



## More than just a show!

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### **Can you get more out of your next tradeshow?**

*It's that time of the year again. "What shall we have at our trade display stand this year?"*

*Several brainstorming sessions later, you come up with some clever ideas, but realise they are simply variations on the same old theme; tactics that are more of the same, just a different look. So...could you possibly get much more out of your trade show?*

First, you might ask yourself:

1. Why are we participating in this show?
2. Where does it fit in the overall strategy?
3. What outcomes do we hope to achieve?
4. Is the return on investment worth it? Can we increase it?

Whatever your reasons for participating, two good reasons are firstly to generate leads and secondly to promote brand awareness. Your tradeshow should be integrated into your overall marketing and business strategy to maximise the return on investment.

Trade shows are great for promoting brand awareness and presence visually to a potentially targeted audience. But, more importantly, they provide you the perfect opportunity to engage customers and prospects alike while they are at your stand. Give them a positive brand experience that they'll remember and this could lead to conversion into sales, and a potential brand loyalist.





To get the maximum out of your investment means thinking about your tradeshow as a process, not a singular event. Look at how you can leverage the opportunity not only during the tradeshow but consider the possibilities before and after the event.

- **Before the event**

Place an ad a month prior to the tradeshow. Design your ad to mirror the look of the stand. Think of how you can drive traffic to your stand. Come up with an offer which may be in the form of a chance to win, freebies, new or useful information via your website or an ad.

The offer will of course depend on whether you're promoting a service or a product. See if you can determine the response rate from what you do. A targeted direct mail or email campaign will provide you another way to drive traffic to your stand.

Select a number of key targets that you want to focus on (100 per sales person is a good average for a manageable response rate). With a direct mail prior to the tradeshow, even if your targeted prospect never attends the tradeshow, you have still managed to generate awareness, and "leads" for your sales people. You can also send SMS reminders.

- **During the event**

Start by maximising the look of your booth. Your trade display obviously should reflect your brand. Although there are many variables such as booth size, audience, venue restrictions, budget etc, there are a number of key elements that should be considered:

- I. **Communication messages**

Focus on single key messages and propositions. These should be large enough to read at a glance. Try to avoid the inclination of conveying every single product benefit that you can think of. Attendees are bombarded with so much information, they seldom look dead on at your messages for fear of being "roped in". Audio visuals that loop are useful tools to use to engage audiences that simply want to know what you have to offer but don't want to approach your stand to ask.



## 2. **Visuals**

Visuals are far better at conveying a message or brand perception. Use consistent brand images that will enhance recognition and credibility.

## 3. **The Offer**

Create an offer or a “special” that creates a sense of urgency for action eg an offer which is available to tradeshow attendees who have visited you at your stand. Or have new information and handouts to give to attendees that you can use to engage them.

- **After the event**

The key to getting the maximum out of your tradeshow is to ensure that you acquire contacts you can follow up on after the tradeshow, which you can convert to sales.

A tradeshow is not the place to try and sell a prospect. Try and meet as many people as you can. Be on the look out for your top 100 targets and open as many doors as you can to continue your dialogue after the event especially for products and services that are more complex.

Lead generation is an art. Once you have mastered it, a tradeshow will become more than just a show. You will then be able to maximise your investment, time and outcome and see a financial return on your investment.

It doesn't matter if tradeshow attendees are prospects or customers who already purchase from you. With prospects your aim is conversion to sales. With customers, it is to strengthen the relationship so they can become a strong advocate for your brand.