your booth. You can prioritize which exhibitors to visit, sessions or workshops to attend, and networking events to participate in based on your particular interests and goals.



Networking

Walking the trade show floor provides many opportunities to network with exhibitors, industry peers, new and existing customers, and suppliers. You can engage in conversations, exchange business cards, and establish connections, without worrying about missing opportunities at your own booth.



Lead Generation

While exhibitors focus on generating leads, walking participants can also identify potential leads by interacting with exhibitors, showing interest in their products or services, and exchanging contact information for follow-up after the event.



Organize Leads

Categorize leads based on interest level or opportunity potential. A customer relationship management (CRM) system is an extremely useful platform to save information on leads. These systems help ensure all details are organized and readily available for follow-up and future reference. Dedicated CRM software platforms include Microsoft Dynamics, Salesforce, HubSpot, Zoho CRM, and Pipedrive.



Immediate Follow-Up

Follow up with leads promptly after the trade show while your brand and conversation are still fresh in the executive's mind. Ideally, this would be within a few days of the meeting. The follow-up could include sending a personalized email thanking the executive for the meeting and summarizing what you discussed, along with an offer to schedule a follow-up call or meeting within a few days to further the conversation.



Personalize Communications

Tailor follow-up communications to each lead's specific interests and needs. This could involve sharing relevant industry insights, case studies, or whitepapers that demonstrate your expertise. Additionally, consider offering exclusive discounts or access to unique resources and promotions as incentives for further engagement.



Timely Outreach

Consider timing your follow-up based on a specific event or milestone related to the executive's expressed interests or needs. For example, if they mentioned a product launch in four months, plan a follow-up closer to that date to offer assistance or provide relevant resources.



Regular Touchpoints

After the initial follow-up, maintain regular touchpoints to nurture the relationship and keep your brand top-of-mind. This can include various channels such as email, phone calls, social media, and direct mail based on the executive's preference. Adapt the frequency of your follow-up based on the executive's level of engagement and responsiveness. If they seem disinterested or unresponsive, space out follow-ups to avoid appearing overly pushy.



Track Interactions

Keep track of all interactions and communications with leads to ensure continuity and avoid duplication of efforts. A CRM system can help easily segment data, track interactions, analyze lead engagement, and facilitate more efficient follow-up and conversion efforts.



Set Clear Next Steps

Clearly define next steps in follow-up communications to maintain momentum and advance leads through the sales pipeline. Examples may include scheduling a follow-up call or meeting, sending additional resources, or arranging a product demonstration.