

## Making Waves in the Exhibit Hall

# 35 Tips & Tricks for Trade Show Success

**Before the Show:** **Plan Ahead:** Start with a strategy for bringing in visitors to the trade show, attracting prospects to your exhibit, delivering your marketing message, collecting names, and getting a return on your investment of time and money.

1. Announce your exhibit to all your current customers and prospects. Include your booth number in all of your pre-show communications, emails, newsletters, etc.
2. Advertise your planned exhibit on the radio, in trade publications, with a direct mail invitation, or on your website.
3. Prepare visually appealing handouts that present the benefits and solutions you offer in a clear and concise manner.
4. Refine and practice your verbal marketing approach, product demonstration, or service presentation.
5. Order giveaways for timely delivery.

**Show Time:** **Attract Visitor Attention:** Trade-show attendees can easily be overwhelmed by all the visual stimulation, crowds, noises and activity in an exhibit hall and will naturally seek out calm, soothing environments and gravitate toward uncluttered displays for a visual and mental break. Design your booth to counteract the over-stimulation.

6. Avoid excessive graphics and colors and opt for one or two bold colors or a single dramatic image as the main focal point of your display.
7. Use short, easy-to-read wording that gets the message across quickly. Include your website address where it will stand out.
8. Add spotlights to highlight your products or give-aways to direct visitors' eyes and create interest and desire.
9. Play soft music or nature sounds or run a water fountain to downplay the crowd noise and create a soothing atmosphere.

**Lure in Visitors:** Trade-show attendees are motivated by curiosity, a competitive spirit, hunger, thirst, desire, and a need for rest. Use all of this to your advantage.

10. Operate a coffee maker, water cooler, popcorn machine or a microwave to warm baked goods to entice visitors and keep them around longer.
11. Include chairs or stools in your booth and invite visitors to take a load off. While they rest their feet, you'll have their full attention.
12. Hire a magician or comedian to entertain passing visitors and draw them back to your booth.
13. Hold a drawing or a contest to appeal to their competitive spirit. Consider a game wheel or video game for more interest.
14. Play a video or animated presentation on a large screen to attract attention with motion.
15. Walk around the exhibit hall and pass out your business card with your booth number printed on it. Tell attendees about your contest, game, give-aways, etc. to direct them to your booth.



70%  
of attendees  
go to  
tradeshows  
with an intent  
to buy!

**Make Your Appeal:** Trade-show attendees are actively seeking solutions to their problems. Seventy percent of attendees go to trade shows with the intention of making a purchase decision. Focus on the solutions and benefits you offer to keep them interested.

16. Wear a logo shirt to appear more casual and approachable.
17. Be friendly and outgoing and approach visitors with a helpful attitude. Don't be overbearing. Remember, visitors have many other options at a tradeshow.
18. Engage prospects in friendly conversation until they become relaxed and open.
19. Ask visitors questions about their needs and listen carefully to their responses.
20. Present your solutions in response to their specific needs.
21. Perform a demonstration of your product or service. Allow participation where possible.
22. Offer samples, coupons, free trials or on-the-spot discounts to encourage decision-making.

**Generate Leads:** It doesn't pay to waste your marketing efforts on everyone who visits your booth. Some attendees are there just for the free stuff. Work to qualify visitors as real or unlikely prospects and collect contact information for those who have real potential.

23. Ask qualifying questions to determine if your product or services fits your visitors' needs. If you don't have a match, be nice but don't waste your time.
24. Collect the names and contact information from qualified prospects through your contests, drawings, or games. Require the information for a chance to play.
25. Get visitors to sign up for your newsletter, seminar, or a free estimate or demonstration.
26. Set up a follow-up conversation by asking permission to call or send more information.
27. Provide a premium give-away and information package for well-qualified prospects.

**Stay Memorable:** After a day of visiting exhibits, your prospects may suffer from information over-load and have trouble remembering which solution went with which vendor. Help them by making sure they walk away with something that is imprinted with your company name, number and website address.

28. Provide quality designed and printed handouts with your benefits prominently featured.
29. Use catalogs, brochures, sales sheets, newsletters, and tip sheets to inform prospects, heighten their interest, and provide a method to make a purchase.
30. Giveaway useful promotional items that relate to your marketing message, your business name or your main benefit and include your name and contact information.
31. Invest in quality giveaways. Cheap, easily broken and unusable items will leave your prospects with a bad impression.

**After the Show: Follow Up:** With little actual sales completed at trade shows, you must follow-up with qualified leads to get the needed return on your investment. Don't wait too long or your competitors will beat you to the punch.

32. Sort your leads into categories based on their level of interest and readiness to purchase.
33. Make your first efforts to contact your best leads by telephone and schedule a follow-up meeting, estimate, demonstration, etc.
34. Send a follow-up letter or thank-you note to your prospects with a limited offer to act now. Call or email after the offer is delivered.
35. Mail your brochure, catalog, newsletter, etc. to all the leads you collected to keep your name in their minds while you work to make a personal contact with each one.