

How to convert booth visitors into buyers

For a new exhibitor, how to take advantage of the tradeshow traffic and get leads for their business is always a question. What's the best way to come back to your office with the juiciest leads? Here's how I might suggest you start:

1) Pre-show

Planning is one the major keys to being successful in getting business at a tradeshow. In your annual plan, you should have a budget for a number of activities which will funnel customers and prospects to your booth at the tradeshow. These can include promotional email and/or direct mailers to your top customers and prospects, telling them your latest product and service news and why they should visit your booth at the show. In addition, make sure your corporate website shows that you are participating in the event with a link to the event organizers site. If you are announcing a new product or service, make sure you have a press plan which supports your efforts.

In addition, when reserving the booth, if possible, pick a booth in a high traffic area and preferably an island booth if you can afford it.

2) Onsite

In your planning, if you can afford it, you should have unique idea which will set you apart from the hundreds of other exhibitors and competitors at the event. Here are some ideas for unique and cost effective options:

- bag stuffer;
- display outside the hall such as a banner;
- presentation in the conference;
- area sponsorship such as registration area, conference area, internet café or break area;
- billboards in the registration or conference areas;
- special giveaway(perhaps advertised in your pre-show promotion)

The idea is to stand out from all of the other exhibitors. Get creative and call your sales person at the event organizer for cost effective ideas.

3) At the booth

Make sure that the booth design allows for prospects to be able to walk through the booth and come into your 'sphere of influence' if possible. If big enough, a table and chairs or a sofa make sense along with the obligatory workstations or presentation areas.

In addition, who you choose to 'man' your booth is all important. Pick people who are friendly, positive and who truly enjoy speaking (and listening) to people (sounds obvious but who hasn't been to event where it's obvious the booth staff doesn't want to be there?), in addition to the product experts.

In addition think of the following things:

A) Know how to greet people

- Initiate the conversation;
- Where to stand (not behind furniture or tables, where it's easy have a comfortable conversation);
- Seek communalities or comment on something your visitors.

Now that you have the person's attention, you want to know whether he/she is a potential buyer. Here's how to proceed further:

B) Qualifying the visitor

Ask:

Are you responsible for making purchases for your company? If not, do you recommend purchases?

If they are not the authorizer or recommender, you need to be polite but firm and thank them for their time. If they are a recommender or authorizer, then follow up with the next questions (either from you or from the product or service expert who is also in the booth):

What are your current needs and how are you meeting them?

How soon are you looking to make a decision?

What's your budget?

If you have gotten the information above, then make sure you get their contact information, either from a card swiper or their business card

C) Add value

This is a crucial part this is usually missed. Ask yourself, what is it that you want your prospect to remember about your product or service? Without the prospect buying anything from you, what value have you already added which will help him or her run their business better? Make sure that the prospect has a clear idea of how your product and service will help them before letting him/her leave the booth.

Lastly:

D) Ascertain a next step for the prospect. Either close them, or more likely ascertain the next steps (either a visit in their office, email or phone call) and thank them for their visit.

4) After the Event

Make sure you treat the leads you get like gold, and make sure you follow up on the leads promptly.

If you follow these steps, given a good attendance, you should get a good result with lots of leads and certainly sales!

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