



Ten Ways To Justify Show Participation

Exhibitor Staff, www.exhibitor.net

Why should my company participate in trade shows?

Regardless of company size, trade shows provide an excellent opportunity to collect qualified leads, make sales and build relationships. Trade shows can complement your other sales and marketing mediums. Choose and use them well, and you will realize many benefits. Consider these:

1. More bang for your buck. Trade shows are one of the most cost-effective ways for your company to reach qualified audiences. According to a study by Exhibit Surveys Inc., the average cost per visitor reached at a trade show is \$177, while the average cost of a field sales call is \$295. You do the math.

2. Less work, more fulfilling. Trade show sales leads require less effort to close. Research by Exhibit Surveys indicates that only .8 calls are needed to close a qualified trade show lead, compared to 3.7 calls to close a typical business sale. Also, 54 percent of all orders placed as a result of a trade show lead require no personal follow-up visit, according to another study by the McGraw-Hill Research Foundation.

3. Fresh faces. A study by Exhibit Surveys shows only 12 percent of the average exhibitor's booth traffic have been called on by a salesperson from that company in the 12 months prior to the show; 88 percent are new prospects. Furthermore, trade shows bring you high-quality visitors. Eighty-two percent of an exhibit's visitors have buying influence for the exhibiting company's products or services, and 49 percent of an exhibit's visitors are planning to buy those products or services.

4. Competitive edge. Trade shows offer your company another opportunity to stand out from the crowd. You can outshine the competition with a well-trained booth staff, aggressive pre- and at-show promotion, eye-catching booth design, and conscientious follow-up after the show. Also, trade show attendees use the opportunity to "comparison shop." So this is your opening to point out where your product is superior - in performance, pricing, service, etc.

5. "Face time." You can reach more prospects in a three-day period than your sales force can in three months. Meeting prospects face to face is also the fastest way to build relationships.

6. Customer bonding. Customer service is a hot topic for many companies. Trade shows are an excellent place to reinforce existing customer relationships. Say "thanks" to key customers with hospitality suites, one-on-one dinners or special services, such as transportation to and from the convention center.

7. Hands-on learning. How much of your product line can your salespeople actually carry with them and demonstrate on the road? Probably not much. Trade shows are a great place for prospects to "test drive" your products.

8. Competitive analysis. The trade show floor provides an invaluable opportunity to study the competition. Where else can you find out so much information on a competitor's new product offerings, pricing and marketing strategies? Much can be learned by just watching and listening.

9. Media spotlight. Most shows (especially large events) attract lots of media attention. Use this to your advantage to gain media exposure. Be sure to invite key press contacts to visit your booth.

10. "Survey says-" Trade shows offer a great opportunity to conduct market research. If you're considering launching a new product or service, you can survey show attendees on pricing, distribution, features and benefits, and minimum quality requirements, among others.