

Two sample business articles that double as long blog posts. Article 1 pgs (1-4); Article 2 pgs (5-8).

14 Trade Show Marketing Ideas & Strategies



1. Make Your Trade Show Booth Inviting

Think of the places in your life that catch your attention and make you feel that you just can't pass them by. Now imagine hundreds of places close to each other all vying for your attention. Reduced to its basics, that's what a trade show is all about. That's why the most important thing you can do is get a custom booth artfully designed by experts in attracting attention in meaningful ways. The experts at Metro Exhibits design and build custom booths to your specifications. They're experts in what works. Remember, you're at the show to generate leads. If you don't capture attention, you won't capture leads.

2. Make Your Trade Show Booth Informative

Exhibiting at a trade show is a marketing activity. Every company that exhibits has an event marketing strategy. That marketing strategy includes a position statement and product or services

descriptions. Display your messages with clarity and prominence. Reinforce who you are. Make clear what new, enticing offering you've come to the trade show to announce. Make them feel they just can't pass by your booth without finding out more. Font size, color, signage dimensions, placement all come into play.

3. Calculate Trade Show ROI

Watch your expenses. Is it better to purchase or **rent a booth**? Is it sometimes better to do one or the other, depending on the distance of the trade show from your nearest office? What about storage options for your booth that can eliminate shipping costs? International exhibitors in trade shows in the U.S. can avoid customs and other costs by storing their booths inside the country. Be smart about travel expenses for your show staff. Keep the staff as lean as you can. Be sure to take advantage of room blocks set aside by the exhibit in a timely fashion. It's always best to book rooms early since they can always be canceled, and to book flights as early as it's known who will attend as flight costs can go up dramatically over time.

4. Location, Location, Location

Learn how the organization holding the trade show allots floor space to exhibitors. If you have exhibited before, lobby for a better position than the one you had last year. Make it part of your negotiation. Study the show agenda. If there are breakout sessions, find out when and where they will be on the show floor. Try to position your booth where attendees will congregate for refreshments or lunch. If you do not know the venue, ask to see the layout. Find out where the educational sessions will be held and try your best to position your booth in a location that attendees will need to pass repeatedly. Ask Metro Exhibits for help. There isn't a venue or a show where we have not done work, or do not know intimately. Every trade show has a landscape and you want to find yourself in the optimum location in that landscape.

5. Size Matters

It's important that your booth not be much smaller than those of your competitors. But size is certainly not the only thing that matters. In fact, a large vacuous booth that is not interesting or does not make the kind of statement you are trying to use to attract and retain customers will backfire. Evaluate your options and costs. Learn as much as you can about your competitors. Study the developing Exhibitor List. Ask for it if it isn't posted on the website. Decide what size you can afford and then consult experts in designing and building booths that make an interesting, meaningful statement.

6. Be Timely with All Your Materials

Don't miss deadlines. Nothing looks as bad as your company or product description on a loose sheet of paper slipped into the Exhibit Guide. It makes it seem as if your attendance at the show is an afterthought, or worse, that meeting deadlines is an issue at your company which may very likely surface when you deliver the product or service you are offering to customers. Store your descriptions in a place where you can go right to them. You want to know how your description appeared in last year's Guide, and make changes if changes apply. Preparing for a trade show

appearance requires project management. We can help. Ask about the Metro Exhibits Trade Show Checklist. We'll send it to you.

7. Ask for the Attendee List

You know the profile of your prospective customers. You should also know your existing customers. If an updated attendee list is not available on the Exhibition's website, ask for it. Know who is coming to the show. This is an occasion to reconnect with your existing customers. If there is an issue with any of the existing customers planning to be present, your staff at the booth should know about it. However large your company may be, don't make it seem so large that you don't pay attention to your customers. The prospects on the attendee list are the main reason you have invested in the trade show. You should know their names, what they look like, their positions at the company, how long they have been in those positions, the size and location of their companies, plus any other relevant details you can gather. From LinkedIn and company websites alone, there is just too much information easily accessible that you should not know as much as possible in advance about the prospects you hope to draw into your booth.

8. Send Personal Messages in Advance of the Show.

If the attendee list available to you does not include email addresses, do your best to find them out. There is no harm in guessing at the structure of an email address that does not seem available. It will only result in a bounce-back. Send out a meaningful, personal email saying something about what you will be showing and how much you are looking forward to a booth visit. The more your email message looks like a mass email sent at the last minute, the less effective it will be. Remember, every action you take is a marketing action that creates an impression. Every marketing action should be aimed at achieving your sales goal. This is the reason you have invested in the trade show.

9. Be an Active Listener on the Trade Show Floor

When a prospect enters the sphere of your booth, deliver your message for sure, but also listen actively to what the prospect says. Take notes on the back of the prospect's business card, or on an iPad after the conversation ends. Write down questions you were asked or trace where the conversation led, even in non-business directions. These details will be useful in your follow-up. In your email or telephone follow-up, you may have to remind the prospect that you met. It's easier to do that with specific details. Answering real questions is your first delivery on your company's offering. Make it work.

10. Get the Post-Show Attendee List

This list will include late sign-ups and walk-ins. Find out how long it will take to get this list. Don't wait for the list to do your follow-ups. You already have the last published attendee list before the show. Most of the names will be on that list. When you do get the post-show list you can always compare and do the same follow up to this smaller list of additions.

11. You Must Follow Up

The attendees at the show fall into two groups: those who stopped by your booth and those who did not stop by. Both groups include your existing clients and prospects. Usually, different people at the company are responsible for clients and prospects. Let's focus on the prospects. Send them personalized emails including details about your conversation. If you were asked a question, answer it. The goal here is to get an exchange going. Because emails can be sent out quicker than phone calls can be made, send emails first and follow up with phone calls. Rate your prospects from top to bottom. If you cannot get to all of them in a timely fashion, contact the most promising first. You should, however, get to them all, because when a lead turns into a sale is not always dependent on your offering. It often depends on the prospect's timing, which is not always apparent. Remember, the entire reason you have invested in the trade show is to generate leads. Eventually, someone will compare the cost of the show to how much business was generated. If you don't follow up effectively, you are throwing away your investment.

12. Learn from the Session Descriptions

Take back to your office more than one copy of the Exhibit Guide, and read through the session descriptions. Give additional copies of the Guide to other members of your company. Although this information is also probably listed online, the book itself is a good reminder to read about the sessions. If you were lucky enough to have a representative who gave a session, find out who attended and what questions were asked. Find out what companies were in the audience and match these companies to your prospect list. The sessions are a guide to what is considered important in your industry at the current time. If there are session topics about which your company is unaware, bring them to management's attention. Learn from them.

13. A Trade Show is Like an Open Book

Actually, it is more like a magazine or television show, in which the attendees are like readers or viewers, the exhibitors like advertisers, and the educational sessions like the editorial in the magazine or the content of the TV show. The attendees come for the content, and they come across the exhibitors on the way to that content. Your job is to lure them into your space with the excellence of your booth design, the intelligence and relevance of your messaging, the product demo or conversational exchange, or both, that you conduct.

14. The Importance of Leads

All the work you do to prepare for the show, and however well you perform at the show, can only be measured by the leads you generate and the disciplined way you follow up those leads. Contact us. Metro Exhibits will evaluate your trade show needs and make recommendations. We design, build, and print all signage for your trade show booth. We have purchase and rental options. We ship, store and install booths. We advise you on the best way to manage your trade show expenses. Our goal is to make your trade show experience a success.

13 Trade Show Best Practices and Booth Ideas

1. Write a Book

It doesn't have to be a long book. It's easier and less expensive than ever before to publish a book. Whatever your field and whatever you are exhibiting, it helps establish your authority if you give away even a slim book at your booth written by you or for you about what you are promoting.

2. Put Something in the Show Packet That Builds Traffic

Take advantage of any opportunities your exhibit contract may afford to let you put an item in the show registration packet. Make it an item that will draw traffic to the booth. For example, a card that will go into a drawing with a space for the entrant's contact information. The more valuable and meaningful the item, the greater the draw.

3. Display Creative, Durable Giveaways

It's all about attracting attention and then rewarding it. Everything you display says something about you. If your giveaways look as generic, then you will create a generic impression. The best giveaway is something creative, useful and durable. Creative means something interesting enough that people who see others holding it will come looking for it. Durable means something that people will value and use, so that your branding will continue to deliver your message into the future.

4. Go Back to Basics

Never forget that your appearance at a trade show is a marketing activity and that all marketing activities require a strategy. The first question your strategy needs to answer is all about AUDIENCE. Who are you there to impress? What do you want them to know about you? Once they know, what action do you want them to take?

5. Remember First Impressions Last

It may sound dramatic, but your goal at a trade show is to stop people in their tracks. There you are in a packed room with prospects and competitors. The prospects are walking down the aisles as if they were sidewalks in a cityscape of booths and success means stopping as much traffic as possible at your booth. To do that, you need a well-designed, attractive booth with positive, appealing messaging and an attentive staff ready to engage.

6. Show Them Who You Are

It's no accident that we call it a Trade "Show." Everyone in your trade is there to show something. The most important thing you for you to show is who you are. Whether you are new to the show or a returning exhibitor, you can't assume that attendees know you. Since it only takes a moment to walk by, the look and feel of your booth must do the quick job of introducing you. That's why design and signage are so important.

7. Show Them Who They Can Be

All of marketing and advertising is about showing potential customers that you have something to offer that will help them realize their potential -- professionally, personally, or both. The messaging on your booth and the attitude of confidence you project should draw people in and reward them for the attention they give you. Projecting confidence does not mean telling them how great you are. Rather it means telling them how great they can become through an alliance with you, whether that means buying your product, enlisting your service, or just learning what you can tell them. All messages are not verbal. The importance of designing your booth in such a way that it attracts and rewards attention is key.

8. Show Them Something Unexpected.

It's very likely that the people in the aisles you are trying to attract have been to hundreds of shows like the one where you are exhibiting. They have very likely been to this exact show in past years. They know what to expect, so give them something unexpected. Remember, you are competing with a floor full of exhibits including those of your competitors. Your goal is to capture attention and turn it into a genuine lead with potential to justify the expense your company has incurred. So do something different. If you want advice from the experts at Metro Exhibits who have been creating booths for years, contact us. We can guarantee that any suggestion we make will be substantial. Gimmicks only get you so far, but true creativity carries the day.

9. Show Them Something Memorable.

The interactions that take place at a trade show are usually fleeting. Your job is to make them the beginning of a relationship. Most of the important work happens after the show, in the follow-up. If the contact you call a few days or even a week later does not remember you, or something about your booth, or something about the collateral you handed out, or the conversation you had, then the follow-up becomes hard work. It often won't succeed. Take notes about specifics on the back of business cards or on an iPad. Record personal details. Give compliments. Often, the show badge will give you a location. If it's a place you've been or know something about, make an observation that you can refer to later. All these details are tools you can use to make yourself memorable and ease the challenging job of follow-up. Sometimes the memorable item can be a design feature of your booth. Use anything that works so you can call up the experience in your later conversation.

10. Show Them That You Care.

Choose your booth personnel carefully. Everyone at your company may be an admirable, hard worker, but people have different personalities. Try to staff your booth with outgoing, caring people who are knowledgeable, interesting, well-roomed conversationalists who make a good impression. Even more important, make sure your booth staff wants to be there. It's easy to sense when someone projects boredom, or reluctance to be in a trade show booth in the middle of the day. People will shy away when booth personnel seem to be just waiting out their time. Be mindful that there is something called trade show fatigue which can get to anyone, so if you have enough staff rotate through the day so people see a fresh face and a friendly attitude.

11. Walk the Floor.

Give your booth personnel the time to know who else is at the exhibition and what they are showing. Have everyone study the show directory. This research provides background for the conversations that will take place in your booth. You need to know where you stand, especially in regard to your competitors. You don't want to know what the people you are trying to impress have just seen before coming to you. To succeed, you must prepare.

12. Don't Forget Why You Are There.

You are there to generate leads with sales potential. Take the entire cost of the show – the space, the booth, the shipping, the travel, the hotel, the meals, the sponsorship, the missed days of work in the office – and divide it by the number of true leads that you generate and you will understand the cost/value proposition. Metro Exhibits has been helping clients with this

calculation for years. On the front-end we help answer the rent/buy question when it comes to booths, we know the value of a successful booth design, because we design, build, store and ship we know how to achieve efficiencies on the front end. Because we know what works in terms of messaging, look and feel, and best practices, we know how to make the investment work on the back-end. Contact us for the Metro Exhibits Trade Show Checklist.

13. Show Them How to Get the Rest of the Story.

Depending on the price tag on your product or service, a sale may not happen in the weeks or even months that follow your trade show interaction. This does not mean the lead is without potential. Companies buy on their own schedule. Your job is to generate enough leads that you have multiple conversations going, and that you turn those conversations into relationships so that when the time comes you are the first person to get the call. To do that, you must keep telling your story, and you have to make yourself easy to find when the time is right. Think of yourself as a story-teller on a stage. Engage your audience. It just so happens that you are engaging your audience members one at a time. Keep them interested. It all starts with that first conversation in your trade show booth which you've take care to make appealing and memorable.