

How to make the most of rebooking opportunities

One of the most confusing things to tradeshow managers have to deal with is what event organizers call the rebook or resign process, where you get the chance to sign up for the next show (whether it be the next year's show or next in a series, etc.). Since different organizers have different rules guiding their rebook processes, navigating rebook can be challenging for tradeshow managers.

Usually the rebook process happens in a sales area during the event where you can see floor plan with signed exhibitors and their booth selections. It's in the organizer's interest to make the rebook process as easy and beneficial to you since the organizer benefits by getting your commitment early and therefore have an idea of the amount of money they can spend on promoting next year's event (and growing it).

I hope therefore to take some of the mystery from the process and help guide you to take advantage of a process which can reap you great benefits, if you manage it properly.

When should you rebook for an event?

- When having a premium booth position is a must;
- If there are a lot of other exhibitors rebooking;
- If there are significant discounts or offers available for those who sign;
- If you have confidence that the event is a strategic option for your company into the future;
- When you want to get unique sponsorship opportunities that are limited to one (or few) vendor(s).

How do you wade through the information and make rebook work for you?

1) Get the rebook procedures in writing from the organizer.

It is key that you understand the procedures regarding rebook, especially if you are a new exhibitor to the event. Usually the organizer will determine a 'priority order, which is the order that determines in which order each exhibitor picks space (and sponsorships). This is usually guided by the total dollars spent with the show over the entirety of the show and/or the number of years an exhibitor has participated in the event. Since many tradeshow organizers have differing rules, make sure you know how your priority order number was determined. By spending more on the event you can usually climb the priority order 'food chain' so investing in a particular event over time may have significant benefits for you. The lower your number the higher in the order you are.

2) Pay attention to what the organizer tells you regarding rebook as you get close to the event.

There may be 'show specials' as an incentive to get you to sign up for the next event. Make sure you understand them clearly as well as the conditions for downsizing/canceling as necessary.

3) Do your homework on the next show before you get to this show. If you are a big sponsor, have a strategic meeting before the show with key tradeshow executives.

Make sure the organizer understands your strategic direction for the coming year(which you should be doing anyway), and if possible, meet with the key people at the event organizer well before the event so you can 'stage manage' the rebook process with the organizer. In certain circumstances they may allow you to make your selections before the event, so you can conduct your own business at the event uninterrupted by the rebook process.

4) At the show, re-confirm the time you need to rebook and show up on time.

Assuming that you weren't able to sign up before the event, make sure that if you are ready to sign during the rebook process and that you have approval to sign contracts or the decision maker is on hand at your designated time. Make sure you show up to the sales office on time, for if you miss your selection time, you've just watered down your priority number which you worked so hard to earn!

5) Ask if conditional contracts are possible

As you are signing the agreements, ask what the cancellation penalties are. Some organizers will offer you options where you can have a fixed period(up to a month but usually two weeks) where you can cancel the agreement without penalty. If you are unsure about the show, you can figure the ROI out after the show ends and confirm(or not)the contract later

6) Confirm the details a week after the event

Even if you have signed a non-conditional agreement, check in with your sales representative after the show to re-confirm your booth position, payment terms

and any promotional opportunities you may have contracted. Always good to make sure!

If you plan the rebook with the same rigor as you planned the show, there are many benefits. Make sure you know what they are and good luck!

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