



Beyond the Booth: Capturing Prospects During the Show





“Coffee is for closers,” Alec Baldwin’s character famously said in the movie *Glengarry Glen Ross*. While his opinion probably isn’t shared by many, those in the world of sales wish we had the character’s determination when it comes to capturing prospects. But the truth is, there’s more to collecting leads and “closing” than a tenacious attitude. Capturing prospects at a trade show is equal parts art and science. Art takes place at the show; Science happens before.

PRE-SHOW CAMPAIGN

There are few things more effective than a face-to-face meeting with a key prospect at a trade show. Securing a meeting and establishing a relationship or connection prior to the trade show will increase your chances of fitting your prospect into your sales funnel.

One month before the start of the trade show, create a Pre-Show Marketing Campaign:

1. Send a Pre-Show Email

No matter the size of your subscriber list is, sending a Pre-Show Email will give your customers the chance to make their trade show arrangements. Include your booth number, a few highlights that will entice them to attend, and make the email as personal as possible (use their first name, and leave a mobile number where your customers can text you the day of the event).

Bonus Tip: Host a Facebook Live event during the show for those who can’t make it. Include the time and date of the broadcast in your email. Designate a staff member to answer questions during the broadcast.

2. Create Social Media Posts and Ads

Social Media posts and ads ensure you reach the customers that aren’t on your email list, and you can post multiple times leading up to the event with different creative and messaging without feeling like you’re spamming your audience.



3. Write Blog Posts About the Trade Show

One or two blog posts about the trade show is a great way to drive your audience to your website while including similar information as your email. Blog posts can be longer and include more detail about new products or services, or a schedule of events for the show. Link your Social Media ads and posts and your emails to the blog posts on your website to drive traffic, and monitor click through rates to determine who has shown interest in your content.



Not sure how to start planning for your next show? Use our Timeline Generator tool to help you plan, step-by-step. We'll immediately send you your own custom trade show timeline.

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BOOTH DESIGN

You've created content, sent emails, posted blogs and promoted on Social Media. Overall, you've generated hype for your next trade show. Now what?

Booth Design is one of the most overlooked aspects of lead-capturing on the day of the event. Think of how many potential clients are lost when a prospect stops at your booth and your staff are too busy working with other visitors to greet them? While you might not have the luxury of hiring additional sales staff for your next trade show, designing your booth with a focus on capturing prospects is an alternative and affordable way to hold a prospect's attention until your salespeople can break free.

Design your booth with these tips in mind:

1. Open Concept

Arrange your show booth so that it invites attendees to walk inside and around your booth. Design with space and entice them with creative product displays that encourage interaction.

2. Lighting

A smartly-lit booth can accentuate design features and create a warm environment. A well-lit display is essential, allowing visitors to easily view the important details of your products and graphics. Use lighting to brighten key areas of your exhibit, such as product displays and promotional materials.

3. Touch Screen Displays

People love the opportunity to guide their own experience, so think of unique ways you can include touchscreen displays to accomplish that goal. Catalogs, virtual tours, company videos, and portfolios are all great ways visitors can interact with your products on their own time.

Bonus Tip: Consider adding a touchscreen kiosk on the corners of your exhibit, drawing people in from the aisle and doubling as traffic management for a busy sales team. This design feature can help boost the interactivity of your booth, without creating extra work for staff members.



WORKING THE BOOTH

Do you ever catch your sales team muttering to each other on the floor as they watch prospects walk by? What are they saying that needs to be kept so secret? The likely answer is that in order to capture solid leads, your sales team thinks they need to separate the suspects from the prospects, thus they are discussing whether or not to approach a lead. Well, we know as well as you do that your sales team should be approaching **every** lead, and by standing back and waiting, they may be missing out on an opportunity.

Your sales team can improve their selling strategy by defining the sales process. Huddle up before the show begins and discuss the plan for the day. Then meet up every few hours, or when possible, to give a quick rundown of what's working, and who needs help in which areas.



Your trade show process could look like this:

- Greet your visitor, be friendly
- Ask a specific question (“Are you looking for anything in particular?” or “Have you seen our new [product name]?” or “What brings you to this show?”)
- Prospect not interested? Politely disengage and tell them you’ll be here all weekend should they need anything
- Demonstrate your product to qualified prospects. If possible, put the product in their hands and show them how it works. If you are demonstrating a product it’s also important for your staffers to be comfortable, familiar with, and knowledgeable about its function, features, and benefits.
- Review benefits and features
- Direct them to a Call to Action (make an appointment, give/get a business card, make a purchase, etc...)



The Art of Questioning

Rapport can be built within minutes of meeting a prospect by asking just a few open-ended questions. Don't ask a yes or no question, or a question that elicits a short response (Q: "How are you today" A: "Good.")

Ask questions that provide you with information as to who your prospects are and what they want.

Example Questions:

- What brought you to the show today?
- What product/service are you interested in?
- What can I help you with?
- What are you enjoying most about the show this year?
- What would you like to see different from the show?

These questions are designed to get prospects talking. The more they talk, the more information you can get from them that will help direct them your product or service.

Bonus Tip: Don't ask about or mention budget. This can give the prospect a reason to walk away, and often before they haven't learned the full capabilities of your product. When they ask about price (and they will) tell them, but make sure they are fully aware of the benefits and features.

CHOOSE YOUR LITERATURE WISELY

Some companies will pass out literature or promotional items without even getting a first name. By the third day at a show, you'll likely see handouts littering the trade show floor or filling up trash bins. Instead of focusing your efforts on giving out as many brochures as possible or handing out all of your giveaways, concentrate on getting contact details and answers to your qualifying questions.

Bring some product literature, but keep it out of reach. Only actively pass it out if you have a specific goal, such as building awareness of an upcoming product or purchase incentive. If someone insists, get their contact info first. Try to get answers to questions about their needs before you hand them anything.

A more common strategy nowadays sees companies skipping brochures entirely. If pressed for literature, offer to email an electronic copy or snail mail your printed materials so they'll have them when they return to their office. This is another good way to get their contact information.



USE A GIVEAWAY, THE RIGHT WAY

Giveaways can be a good way to generate buzz for your company. They can also generate a lot of dead-end leads if you're not careful.

If you're giving out free stuff in exchange for contact info, separate the people who are interested in your product from the ones who are only interested in the prize. If everyone drops their business card in the same fishbowl, your sales team will end up wasting time calling on bad leads. If you want to show off your sense of humor, you can set up two fishbowls: one labeled "Interested" and one labeled "Just Here For The Free Stuff."

HOST YOUR OWN SEMINARS

While it's true that trade show attendees like the freedom to wander in and out of different exhibits and booths, what's also true is that time is money. Your key prospects are busy, and want to make best use of their time during a trade show. That's why hosting your own seminars is a great way to attract these key prospects who want to validate being there while also learning as much as they can about their specific industry.

Steps to Hosting a Seminar:

1. Create a Seminar Landing Page where you can capture sign ups
2. Send a series of emails that directs to the Landing Page
3. Create Social Media posts and ads that direct to the Landing Page
4. Contact sign ups prior to the event reminding them about the Seminar
5. Host the Seminar on the 2nd or 3rd day to give your sales team time to attract last-minute attendees
6. Provide food and drinks at the Seminar
7. Keep the Seminar to 45 minutes, and follow with a 15-minute Q&A session
8. Send a post-seminar email survey to your list for feedback



SEND AN IN-SHOW EMAIL

By the last day of a show, attendees are either going back to booths they've seen before, and liked, or are on the hunt for show deals. The last day is one of the toughest days to attract prospects. Feet are sore, brains are tired, and with every passing hour, your staff becomes more fixed on the tear down and clean up.

Send an email first thing on Sunday morning, or the last day of the show, to remind attendees to visit your booth. The key part of this strategy is to give them something new to see. Do you have a special product or service? Put it aside and wait until the last day to display it. Drum up interest throughout the show by announcing a special unveiling of the product or service—this will give prospects an incentive to visit you on that all-important last day. And for those that do show up, you can be sure to bump them to the top of your “very interested” prospect list.

FINAL BONUS TIP

Don't believe the anecdote that no one uses business cards anymore. According to CreditDonkey, 27 million business cards are printed daily, and a company's sales increase 2.5% for every 2,000 business cards handed out. Trade shows are where decision-makers and CEOs do most of their business-card swapping.

Set up a fish bowl at your booth and at the end of each day, input email addresses into your contact list.

Be transparent with a note on your fishbowl that says “by providing your business card you agree to receive periodic email communication about promotions, new products and services.” Over the course of three days, you could end up with over a hundred business cards, which can all be added to your prospect list and added to your sales and marketing funnel. However, if you do this be sure you are working only the qualified leads from your business card collection. This may take some post-show research to see who's actually qualified to be hearing from you.

Ready to Discuss Your Trade Show Booth Strategy?

Talk to an Apogee Exhibits Expert by [Filling out our Short Form](#) or Calling (315) 986-4600 Today.