

Quick Sales Tips--Trade Show Success

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So how is your trade show ROI? Most salespeople I know tend to whine when they are asked to attend a show. They will make up excuses, cajole colleagues to replace them, and even tell the boss that the "biggest deal of my life is about to close", and how this trade show at the WORST time is going to blow the deal!

The boss says, "Tough luck, Dude. You're going." To make the most of it, you are planning on meeting up with your drinking buddies, scouting out your competitor's booths, and plotting your kids/nieces/godchildren trinket run.

When was the last time you attended an important trade show? Did you notice anything unusual while walking around? If you saw sales reps schmoozing with each other, booth staff sitting down, reading the paper, and/or company representatives checking their email all while in the booths, you observed "**Booth Mis-Behavior**". No wonder everyone complains that there's no business at the show!

If you know how much it costs your company to exhibit, ship equipment, literature, and samples, pay for your expensive hotel room, and send out pre-show marketing materials to customers, than you are ahead of the game. Now, how are you going to see that your time and money are worth attending the show?

Clients ask us all the time, "How do we work a trade show to maximize our time? We know how to sell, but trade shows are different. Everyone is in a hurry. Our customers have short attention spans. And why does everyone stand so darn close to me (especially after eating Chinese food)?"

To answer these questions, and more, we created a program called, "**Be an Exhibitionist—Increasing Your Show ROI**" and here are some of the top hints to get you going:

1. Use The **S-M-I-L-E** Approach.

S = stand off to one side--avoid blocking your booth so guests can see what you are offering and can enter without feeling like the Gestapo is guarding the booth. Unless you're getting paid as a booth-bouncer, step aside.

M = Make eye contact with people. While you've met their eyes, go ahead and smile. That creates a welcome feel to encourage guests to enter your space.

I = Interest your customer by asking quality, open-ended questions. My favorite is, "So,

what brought you to the show?" This is your clearest qualifier to find out if you have a browser, a decision-maker, or a spouse who is just "killing" time.

L = Lead your guest to what products or services you have that will suit their needs based on your quality questioning. This is the best way to garner interest. And don't do all the talking; no one enjoys hearing a monologue (unless of course, you're Jay Leno.)

E = Encourage feedback. What does your guest think of your solution? Should someone in your company set up an appointment or an on-site demo? When? If this isn't the decision-maker, find out who is, write it down, and pass it on or follow-up appropriately.

2. Invest your time wisely. Instead of planning dinner with your colleagues from across the country, plan on spending time with customers. A trade show is the perfect opportunity to connect with that hard-to-reach prospect, or the customer who is too busy to return your calls. This is what your entertainment budget is designed for!

3. To consider why customers are in such a hurry, consider who is in charge of the trade show and their main purpose. If an association is sponsoring the show, they are interested in sales. No, not your sales, theirs! They want to sell booth space, drayage, and anything else to get their return on their investment. If you don't get one quality lead from the show, it's not their problem. Therefore, the time allotted for expo time is very, very limited. There may be a thousand booths at this show and you have attendees with only 20 minutes to space between lunch and a session. That means your biggest competition is TIME. Yep, that's why everyone is in a rush.

Your job is to grab someone's attention quickly, generate interest, and get the lead. Period. Closing sales in your booth are not all that likely, unless you are selling consumables at a low price. Make sure you have a follow-up plan.

4. Standing too close? This is a trade show annoyance, but necessary. You see, those booths are usually too small. Even if you have a spacious area in which to move, for some reason, people love to stand close to you in the show booths. To get someone to back off a bit, try stepping forward, just slightly. This usually encourages people to move back and not move closer to you. If you step backwards, the natural tendency is for the guests to follow you, bringing them even closer.

Oh and about the Chinese food for lunch...have plenty of Altoids in your pocket to share!

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Renee Walkup, President of SalesPEAK, Inc., believes selling should be fun. Since 1996, the SalesPEAK team has worked with dozens of companies on their sales, presentations, and performance; maximizing profitability in the paper industry and many others. In addition to on-site customized sales programs, SalesPEAK provides telephone-coaching sessions, one-on-one skill training, and videos.

She is a Sales Consultant, Keynote Speaker and Author of "Selling to Anyone Over the Phone" with over 11,000 copies sold.

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