



# Four Ways to Increase Trade Show Effectiveness





A trade show feels a lot like a Super Bowl game. It calls for a lot of preparation, the event generates an air of excitement, and there's a great deal at stake. Success requires every member of your team to do their best and work together.

Your company can increase your chances of getting a championship-level performance from your trade show staff by equipping them with the right strategies. Put into play, each of these will help your company get the most out of your trade show investment.

## 1. Pitch plan



An industry exposition provides far more than a chance for your employees to get out of the office and enjoy a change of scenery. A trade show proves to be prime time for your sales staff. True, phone calls, emails and prospect site visits are great, but a trade show puts your selling stars under the same roof with hundreds—maybe thousands—of solid prospects. It's an opportunity your team should prep for.

Here are a few things to keep in mind as you're preparing for the big event:

### **Learn the difference between hesitance and a hard “no”**

It would be wonderful if every pitch was met with an enthusiastic “yes” right off the bat. Unfortunately, that isn't the case. However, if you listen to what a prospect actually is saying when they turn your pitch down, your chances of converting them into a customer increase.

When the person sitting across from your staff in your trade show booth doesn't accept your pitch, their response generally falls into one of two columns.

- **Rejection.** This is a firm no—they aren't interested, your product or services don't align with their needs and goals, and they most likely won't in the future. Odds are that if you press on, you'll only frustrate and annoy them. The only thing worse than a failed prospect, is an angry failed prospect.



- **Objection.** This response could be considered a 'soft' no. They might be on the fence and open to convincing, or they have a concern about the deal you could be able to clear up with additional information. It's also possible they like what they're hearing but now is not the right time. File their contact info and contact them later, when the time might be better.

## Know your value

For a visitor to your trade show display to be converted to a customer, they must be convinced of what value you can offer them. Before your staff can make the case, they need to know your company's value first. Keep in mind these three key areas of benefit.

- **Company.** Across their organization, your prospect's company is concerned about things like conserving operating costs, pulling in more revenue and saving time. Hit their key pain points by communicating that your solutions save money, boost profits, increase efficiency or otherwise provide organization-wide benefits.
- **Professional.** In addition to providing value to the prospect's whole company, your solutions benefit them. Your goods and services help them accomplish their individual goals, hit important benchmarks and look good to their superiors.
- **Identity.** At the top of a pitch, ask your target how their company views itself, and how they think customers view them. Then, harness those responses to formulate answers that outline how your solutions can complement or boost that identity.

## Practice makes perfect

A trade show offers the singular opportunity for sales professionals (especially the less experienced on your staff) to flex their pitch muscles with a large number of people. Consider preparing them for the experience by conducting dry runs with other staff at your homebase. Also, before they arrive, advise them not to get discouraged if they get turned down. Let them know that each unsuccessful pitch is a learning opportunity—adapt, adjust and try again.



Another thing to consider: the art of your pitch is something everyone at your company should know about—not just the staff with "sales" in their title. That awareness will lead to better understanding of the purpose for attending a trade show, and the role every employee plays. This brings us to the next tool...

Want to know more about becoming pitch perfect?

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2.

## Team Bonding



All too often, the different departments of a company work as disjointed fragments, rather than as a cohesive unit. Members of your staff aren't aware of the important role other departments play, so when they are thrown together in the relatively close quarters of a trade show booth, they don't truly appreciate each other.

The work of fostering greater understanding and appreciation among various staff members begins long before you pack up your trade show exhibit and head for the show. Educating everyone about the important roles their colleagues play should be an ongoing effort. Lunches, outings, parties and other intra-company events can promote more togetherness.

Before the show, be sure to include different departments in trade show planning meetings and discussions. Share what each department contributes to preparation, what their roles will be at the show, and how everyone plays an important part in your company's success at the event. Then, at the trade show, make time for staff to mingle off the show floor. A pre-show dinner or reception provides a good place for staff from different offices to get to know each other, so they're not just thrown together in the exhibit.

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## Technology

It is difficult, if not impossible, to remember what the business world was like before smartphones, tablets and other high-tech tools arrived on the scene. Still, it turns out your team might not be harnessing these handy digital devices to their full potential.

The smartphone in your employee's hand connects them to the entire digital universe, but phones also connect your trade show booth staff to each other. Facilitate a stronger connection and pave a path for greater responsiveness by having everyone share their contact information before the show.





Surprisingly, many companies still rely on outdated contact lists. At best, these are simple spreadsheets that either get left back at the office or printed on a paper list kept at the trade show booth reception. Improve upon that by creating a contact list of everyone who will be on site—phone numbers, emails and other pertinent data. Then, make sure all your show staff loads that list into their devices. This ensures that if someone needs to reach a colleague immediately, the contact info is at their fingertips. The alternative means having to run back to the booth to peek at the list, or scour the entire exhibit hall to find them.

Looking for more ways to keep your staff connected? Download these smartphone apps:



- **WhatsApp:** enables users to message and call each other
- **Slack:** lets users chat, group message, and share documents
- **Telegram:** combines instant messaging and VOIP functions
- **Google Hangouts:** provides one-on-one and group chats with more robust features than simple text messaging
- **Zello:** turns your smartphone into a walkie talkie—no handheld jobsite walkies required

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## Harness Key Learnings



Read here or more factors to consider when assessing your company's trade show performance.

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No matter how great your trade show went, there always will be room to improve. Postmortem meetings or discussions—with everyone sharing their views on what went right at the show



and what could go better—are a powerful assessment tool. However, to make the most out of your self-assessment efforts, you have to start before your trade show display is taken down and everyone is heading home.

During your pre-show preparations, encourage your team to think about process improvement while they're in the booth. This proactive approach will lead to more robust information being shared in the after-event discussion mentioned above. Also, it will help increase staff's awareness of everyone's function at the show, and appreciation of what each individual employee brings to the proverbial table.

Here are some quality-control considerations for your trade show team to keep in mind:

## **Overall strengths and weaknesses**

While single events might stand out—a great client interaction, or a technical presentation glitch—there is benefit from taking a big-picture view of your trade show operation. Did your exhibit traffic flow smoothly? Were your in-booth resources well organized and easy to find? Were people with scheduled appointments able to connect with the right person in a timely manner? Answers to these questions provide you a path to a better experience for your visitors and staff the next time around.

## **Competitor performance**

Hopefully at least a few of your trade show booth staff got a chance to scope out your competitors' setups. Your employees also might have an ear to the ground and heard how attendees responded to the messages those companies are broadcasting at the event. Reports of how the other guys fared at the event can serve as a helpful benchmark against which to gauge your own performance.

## **Meetings and messaging**

Were prospects receptive to your pitches and presentations, or did your efforts fall short of your goals? If your marketing materials and client conversations did not achieve the desired results, take the opportunity to assess your messaging and talking points, refreshing and adjusting where necessary.

## **Booth checkup**

Finally, take a look at how your trade show exhibit performed—or didn't perform—at the event. Did your booth staff notice attendees taking a quick glance, then passing you by without visiting? That could indicate there's room for improving the signage, messaging, graphic elements and other components. Did visitors walk in, take a quick look, then depart without talking to your people? Think of ways you could make the setup more enticing and encourage your people to engage more. Your display represents a significant investment—it is important the booth design and layout make that investment pay off.

### **Does your trade show display need a makeover?**

Check out Three Cost-Effective Ways to Refresh Your Trade Show Booth.

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**In search of more ways to maximize your trade show results?**

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