

## **MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS THROUGH TRADE SHOWS, EXHIBITS OR BUSINESS EXPO'S**

### **I. PRACTICAL REASONS TO EXHIBIT IN SHOWS**

- A. Find and talk with people willing to buy what you sell. According to Jay Conrad Levinson, "Guerrilla Trade show Selling," that's it – nothing more – just sales.
- B. If you want average results, do what you see most exhibitors doing.
- C. If you want extraordinary results, train yourself, train your staff, and most importantly, expect extraordinary results.
- D. Plan to turn heads and raise eyebrows – change the status quo. Rely on time, energy and imagination to attract visitors to your booth to form business and personal relationships.

### **II. TOP 15 REASONS WHY GUERRILLAS EXHIBIT AT SHOWS**

- A. Sell what you offer to visitors -- one of the best reasons to exhibit at a business show.
- B. Sell what you offer to other exhibitors. This works if you supply goods and services that other exhibitors use in their daily businesses. Be sure to visit other exhibits to generate relationships, referrals, and get ideas for future exhibits.
- C. Get leads to follow up. Make sure to follow up or you've wasted your time and money – DO IT within ONE week.
- D. Network and troubleshoot with other professionals. Learn from other pros in the business.
- E. Establish industry positioning. A chance to announce to the world that you're a serious business player.
- F. Meet with existing customers. Make a weeks' and months' worth of sales calls to existing customers in a short period of time – invite and encourage them to attend.
- G. Visit with people who are otherwise hard to meet. Look for key buyers who are otherwise unapproachable.
- H. Introduce new products to the market. Coordinate a product launch with the show.
- I. Do market research. Try new offers out on hundreds of buyers and fine-tune pricing and product focus.
- J. Find new dealers, representatives and distributors. If looking for help, put a sign in your exhibit that says DEALERS OR AGENTS WANTED.
- K. Find new employees. Put a sign up for this also.
- L. Conduct business meetings. Schedule meetings with clients, partners, and potential customers.
- M. Scope out the competition. Get a clear picture of competitors' marketing strategy.

- N. Get smart. Look for educational opportunities, and offer them to clients.
- O. Get media exposure. Media may be present.

### III. FIVE REASONS DECISION MAKERS ATTEND SHOWS

- A. To find out what's new. Fifty percent of all attendees want to see new products and services.
- B. To see competitors and compare prices. 93% compare similar products, 50% request calls for a sales rep, 73% ask for price quotes, 75% find at least one new supplier.
- C. Visit different suppliers, hear their presentations, and compare vendors' points of view, 49% make purchases.
- D. Collect literature for later review. Average visitors stop to talk or acquire literature & information.
- E. Get a better perspective of what's available. It beats hunting for people and spending a lot of time on the phone.
- F. Meet current clients, find potential clients.

### IV. SHOW BUDGET—PROPOSED/ACTUAL COST

- A. % of Budget Dollars:
  - 1. 35% Space
  - 2. 16% Show services
  - 3. 15% Construction of display
  - 4. 34% Transportation, refurbishment, Promotion, Misc.
- B. Budget Item Estimates for each:
  - 1. Booth Space
  - 2. Exhibit Structure
  - 3. Shipping
  - 4. On-site services (audio-visual, water, photography, etc)
  - 5. Personnel
  - 6. Promotion (direct mail, incentives, literature, printing, etc.)
  - 7. Lead Gathering (printing, postage, contingency, etc.)
- C. After the Show, Make an Actual Budget of Income and Expense, for NET PROFIT comparison.

### V. EXHIBIT DESIGN

- A. Capture visitor's attention/keep audience in mind:
  - 1. Develop a Theme/or message for all signs, brochures, table colors, decorations, business cards, etc.
  - 2. You have only 3 – 7 seconds to tell visitors who you are, what you do, what your offer is. Make them want to stop and check you out.
  - 3. Make graphics look like a BILLBOARD, NOT a bulletin board.

4. Keep exhibit focused, not crowded with too many items.
5. Use clear plastic holders for brochures – not stacked flat on table.
6. Power of color –
  - a. **Black** portrays power; **Gray** encourages creativity but can be perceived as dirty.
  - b. **Brown** is interpreted as informal; **White** signals purity and honesty.
  - c. **Red** attracts the eye, and is high energy; **Orange** attracts the eye but conveys “cheap.”
  - d. **Blue** has a calming effect and encourages fantasy; **Silver & gold** indicate top-dollar products.
  - e. **Yellow** brightens but if used too much can cause attendees to become cranky; **Green** helps surroundings become more familiar, and is associated with nature & money.
7. Make sure graphics can be read 10 feet away, and your organization or product name sign is shown prominently at highest possible point in your exhibit. (most locations do not allow you to fasten signs to their walls or materials, so be prepared to display large signs on easels. (Signs on lower section of tables get hidden when people are in front of it.)
8. Arrange products and materials at different heights, rather just flat on tables. Make the display memorable.
9. Get professional help when desired, for greater impact.

## V. PROMOTIONALS

### A. Before the Show

1. Send personal invitations to clients, include tickets to take to show & claim a prize or gift at the event or offer special discounts to clients when attending the show, etc.
2. E-mail announcements & invitations – add to your E-mail Signature.
3. Broadcast fax announcements & invitations – include an Ad on all outgoing info.
4. Place conference or show information & invitation to attend on:
  - a. Your web site, invoices, envelopes, letterhead, etc.,
  - b. Anything to get more potential clients present to see your exhibit.

### B. Top Five Promotional Product Preferences:

- |                         |                                                               |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Wearables            | 27.2%                                                         |
| 2. Writing instruments  | 11.8% (mail empty box to clients to pick up pens at the show) |
| 3. Glassware/Ceramics   | 9.4% (heavy when loading/unloading)                           |
| 4. Calendars            | 7.3%                                                          |
| 5. Desk/Office/Business | 5.6%                                                          |

6. Offer product samples they can get only at the show.
7. Offer 10 - 20% discounts when making purchases during the show.
- B. Catalogs & Information – mail to client one week AFTER the event.
  1. To make promotional products work, they should:
    - a. Have a high perceived value
    - b. Be given, not taken
    - c. Be given selectively
    - d. Be identified by donor's name.
    - e. May be mailed to client one week AFTER the event.
- C. During the Show Plan:
  1. Contests, Drawings, attractions, Deferred Rewards
  2. Memorize 1 or 2 effective messages (ie. "17-second Business Commercials") that spell out the benefits of your services or products.
  3. Dress for maximum effectiveness in terms of colors, image, etc.
  4. Wear comfortable shoes, drink plenty of water,
  5. Take breaks, but always staff booth when visitors are walking by,
  6. Stand to greet visitors, smile, engage them with questions to get responses, reach out to visitors, welcome to show.
  7. Be a good listener, be confident, make a good first impression.
  8. Know when to kiss, to bow, to shake hands and to disengage contact.

## VI. MANAGING LEADS

- A. Develop Lead Information + Business Cards
  1. Make sure to get business cards and e-mail addresses
  2. Ask open-end questions (not yes/no answers) type of business, needs and desires (importer, distributor, end user, etc.)
  3. Products of interest – send after the show.
  4. Other useful info helpful for follow-up
  5. Prioritize Leads: "A" Hot, "B" Near-term, but undefined need, "C" information only.
  6. Within one week:
    - a. Write: thank you notes by mail, e-mail, fax.
    - b. Fulfill lead requests or promises
    - c. Keep lead follow-up reports
    - d. Manage and follow leads in the field if needed
    - e. Make appointments to close sales, plan future written follow-up, special offers, new products/services, etc. if needed.
  7. WARNING: 79% of all Exhibit leads generated are not followed-up!
  8. Remember – it costs less to keep a client than to develop a new one.

## VII. EXHIBIT SET UP & SUPPLIES

- A. ALWAYS have exhibit set up by OPENING TIME.
  - 1. Get all printing and signs prepared at least ONE WEEK in advance.
  - 2. Make a check list of items to take (see below for some)
  - 3. Practice setting up exhibit at home or in your office – then ask for evaluations from neighbors, business associates, sales persons, etc.
  - 4. Take samples of products – not ALL you have.
- B. Supplies:
  - 1. Decorated box or basket for contest/drawing, with sign describing prize.
  - 2. Staplers, scotch tape, signs, paper clips, string, pens, pencils, brochures & plastic holders, display items to draw potential clients to your table.
  - 3. Business cards, writing pads for lead information, balloons, visual aids, flower arrangements, tablecloth in solid theme color (patterns distract from your display, but a solid theme color can enhance it).
- C. Booth Behavior – **DO NOT**:
  - 1. Eat food in booth during exhibit time – arrange to do it away from table.
  - 2. Talk on cell phones to anyone – set cell phones to take messages and then if needed, make calls away from exhibit.
  - 3. Sit while talking with visitors – stand accompanied by a welcome smile.
  - 4. Fold arms defensively – use hands to refer to items in your booth.
  - 5. Let friends gossip or take your time away from business visitors – arrange to meet later.
  - 6. **PACK UP AND LEAVE EARLY.** Stick with scheduled time, unless absolute emergency with permission of organizer.