

27 LOW OR NO-COST WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR TRADESHOW

By Susan Friedmann,
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There are lots of ways to improve your team's performance at tradeshow. From snazzy new displays to intensive training to rewards and incentives for top producers, it's difficult to count the myriad ways. What's not difficult is to realize that some of these improvement methods come with hefty price tags.

Don't despair. There are many ways to pump up performance without breaking the bank. In fact, I've collected 27 low or no cost ways to improve your next tradeshow:

1. Research the show BEFORE you commit: Does it attract a large number of people from your target audience?
2. Give yourself enough time: Planning and preparation for a major show can take 12-18 months.
3. Involve top management in the planning process. You'll get better results from your team if they know upper management is supporting their efforts.
4. Send e-mail reminders to loyal customers and strong prospects before the show, urging them to stop by your booth.
5. Define goals and objectives for show participation.
6. Share these goals and objectives with your booth staff. They can't achieve your goals and objectives if they don't know what they are.
7. Plan for security as needed: You don't want expensive prototypes or demo models 'walking away'.
8. Brief your team on common tradeshow espionage practices and how to defend against them.
9. Send enough people to ensure adequate booth coverage throughout the show.
10. Give each booth staffer a specific role, with job expectations clearly spelled out.
11. Stress the value of friendly greetings, polite manners, and appropriate body language.
12. Take time to familiarize your team with the lead collection technology you'll be using before the show.
13. Make sure at least some of the people going to the show are prepared to answer technical questions.

14. Send friendly, personable people with a genuine enthusiasm for your company, its products, and its services. These may not be your most senior people: Make your choices based effectiveness, not seniority.
15. Check in with your team throughout the show to assess performance, reward positive behaviors, and stop negative trends before they get out of hand.
16. Establish a dress code for your staffers: They'll look more professional and act as better ambassadors for your company.
17. Don't forget the shoes, hair, and accessories: People notice the details. Manicures are crucial, as your team will be shaking hands hundreds, perhaps thousands, of times during the show.
18. Two words: Breath Mints.
19. Practice asking qualifying questions with your booth staffers.
20. Product demonstrations are a great way to draw a crowd: Make sure your team knows how to give an effective, engaging presentation by having them practice before the show.
21. If you are sponsoring entertainment, a speaker, or other event, then make sure your team knows what to do during this time. From working the crowd to collecting leads, there's plenty they should be doing to promote your company's name and image.
22. Designate a 'go-to' person to act as a liaison with show management. The better your relationship with management is, the better your show experience will be.
23. That exhibitor's service manual the show organizers sent you when you registered? Read it: It's chock full of valuable information to help ensure a stress-free show.
24. Copy appropriate pages from the exhibitor's service manual and pass them along to the relevant staffers: It doesn't help you to know when everything has to be broken down and off the show floor if you're not the person doing that work.
25. Order services ahead of time. Making deadlines = big savings.
26. Establish a follow up protocol for hot leads, promising prospects, and likely customers. Use this protocol to turn leads into sales.
27. Say, "Thank You" to attendees for stopping by, to anyone who fills out survey information, or participates in a demonstration, during your follow up calls.

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