



Improving ROI with Pre-Show Promotion

Pre-show promotions can increase booth traffic by 33% to 50%. Many successful exhibitors will use pre-show promotion to:

- Attract pre-qualified prospects to their specific booth
- Pre-schedule appointments to ensure that they see the attendees they need to see
- Enhance their “brand” by ensuring that attendees have perceptions of their products, services, solutions and that capabilities are updated and accurate

Why bother with pre-show promotions? According to the Center for Exhibition Industry Research, a not-for-profit trade show and exposition industry research group in Chicago:

75% of the attendees at a given show come with a pre-planned personal agenda

Still not convinced you need to promote yourself to get the right people to your booth? The Center’s research also discovered that:

- **46% of executive decision makers made purchase decisions while attending a show**
- **77% of executive decision makers found at least one new supplier at the last show they attended**
- **40% of any given trade show audience is attending the show for the first time**
- **50% of the attendees have not been to another show in the previous year**
- **50% of the audience wants to see “What’s New” in products and services**

Attract Pre-Qualified Prospects

Not everyone will be a good prospect for every exhibiting company. Target your promotions to pre-qualified prospects and existing customers. To ensure that you are targeting the right attendees, work with your vice president of sales to define the specific type of prospects or customers or specific attendees they would like to see in the booth. The better you define your specific target audience, the better you can target your promotion.

Pre-Schedule Appointments

In order to improve their competitive posture, accelerate the buying process, as well as enhance relationships with existing customers, active sales opportunities and other pre-qualified prospects, many companies have their salespeople pre-arrange meetings in order to:

- Conduct tours of the exhibit to ensure that prospects and customers have a perception of your company's capabilities that is updated and accurate
- Facilitate time-efficient and cost-effective executive-to-executive meetings to build or enhance relationships at the decision making level of the customer organization
- Demonstrate products or equipment that would otherwise be difficult to display
- Provide access to personnel the customer would generally not have access to including technical resources, research and development staff, senior managers, etc.

Enhance Your "Brand"

Can your best customers accurately describe your company's current capabilities? Are they aware of all of your products and services? Can they articulate all the ways that your company can help them succeed? Have your sales people have the following conversation:

Customer: "I just bought "x" from so-and-so."

Salesperson: "I'm disappointed – why didn't you get those from us?"

Customer: "I would have preferred that – but I didn't know that you sold those."

Pre- and at-show promotions will provide you the opportunity to convey your key messages and ensure that your prospects and customers have a perception of your company that is updated and accurate. The more dated and inaccurate their perception is, the more sales you are missing.

Show attendees are bombarded with marketing messages prior to, at, and after trade shows. To "stand out from the crowd," and be remembered accurately, we suggest that you create and use a marketing message that is simple, clearly defined and easily remembered. Your message should:

- Leverage, support and enhance your brand
- Be consistent with how you want your company, products, services, solutions and capabilities to be perceived and remembered
- Be conveyed in all of your pre-, at- and post-show promotions and advertisements
- Be understood and supported by your booth staff (if your staff can't articulate your message, your marketplace probably won't be able to either)

Types of Promotions

Types of pre-show promotions include:

- Invitation Letters
 - Send a personalized invitation or letter which conveys your marketing message and motivates the prospect to visit your booth — i.e., new product announcement, meet with a senior manager in your company, etc.
- Hospitality Function Invitations
 - If your company is hosting a hospitality function after show hours, send invitations to pre-qualified prospects and customers. This invitation should invite them to your booth to pick up a pass for the hospitality suite. If you just send them a pass for the hospitality suite, they might miss your booth.
- Advertising
 - Advertise in newspapers, trade magazines, newsletters, the exhibitor directory or other industry related publications and websites. Make sure that all the ads you run during the two months prior to the meeting have a tag line which mentions the meeting's name and your booth location and/or number.
- Provide incentives that will motivate pre-qualified prospects to stop at your booth.
- Some exhibitors will use a contest or gift to motivate prospects and customers to stop by the booth.

These suggestions were authored by Keith Reznick, President of Creative Training Solutions (www.creativetraining.com) a company that designs and delivers live and online training programs for booth workers. More than 30,000 business professionals have participated in CTS programs and learned how to be more effective on the show floor.