



Tradeshow Follow-Up

Every Industry has its own unique tag line that separates their success from others. In Hollywood they say "Timing, it's all about timing". In real-estate it is... "Location, it's all about location: Location, Location, and Location!"

In the tradeshow business it's both, *Location and Timing*. Every aspect of exhibiting, all the way from your show selection, to show prep, then ending with your post show meeting is *ALL* about location and timing.

Location is hard to control. It can however be maximized even when you have no control over where the exhibit hall places you. However, timing is all in your control, so let's start there.

Tradeshow planning and preparation can be compared to planning that big Holiday Feast. You have visions of everyone gathered around you. All are in happy spirits. The meal came off just perfect. All had a good time, and they all went home satisfied for having been there. Picture- perfect, right?

I want to live in that world... Don't you? You worked your hind end off for weeks making "to do" and task lists. This included all that needed to be bought, all that needed to be assembled, all the invitations that needed to be mailed out. Then with encouragement in the days prior to the event, you have now arrived to the pre event days where you will actually start setting up the house. You will clean, dust, cook, decorate and wear yourself out just to make sure the big day rolls on perfectly. Just how you dreamed it would turn out months before. You are now worn to the core. Yet, somehow the show must go on. So you wake up early on the day of the festivities. Recheck your list and make sure you have it all, and then you start putting together the last tidbits that could only be done on that day.

Just like you had envisioned, the day was a success. Everyone has left now, and you think you have time to just sit on the couch and crash. You owe yourself at least that. So you plop on down and look around with a smile on your face remembering how great the day was. As you slowly gaze around, you now see the aftermath of the great event. Dishes need to be cleaned, furniture needs to be cleaned off and put away. The Silverware needs to go back until the next Holiday event, and with a big sigh you get up and get right back to work.

Until my wife and I became the host's of the festivities, we had no idea of all that goes into making it all picture-perfect in the end.

Holiday event or tradeshow, is there a difference? Well maybe in the good tidings and the warmth of the family connections, yes I'll give you that. But in the way it is envisioned from the beginning, planned, detailed and followed through it is all very close to the same.

Let's start with the vision you had in the beginning....

Make sure that all of your planning, your entire note taking; all of your thoughts stay in one location. Keep just one journal, log, file, etc... For each show.

Connecting with your client base is another big key. Email blasts, post card invitations, personal calls are all great ways to get those you really want to see out to the booth. Take advantage of every tool the show offers for free advertising for your booth. Be E-connected savvy. Post your shows on your web page. Follow the shows on Twitter and Facebook, and post updates regularly so your followers keep you at the top of their day. Offer E savvy spiffs. Items, that if they encourage them to follow you, and by doing so, if they bring the daily password to the booth that day, they receive a spiff or product piece.

Don't look for your client to just come to your booth once. What are you doing to keep them coming back for the three days they are there?

Creativity before the show is as important as it is to bring customers to the booth at the show. So don't be selective when it comes to getting your name and booth number in front of potential leads before the show.

It always amazes me the staffing that some companies send to a tradeshow. Be mindful that you have just a few minutes to capture leads and gain interest on the show floor. Even though you might be in a very engineer or designer oriented field, and need that kind of talent on the floor to talk with co-equals who just want to talk the deep part of the design. Most are there to see as much as they can as fast as they can. It never hurts to reward staff within the company who has the gift and knowledge of all aspects of your industry. By sending them to the show to help on the show floor They can also relay that information quickly, while listening and retrieving information for your potential client.

Based on the size of your booth, plan on one member of your team simply being the runner of leads, keeping give-a-way bins full and so on. Taking time to organize leads on the floor and other jobs like this, draws valuable time away from closing sales and gathering information.

Pre show meetings are essential. Make sure that the entire team provides input as to what needs to be presented on the floor. What products are essential to show? What promotions are you offering? What spiffs are you presenting if any, and does everyone get one? My motto at shows is "less is more".

Don't clutter up the booth with too many people, too much exhibit, too many graphics, or too many give-a-ways. Sure it's great to have a great presence on the floor, yet sometimes I see more employee's there than buyers. Or everyone comes in for the spiff, and not for the business.

So in your pre-show meetings hammer this entire business out before you open your doors to the family. Then at the end of each day recap those items and see what is working now that you are actually there. The leads gathered are critical. It is all about timing. Organize them that night; don't just throw them in the daily show box to take home. You have invested thousands of dollars into a successful show. You are expected to produce revenue, and be accountable for those dollars invested up front for a good showing. You can't tell me that every one of us doesn't have a financial department cringing at the thought of where money went towards a tradeshow? Keep your "R &R" at the top of your game.

Now let's cover the post show activities.. Remember it is all about timing. Prior to the show, you did all you could to get the word out. You started early and made your to do list, and activity flow charts. Now the big day has come and gone. You are just about to plop down on that big old couch and take that breather you feel you are in so much need of. Not yet...

As soon as you get back gather the group around you and reevaluate the success of the show. Here are a few questions to cover; starting off in the order they occurred throughout the process.

- How did the preshow planning go with everyone?
- Did every department keep up with their deadlines?
- Were the deadlines realistic, or do we need to start earlier for the next show?
- Was there anything left out of the planning process that was critical for the next show?
- Did the exhibit arrive on time?
- Was the labor crew efficient?
- Do we need more of our team there to see it all comes off as planned at set up?
- Did the exhibit work?
- Did the lead retrieval process work?
- Did we staff the booth properly?
- Did the literature work?
- Was the quantity of literature appropriate for the attendee's and the right quantity?
- Did we draw them in or were they drawn in?
- Did our give a way items work?
- When did we notice down times and on what days?
- Overall, what worked well at the show?
- What didn't work?
- Was the booth in the right location? How do we improve for next year?
- Was this the right show for our market?
- What was our competition doing that we weren't?
- What did we do on the floor that was better than our competition?
- Did we meet those who could close the deal, or just the middleman?
- Did the show decorator seem to care about my exhibit enough to help me be successful?
- Is it worth attending next year?
- Is the process to follow up with the leads the best we can do?
- Has the assignment been given for each department to follow up with their leads?
- Can we challenge ourselves *now* to improve with thoughts for next year?