

Nuts & Bolts of Marketing

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Trade Show Marketing Mistakes: How to Avoid Them

Susan Friedmann, http://www.sideroad.com/Trade_Shows/trade_show_marketing_mistakes.html

The key to great exhibiting is marketing. But marketing is a very inexact science that leaves room for a multitude of errors to occur. The following are some of the most common marketing mistakes that exhibitors often make. Learn to avoid them and you will increase your chances for a successful trade show.

Have A Proper Trade Show Marketing Plan

Having both a strategic exhibit marketing and tactical plan of action is a critical starting point. In order to make tradeshow a powerful dimension your company's overall marketing operation, there must be total alignment between the strategic marketing and your exhibit marketing plan.

Have A Well-Defined Promotional Plan

A significant part of your marketing includes promotion - pre-show, at-show and post-show. Most exhibitors fail to have a plan that encompasses all three areas. Budget is naturally going to play a major role in deciding what and how much promotional activity is possible. Developing a meaningful theme or message that ties into your strategic marketing plan will then help to guide promotional decisions.

Use Direct Mail Effectively

Direct mail is still one of the most popular promotional vehicles exhibitors use. From postcards to multi-piece mailings, attendees are deluged with invitations to visit booths. Many of the mailings come from show management's lists and as a result, everyone gets everything. To target the people you want visit your booth, use your own list of customers and prospects--it's the best one available.

Give Visitors An Incentive To Visit Your Booth

Whatever promotional vehicles you use, make sure that you give visitors a reason to come and visit you. With a hall overflowing with fascinating products/services, combined with time constraints, people need an incentive to come and visit your booth. First and foremost their primary interest is in "what's new!" They are eager to learn about the latest technologies, new applications, or anything that will help save them time and/or money. Even if you don't have a new product/service to introduce, think about a new angle to promote your offerings.

Have Giveaways That Work

Tied into giving visitors an incentive to visit your booth is the opportunity to offer a premium item that will entice them. Your giveaway items should be designed to increase your memorability, communicate, motivate, promote or increase recognition of your company. Developing a dynamite giveaway takes thought and creativity. Consider what your target audience wants, what will help them do their job better, what they can't get elsewhere, what is product/service related and educational.

Use Press Relations Effectively

Public relations is one of the most cost-effective and successful methods for generating large volumes of direct inquiries and sales. Before the show ask show management for a comprehensive media list, and find out which publications are planning a special trade show edition. Send out newsworthy press releases focusing on what's new about your product/service, or highlighting a new application or market venture.

Differentiate Your Products/Services

Too many exhibitors are happy to use the "me too" marketing approach. Every aspect of your exhibit marketing plan, including your promotions, your booth and your people should be aimed at making an impact and creating curiosity.

Use The Booth As An Effective Marketing Tool

On the trade show floor your exhibit makes a strong statement about who your company is, what you do and how you do it. The purpose of your exhibit is to attract visitors so that you can achieve your marketing objectives. Opt for large graphics rather than reams of copy. Pictures paint a thousand words while very few exhibitors will take the time to read.

Realize That Your People Are Your Marketing Team

Your people are your ambassadors. They represent everything your company stands for, so choose them well. Brief them beforehand and make sure that they know: why you are exhibiting; what you are exhibiting and what you expect from them.

Follow-Up Promptly

The key to your trade show success is wrapped up in the lead-management process. The best time to plan for follow-up is before the trade show. Establish a lead handling system, set time lines for follow-up, use a computerized database for tracking, make sales representatives accountable for leads given to them, and then measure your results.

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