

A network diagram with white lines and dots on a dark red background, forming a complex web of connections.

*Skyline*<sup>®</sup>

# BOOTH STAFFING TIPS & TOOLS FOR THE DIGITAL ERA

REFERENCE GUIDE AND WORKSHEETS

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# Introduction

Trade shows have been a consistent resource for generating leads and connecting with customers for many years. It's one of the only ways to gain face-to-face access in one convenient location to a large proportion of your target clients.

While some things will likely be the same regarding trade shows – the desire to prove a return on investment (ROI) and to make new business connections – there are many things that have evolved over the years that have changed the way people interact on the trade show floor.

This reference guide will provide insight into the changes in trade show booth staffing, what's causing the shift, and how to best prepare your team. Your staffers – by engaging, qualifying and capturing potential customers – represent your best opportunity for success on the trade show floor.



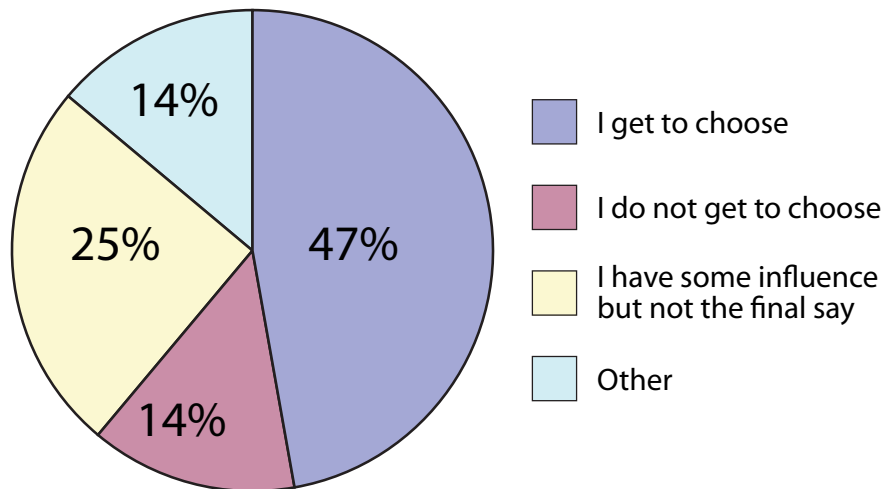


# SURVEY SUMMARY

We surveyed veteran trade show managers – 50% of them having over 10 years experience – to better understand the role of the booth staffer, how training impacts their performance at the show, and how technology has effected trade show exhibiting. Here's what we found.

## Almost half of respondents have control over the booth staff selection

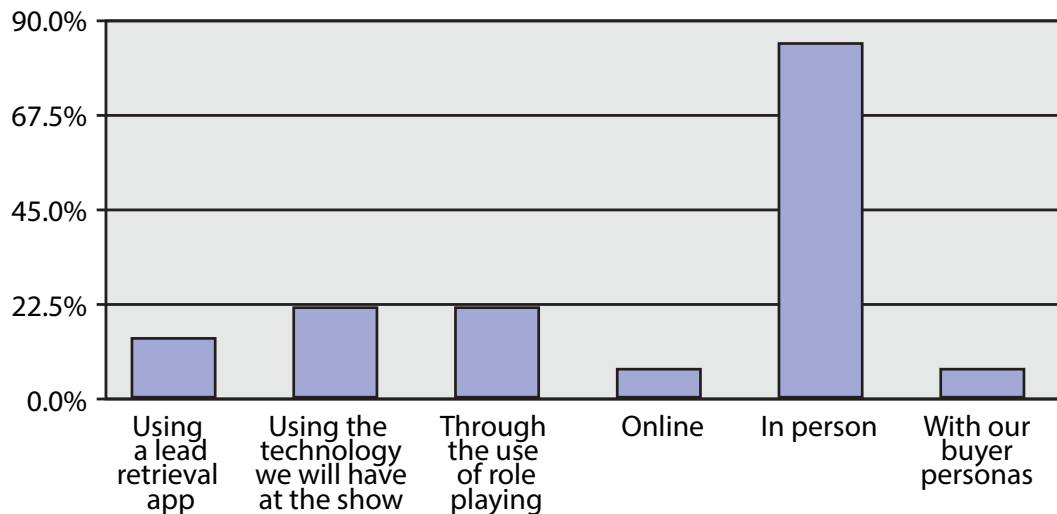
Do you get to choose your booth staffers or are they chosen for you?



**47% of our trade show manager respondents declared that they get to choose the staffers they bring to the show, while 25% have the chance to influence the decision, while the remainder 28% have no influence.**

If you have the luxury of choosing who you bring to the show to represent your company, you'll want to choose someone who has a mix of product knowledge, savvy communication skills, and is motivated to work the show. We'll get into the specifics of what makes a great booth staffer in further sections of this resource.

### A majority of booth staffers are trained in-person prior to the show



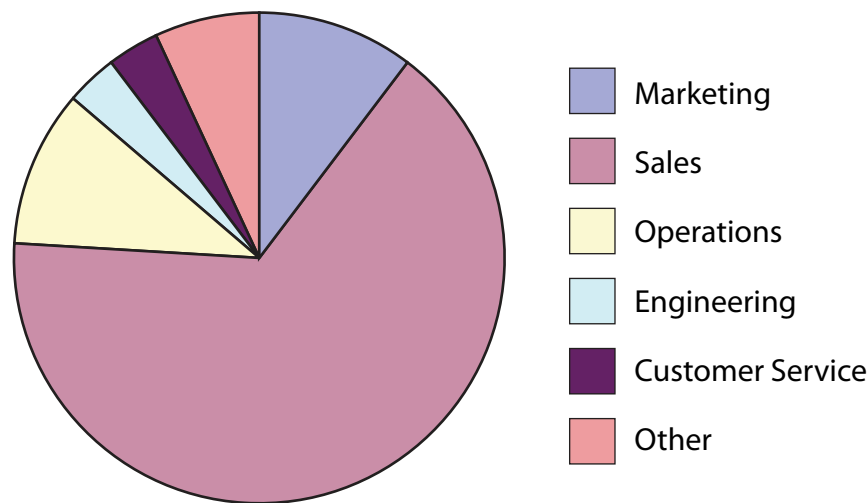
**A whopping 75% of respondents trained their staffers prior to the show, however each company may have a different definition of what staffer training is.**

Having a specific understanding of the target market and products could be enough for a booth staffer to be considered prepared in some companies. We recommend further in-depth training and will give you examples throughout this resource.

*One survey respondent stated: "Most know the target market, have prior show experience, product knowledge etc. We do provide tips and suggestions for the specific show."*

There is so much to understand beyond the product or company message at a trade show. Understanding how to use the lead retrieval app or what constitutes a qualified lead are topics that could be overlooked when training, but are imperative to the success of your follow up.

Our survey respondents select staffers that primarily work within the Sales department (65%) followed closely by Marketing and Operations.



Strong communication skills will always be a staple when searching for potential booth staffers, with 96% of respondents citing that as the most important skill a staffer needs today to be successful on the trade show floor.

Answer Options	Response Percent
Outgoing personality	51.7%
Tech Savvy	6.9%
Strong people & communication skills	96.6%
Product knowledge	82.8%
Trade show knowledge	13.8%
Other (please specify)	3.4%



## Technology Considerations

Along with a staffer that is proficient at engaging show attendees, an effective lead retrieval system is important for your success. A surprising 40% of respondents still rely on paper lead cards to track their conversations on the show floor, while 35% of respondents relied on a tablet or laptop to track leads. We have found in other informal surveys that the number of exhibitors using business cards or paper leads is even higher in some industries and in smaller companies.



The benefit of using technology to capture your conversations on the show floor is that you can track your contact with a prospect from the initial conversation and, if you tie the data to your CRM (Customer Relationship Management Software), you can track that lead all the way through to a sale.



This is an essential part of tracking your trade show ROI. Unfortunately, 82% of survey respondents admitted their lead retrieval system was not connected to a CRM like Salesforce, Hubspot or Microsoft Dynamics that would allow them to track sales associated with each lead captured.



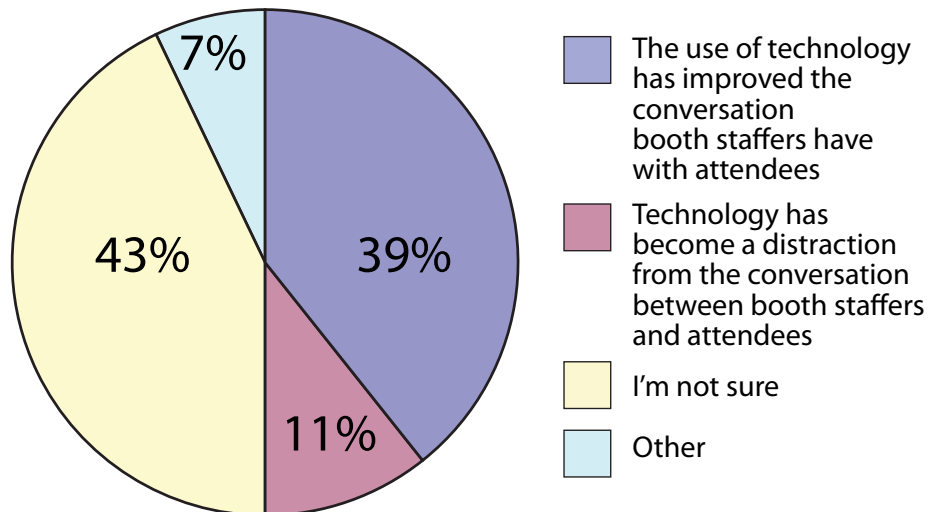
**Since 82% of respondents don't have a lead retrieval system that's connected to a sales tracking software, it is not surprising that 80% of respondents also do not have a dedicated follow-up process for tracking their trade show leads.**

That means 80% of respondents do not have an agreed-upon process by which to contact customers (that they invested a lot of money to talk with at the trade show) making it even harder to prove an ROI to leadership when the bills are paid at the end of the show.

Technology can improve many inefficiencies in the business world and having an automated process to track customers through the sales funnel can help trade show managers track the amount of sales generated from contacts met at the show.

*One respondent said, "Technology allows for easier registration, reducing the need for traditional hostesses or hosts that only performed registration."*

### How Do You Feel Technology Has Impacted Staffing in the Past 5 Years?



39% of our respondents felt that the use of technology has improved the conversation booth staffers have with attendees, while 10% feel that technology has become a distraction from the conversation between booth staffers and attendees.

Before we dive into training resources to better prepare your booth staffers, let's take a look at what our survey respondents claimed were the hardest things about booth staffing and the changes they've seen through the years on the trade show floor.:

## What are the hardest things about booth staffing?

"Having the right number of people and the right mix of knowledge."

"The tendency to neglect registration during the early encounter."

"Training staff...to walk up and talk to people that really aren't ready to stop at the booth."

"Making sure everyone is doing their assigned role."

## How do you think booth staffing and trade shows have changed over the years?

"Traffic is much slower, so less people are needed."

"Not that much. We need to have knowledgeable personnel and attendees need either to be interested or induced to see how our subject fits into their needs and that we know about that which we are presenting."

"We now are much more focused than we used to be."

"Fewer people are attending."

"More sophisticated about tracking ROI."

"Fewer attendees at trade shows, just busy buyers.  
Less orders written during the show.  
Staffers are employees of the manufacturer."



# BOOTH STAFFING ARTICLES

The success of most trade shows and events relies heavily on the effectiveness of the staffers and the tools they use at the show. Can they engage? Can they qualify? Can they appropriately represent their company? In the next section we provide articles to help you gain the knowledge you need to prepare staffers and give them the tools they need to improve your results.



# Booth Staffing Tips for the Digital Era

Sofia Troutman, Skyline Exhibits

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**Staffing for trade shows and events has changed.** Before “Big Data” and the proliferation of electronic marketing, it was sales people who reigned supreme at the show. Their personality and ability to connect with people were key tools for getting more people into the booth. Crowd gatherers were big too as it was all about getting people who you did not know to come into the booth and learn all about your company. While salespeople can still be great staffers and people skills are always great, the landscape of trade shows has changed and with that the type of skills needed to staff the booth.

## What They Need to Know

**Why are you there?** Are you looking to gain new clients or nurture existing ones? Are you planning to educate people on an existing product or launch a new one? What are your goals for the show and how do they fit into your overall marketing and company goal? It is also helpful to give staffers specific goals they have control over. An example may be to ensure they find out from the client if they are aware of the new product, if they think it will meet the need, and what steps the company should take to get that client’s business. It may also be helpful to them to know approximately how many leads they are expected to take throughout the show and each day of the show.

**It’s not just about leads, it’s about relationships.** There are other ways your company can get someone’s name or email address. However, this is the time to start a real relationship with a qualified prospect by listening and making them feel welcome.

**Technology should help not hinder.** If the client is there and wants you to talk or listen, don't force a video or demo on them just because you think it is cool.

**Less about you and more about them.** This includes pitching your products. Find out about their needs, their interests, and their experience with your company or their current vendor.

**Fully control the customer experience.** From the trash in the booth to the time you take to ask how their day is going. The trade show is a unique opportunity to truly control their whole environment. Take advantage of it. They need to create an experience that goes beyond the booth.

**How to capture information.** Capturing information from clients via quotes, photos or videos is part of the value of the show. This information can later be repurposed as marketing content that will extend the value of the event not only from a marketing standpoint, but also potentially to benefit your product/service improvement and customer service initiatives.

The landscape of trade shows has changed and with that the type of skills needed to staff the booth.





**In contrast to your technical booth staffers, it is important to have a good balance of personalities to engage with your attendees.**

**Any products or services that you are featuring at the show.** If they need training they should get it well before the show. As products become more complex, hands-on time is even more valuable. Staff will be expected to know more than just the basics.

**How to demo.** Staffers should be comfortable doing a live demo of your products or service (as relevant) or, at the very least, access a video of one. If they can't do this well the effectiveness of your live event will suffer and you will miss opportunities to build credibility with new and existing clients.

## Who They Should Be

**Good listeners.** Attendees are not looking for someone to spew out everything already on your website or marketing materials. They can get that by doing a Google search. They need someone to truly listen to their questions, needs, and tailor the message to them. In fact, the attendee may have already searched your company, and will come to your booth staffers with more knowledgeable questions. The buyer is a lot more informed than they once were, prepare for questions deeper than the surface of your company or products.

In contrast to your technical booth staffers, it is important to have a good balance of personalities to engage with your attendees. A Skyline booth staff veteran has this key take away from her experience.

*"Yes, it was important to have very knowledgeable people in the booth but I would always balance those people with the "Engagers". For me, it almost mattered more that people in the booth were people. They were engaging and outgoing and, frankly, fun (without being pushy)." – AA*

No one enjoys a pushy booth staffer!

## Tech Savvy

No, they don't need to know how to code, but... between lead gathering apps, monitors and possibly digital signage, there are plenty of opportunities for both leveraging technologies for the benefit of attendees and for tech glitches. You need someone who will not be afraid to troubleshoot as needed, will be comfortable learning and using apps as needed and can easily use technology to ensure the exhibit is functioning and exhibitors get an optimum experience. Something as simple as googling an answer or pulling up a key video on YouTube should be a natural thing for your staffers. Their time and your time with them are precious.

No one knows every single answer to every question they get. However, there are some people who take ownership of the question and ensure they can find the answer and then follow up with the client as soon as possible. Your staffers should be able to access answers with the client at the show if at all possible, during the show and send the response via email or phone or immediately after the show (within days at the latest).

**You need someone who can easily use technology to ensure the exhibit is functioning and exhibitors get an optimum experience.**





You get seconds or minutes to make a good impression in person with a current or potential client.

**Customer centric.** If they are not the type of person who will go the extra mile to help a client they are not the right person to staff the booth – emotional intelligence is key. You get seconds or minutes to make a good impression in person with a current or potential client. Many other companies are there competing for that time. Your staffers need to be eager to make the most of every client experience. One way to bring this home is to talk about the potential lifetime value of each prospective client that walks into your booth.

Change has always been inevitable at any live event and trade shows are no exception. This is not new, but it has become even more prevalent and expected. Technology is a big help, but will increase the uncertainty of whether or not things will work as planned. Your staff needs to be able to adjust course as needed and do it with a smile.

One of Skyline's veteran booth staffers had this to say about the increased use of technology on the trade show floor:

*"What I appreciate about where technology is now is it allows the booth staffer to come alongside the attendee and join their self-guided experience. This is achieved through the use of touch screens and apps for iPad®. It creates a feel of teamwork and co-discovery. As a staffer, I became less of a presenter and more of a companion." – RM*

Working as a team, instead of creating an "us versus them" mentality makes the attendee feel welcomed. This is an example of technology enhancing the face-to-face experience, rather than detracting from it.



## What They Should Wear

**Ensure they are easily identifiable.** You don't want attendees wondering who is staffing the booth and who is a client, as time is precious.

Ensure that they are comfortable yet professional unless it fits well with your theme and branding. Comfortable shoes are a must. Their feet will hurt regardless, but they will hurt more if they are wearing the wrong shoes, which is likely to make them tired and irritated. No one wants to interact with someone who appears to be in pain. Besides, dress codes are much more relaxed in most industries nowadays and good quality shoes can look stylish.

Gone are the days that the uniform at trade shows was branded cheap looking polo shirts. You can be brand appropriate without necessarily wearing a uniform.

Make sure  
staffers have  
easy electronic  
access to key  
product/service  
information.

**Brand and theme appropriate.** Gone are the days that the uniform at trade shows was branded cheap-looking polo shirts. You can be brand-appropriate without necessarily wearing a uniform. This is more the case if you have a larger exhibit but try to think of alternate ways you can make your staffers easy to identify without making them look like they are ready for their hourly shift at a local burger joint. You can have branded name tags, accessories, all wear the same color shirts (not necessarily the same style). You want your staffers to feel comfortable. For example, if a lady has to wear a standard men's shirt that reaches down to her knees, she is not going to feel her best.

## What They Should Have

**Smartphone, tablet or touchscreen.** Make sure staffers have easy electronic access to key product/service information so if they are asked a question they don't know the answer to, they can easily check it on the spot and get back to the client.

**Show and venue information.** They should have this well before the show so they can make their travel arrangements and clear their calendars well before the show

**Backup hard copies.** Paper product/service cheat sheets should be available well before the show so they can review them on the plane and at the hotel before the show. Also, lead card backups are always a good idea in case your Wi-Fi sputters or you lose access to your lead gathering application.

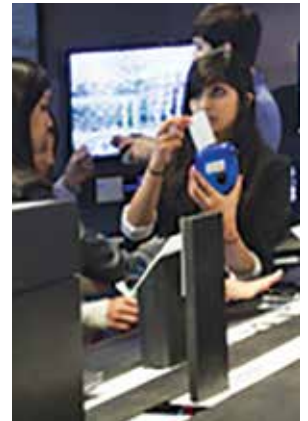
## Bonus Points

If you have a staffer that can also be a presenter of relevant industry data, your company will gain added credibility and real face time with potential clients. Those clients are then more likely to come back to visit your company's booth.

If staffers are active on social media they will be able to help promote your presence before, during and after the show and they are more likely to be recognized as someone potential clients are already familiar with and trust.

*These are a few of the things you should keep in mind as you prepare to choose and prepare your staff for your next show.*

**If staffers are active on social media they will be able to help promote your presence before, during and after the show.**





# Get Better Trade Show Results by Leaving Your Brochures at Home

Judy Fairbanks, Skyline New York

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Companies spend significant manpower and budget producing hard copy materials they bring to trade shows, hoping that everyone who picks up a flyer or brochure will read it carefully. The reality is that most attendees that receive materials on-site will end up tossing them. This is an unfortunate result and a wasteful practice.

## Make Your Collateral Work Harder

So how do you ensure your marketing materials are actually read? In most cases, it's wiser to send materials after the crowds have dispersed. It's natural to want to give everything you have to anyone who visits your trade show display, but you'll get better results by placing a well-timed email after your prospect has had time to catch their breath, delete unwanted messages and shift back into gear. Why?

## People Are More Likely to Read the Literature When They're at Their Desk

These days, snail mail stands out. At their desks, people have more time to review it in a leisurely fashion. Most people attending trade shows are rushing around the whole weekend trying to see as many people as possible and they just don't have time to read through everything.

## Get Into the Right Hands

It's more likely your literature will find its way into the appropriate hands if you mail or email it. If you send it via email or mail, recipients will most likely forward it on to others who might be interested or who are in charge of procuring the products or services you offer. They're also more likely to open a file based on your literature for future reference.

## Don't Let Your Trade Show Message Get Lost in the Crowd

Your literature won't get lost in the shuffle. At trade shows, visitors have tons of literature shoved into their hands by dozens of companies. Do you really want to be just one more flyer or brochure in a stack that's overwhelming? Mailing or emailing materials a week after the trade show means you'll stand out. Your material won't be just one brochure among many. Waiting a week also sets your material apart and readers will have more time to review your materials and digest the information.

## Repetition Improves Recall

Scientific studies have proven that repetition improves recall. Potential customers who visit your trade show booth may or may not remember your company name after the event is over, but the chances they will recall who you are and what you have to offer increases dramatically if they visit your booth one week and receive company literature the next week. Jogging their memory with a short, personal note included with your literature will also make readers feel appreciated. Everyone likes to be remembered.

**It's more likely  
your literature will  
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or email it.**





## When Less is More

Your trade show area will look cleaner, neater, and more professional if you don't have stacks of material lying all over the place. Having the right literature is great, but if you have stacks of paper sliding over or a messy array of literature, it can confuse visitors or simply turn them off. In many cases, a "less is more" approach is best.

## Valid Contact Information

This is the best reason of all; mailing your literature gives you the ideal opportunity to get valid contact information from everyone who visits your booth. Simply ask for each person's name, address and email so that you can send them your literature and any additional information they request. You'll get far more leads if you have something to offer after the trade show is over.

Mailing or emailing your company literature a week after the convention or show is over can become one of the best marketing decisions you'll make this year. Avoid collateral damage – and leave your brochures at home.

**Mailing your literature gives you the ideal opportunity to get valid contact information from everyone who visits your booth.**

# 3 Best Conversation Starters to Get Attendees Talking In Your Trade Show Display

Scott Price, Skyline New Jersey

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The hardest part of exhibiting with trade show displays is getting people to come into your booth. No matter how great your product is; if no one sees it all of your efforts go to waste. The first step is to have a great display. TSNN (Trade Show News Network) suggests hosting presentations, product demonstrations, and finding ways to entertain attendees. But what if you don't have a crazy eye-catching display or demo? What if your budget doesn't allow for extras? How will you get people to stop and come inside?



The key to attracting attendees effectively is to keep the interest on the potential customer.



## You Don't Need Pushy Sales Reps Trying to Draw in Customers

Getting people in your booth is as easy as starting a casual conversation. The key to attracting attendees effectively is to keep the interest on the potential customer, not your company or staff. It's all about keeping it simple and making the conversation about them, then listening to their points and having the knowledge to back up your replies.

But as everyone knows, starting up a conversation with a total stranger can be incredibly difficult. Everyone is busy, wanting to pack as much into their trade show visit as possible. Many just want to be left alone until they're ready to ask the questions. However, by making them feel like you just want to get to know them, you can win their attention and prevent scaring them away. This can be best achieved with a few key questions, which can be posed by any members of your staff or by you if you're the only person manning your booth.



## Starter Questions Can Begin Important Conversations

Each of these three starter questions provokes a different thought process. You can use them to customize the attendee's experience. Focus not only on the answers, but also body language and eye contact. By paying close attention to all these aspects, you can help to steer the conversation and make a customer want to come inside and feel comfortable. You also won't make them feel like you're pushing them to do something they don't want to do.

### 1. "What are you looking for at the show?"

Find out what this specific customer is looking for today. Every show attendee's goals are likely to be different, and you need to know what this specific group of attendees is focusing on.

### 2. "Have you heard of us before?"

While knowing you have product recognition is important, so is the opportunity to gain new customers. It is also important to use shows as a way to change opinions and to gain credibility for your company and product. Attendees will talk to one another, and having your company name and product associated with a positive experience will encourage others to come visit your booth as well.

### 3. "What's your biggest challenge?"

Use this as an opportunity to cater to the needs of your customers and show product flexibility. By phrasing this question properly, you can ensure a productive conversation that leads to solutions or a product conveniently located inside your booth.

If your answer to "What's your biggest challenge?" is "knowing how to get the most out of a trade show," get an expert opinion. Speaking to someone with experience in the field can help you to find out how to get the most out of a trade show.



**Focus not only on the answers, but also body language and eye contact.**

# 10 Things You Need to Do for a Highly Successful Trade Show

Scott Price, Skyline New Jersey

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Having a detailed plan of exactly what you need to do can help ensure that you optimize results yielded at every show.

While the advantages of trade show marketing can be extensive, optimal success hinges on careful planning and strategic execution. Having a detailed plan of exactly what you need to do can help ensure that you optimize results yielded at every show.

## Key Factors to Consider When Planning for Your Trade Show

When creating your best practices plan, it's important to consider several critical factors. Following these 10 simple tips can help you create a finalized plan that covers the most important components of any trade show you attend:

### Create a Checklist

Trade shows, and the display itself, require management of a slew of details and logistics. Creating a checklist of everything that needs attention before, during and after an event can minimize the chance of something important falling through the cracks.



## Get Your Key Players Ready

Having the right staff managing your trade show booth will play a key role in your ultimate event success; pinpoint the best employees to help manage the booth and give them all the resources they'll need for training and preparation.

## Consider Attire

Planning what your staff should wear as booth staffers is critical. It should enforce your brand, your message, and match your trade show display in a way that ties everything together. If you're a tech company with a clean and savvy booth and modern products to display, choose a wardrobe that reinforces that. Ultimately, choose something comfortable that your team can wear throughout the long hours of the day without feeling constricted or hindered in their interactions.

**Pinpoint the best employees to help manage the booth and give them all the resources they'll need.**

Too much  
messaging  
and imagery  
is more of a  
distraction  
than a help.  
Remember,  
less is more.

## Coordinate a Booth Schedule

Speaking of long function hours, it's important to carefully coordinate a booth schedule for your staff so everyone gets a much-needed break to rejuvenate during the event. Choosing your booth staff and scheduling them throughout the event is a task all on its own.

## Know Your Host

Every venue has a point of contact designated to act as a liaison with the exhibiting businesses. These contacts will know everything there is to know about the upcoming event. Reaching out before the show can help you make critical choices such as where to locate your booth, what other businesses will be attending, and how many attendees will be attending.

## Keep Your Exhibit Simple, Yet Effective

Of course, your exhibit plays a key role in ROI. If your exhibit doesn't represent exactly how you want your company remembered, you're setting yourself up to fail. Your exhibit doesn't need a ton of words on it to showcase who you are or what you do. For that matter, it doesn't need over 10 pictures to show what you do. Work with a professional design team for a visually compelling display that portrays only the essentially information. Too much messaging and imagery is more of a distraction than a help. Remember, less is more.

## Choose a Giveaway

Tired of the same old pens and stress balls? Give attendees a handout from your product line. Free samples and even product discounts can deliver long-lasting marketing results.



## Showcase Your Most Important Products

Display your most important merchandise throughout your booth so visitors can have easy access to it. Also, plan on offering live demonstrations so guests can see for themselves what your product line is capable of.

## Have a Process to Capture Leads

Gathering leads is a primary reason why business owners participate at industry trade show. Offer employees a detailed outline on how to best capture leads at a convention. Actually, the best way to make sure everyone knows how to gather leads is to cover this in your booth staff training.

Display your most important merchandise throughout your booth so visitors can have easy access to it.



## Follow Up

Most importantly, have a best practice in place to ensure that each and every lead gathered gets the follow up it deserves. Following up with your event leads is the best way to establish a professional relationship with guests for long-term return on investment.

Important: Follow up should happen one to three days after a show. After three or five days, it may be too late and you're sure to have lost credibility if you wait more than a week.

This is a very short and general outline of the kinds of things you need to consider when exhibiting at a trade show. Start here, and you're off to planning for success.

Follow up should happen one to three days after a show. After three or five days, it may be too late...



# Trade Show Exhibit Dress Code: Dressing for Success

Scott Price, Skyline New Jersey

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Your company's trade show exhibit is the focal point for any conference or event you're attending, but it won't be the only thing representing your business. You and the rest of the staff will also get plenty of attention. By understanding the dress code for any event, you can ensure you'll be putting your best foot forward and impressing attendees.

## Dress for the Trade Show Exhibit Event

Although most venues don't have a formal dress code, they usually have fairly clear guidelines that attendees and exhibitors are expected to follow. In most cases, casual clothes are frowned on; exceptions include sports themed events and recreational events such as boat shows. For professional conferences (medical, legal, etc.) you should always dress as though it were an important day at the office. If you'd wear a suit to meet your CEO, then a suit is best for a trade show booth.

## Dress for the Venue

Make sure you check with the venue where your trade show exhibit will be displayed. There's a huge difference between padded, carpeted flooring and a concrete convention hall. The harder the floor, the more comfortable your shoes will need to be. Women should avoid wearing sandals; they look too informal and toe and foot injuries are common in areas where there is a lot of wiring for dozens of trade show booths.

Understand the dress code for your event and follow the guidelines.





**When working the booth, it's about representing the company, not expressing your personal taste.**

## Wardrobe Details Are Important

Don't forget that you'll be working long hours on your feet at your trade show exhibit and dress accordingly. You can dress professionally and still be comfortable if you keep a few things in mind:

1. Your shoes will make or break your comfort when you're on your feet for hours. Women should avoid high heels; today there are gorgeous flats that will work with any business suit or dress you may wear. Whatever you do, don't wear new shoes or you'll have aching, blistered feet before the end of the first day.
2. Be aware of the norms in your industry and scale down or cover body art or piercings in order to avoid standing out as "inappropriate." In most cases, earrings are fine, but pierced noses and eyebrows can be viewed with disfavor in more conservative industries. Remember, when working the booth, it's about representing the company, not expressing your personal taste.
3. You can wear jewelry in moderation. The pieces should be classic and understated rather than loud and intrusive. An armful of bangles is distracting and there's already plenty of noise on the convention floor; you don't want to have to compete with jangling jewelry to be heard.

4. Polish your shoes! This sounds simple, but there are executives who have admitted they check out the shoes of company reps. Scuffed or neglected shoes say you aren't interested in the details, which is a bad message no matter how awesome your trade show exhibit is.
5. Working trade show booths means shaking a lot of hands, so be sure your hands look their best. If possible, get a manicure a day or two before the event so your hands are well groomed. Women should choose either a pale, neutral nail color or stick with a clear coat of polish.
6. Take a small sewing kit with a needle, thread and a lint brush for quick clean-ups or repairs.

**With all of these tips in mind, you'll be sure to dress for success and have a great show!**



**Polish your shoes! Scuffed or neglected shoes say you aren't interested in the details.**



# 3 Key Things that Get Attendees into your Booth

Mike Thimmesch, Thimmesch Marketing

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It would be very easy to think that simply by building a beautiful trade show exhibit that many, many visitors will willingly come into your booth space. And for many years, that had been true. But today, trade show attendees have become more skeptical and reluctant to leave the aisle and enter into booth spaces.

Not that people stay away from trade shows – trade show attendance is actually INCREASING. But buyers at shows have become more skeptical because they have gained control of the buying process, thanks to the wealth of information available about products and companies on the Internet.

So while they still go to trade shows to shop for new products, it takes more to get their attention and get them to buy from you.

**Promotions are no longer a luxury; they are a necessity for maximizing your trade show potential.**



Here are three things that will persuade more trade show attendees to become your trade show booth visitors – and all three can be achieved with promotions:

### An Exchange of Value

Attendees will venture into a booth if they feel they will get enough value in return for their time. After all, attendees are spending anywhere from a few hundred dollars to \$2,000 to travel and attend their industry show. Value to the attendee may be in the form of a free sample, a discount or show special, food or drink, a useful, fun or exciting giveaway that has a high perceived value or a chance to win something even more valuable, or #2, an experience or #3, learning.

**Attendees will venture into a booth if they feel they will get enough value in return for their time.**



## An Experience

You can engage the eye and make a memorable impression on visitors with a well-choreographed demonstration of your products that proves what makes them superior to alternatives. Other valued experiences include entertainment that they can't see anywhere else, an activity that appeals to their senses, a chance to see or even meet a celebrity, and a personalized interaction that shows they are valued.

## Learning

Attendees come to trade shows to find out what new products are available and to find companies and product that can solve their problems. So help them learn what you offer that is new, how you are on top of the trends of your industry, how they can be better at their jobs, and how your company can solve their specific needs.

Promotions are no longer a luxury; they are a necessity for maximizing your trade show potential. Get creative about how you can provide value, experience, and learning in your exhibit to get more of the right people into your booth.



Attendees come to trade shows to find out what new products are available.

# Attendees' 7 Pet Peeves Concerning Trade Show Booth Staffers

Mary Buffa, Skyline Southwestern Ontario

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Since the booth staffer and attendee interaction is very important, it is important to keep in mind what the attendee feels when they talk with a representative of your company. Here are 7 pet peeves an attendee has when talking with trade show booth staffers.

Each attendee who sees your trade show display and visits your booth is a potential lead. But there's no way to qualify that lead until you have a conversation. That being the case, it's important you don't squander the opportunity to engage every visitor.

Unfortunately, exhibitors often inadvertently drive attendees away.

Below, you'll find attendees' top 7 pet peeves. At your next event, keep the following attendee grievances in mind.

## Booth Staffers Who Lack Expertise

Visitors expect your staff to be knowledgeable about your products and your services. They want answers to their questions concerning how your products might benefit them. If the employees you brought with you to the show are unable to answer those questions, your visitors will be unimpressed. Before your event, train your booth staffers so that they are ready to represent your company. Practice asking questions that an attendee may ask and give ideas on how to engage attendees from the aisle. The more prepared your staffers are, the more credible you will appear to attendees and potential leads.



**Each attendee who sees your trade show display and visits your booth is a potential lead. But there's no way to qualify that lead until you have a conversation.**

**Make sure your staffers look your visitors in the eye when speaking with them.**

## An Overly Aggressive Approach

Few people appreciate an aggressive sales approach. They want to have a conversation about their business needs, not be on the receiving end of a hard pitch.

Give visitors a few moments to look around your exhibit. Allow them time to check out your show displays and marketing/merchandising presentation. Watch for body language that indicates they'd like to speak with someone.

## Staffers Who Refuse to Make Eye Contact

Eye contact gives the impression that you notice the attendee and are available to help. It makes you more personable, trustworthy, and engaging. Attendees are looking to work with a company they like and trust. Make sure your staffers look your visitors in the eye when speaking with them. Whether they're soft-pitching or generating leads, friendly eye contact will improve their results.



## Lack of Attention

Remember the last time you were walked into a trade show display or even passed by with interest, only to be ignored? Unless you were desperate for whatever the company was selling, you probably turned around and walked away.

Understandably, lack of attention is a major turn off to show attendees. When they arrive at a booth, they expect to be greeted by someone from your company staffers. They want the attention of someone who can answer their questions and communicate dependability. From the attendee's perspective, exhibitors who ignore them while trying to drum up business will likely do the same once he or she becomes a customer.

## Incessant Focus on the Exhibitor Company

Have you ever attended a party and got stuck listening to someone talk incessantly about themselves? If so, you were probably looking for an opportunity to escape. Trade show attendees behave in the same manner. When an exhibitor bombards them with a monologue about his or her company, ignoring their needs, their eyes glaze over. They start looking for a means of escape. Remember, visitors want to have a conversation. They need to know whether your products or services are a good fit for their business needs, and want to discuss those needs with you. Take the focus off your company and direct it toward them. Ask questions about their needs instead of how you meet theirs.



**Take the focus off your company and direct it toward them by asking questions about their needs.**



**No one ever  
lost business  
at a trade show  
by getting to  
the point.**

## Staffers Who Beat around the Bush

Attendees are impatient for a variety of reasons. Some have a lot of booths to visit and want to make sure they have enough time to do so. Others have been forced to attend the event by their bosses and don't really want to be there. Others can't wait to leave the convention hall to grab dinner and drinks with their friends. That means you and your staffers must quickly get to the point. Remember to give the booth visitor time to look around and, when they're ready to talk, immediately ask about their business and what they're looking for. Put the focus on them. Once they've described their needs, explain how your products can help them. No one ever lost business at a trade show by getting to the point.

## Not Being Given a "Next Step"

If a visitor is interested in your products, he or she will want to know what comes next. That doesn't mean you should ask them to make a purchase decision. It just means you need to create a post-show expectation. For example, suppose you've talked to an attendee and determined that he wants to know more about a particular product you sell. You've qualified him as a hot lead and collected his contact details. Before he leaves, tell him that someone from your sales department will contact him on an agreed-upon afternoon. Set the expectation so he knows what comes next.

Trade show attendees have a lot of pet peeves, so make sure you're not exhibiting any of them. Avoid the above list and you'll stand a much better chance of productive conversation and a better outcomes. Train your booth staff and come prepared. You are there to serve and find potential business partners and clients.



# STAFF TRAINING MATERIALS

We recommend you provide marketing materials you will have with you at the show to your booth staff for review. Ensure your staff understands the type of person you are looking to interact with and what constitutes a high quality lead from a lower quality lead. Any demos or product specific information should be discussed.

# How Many Staffers Do I Need?

By Marc Goldberg, Marketech 360

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If the booth size is a given, which it normally is, then you will need one staffer for each 50 square feet of unoccupied space. Occupied by what, you are asking? By your display, product demonstrations and equipment.

## Method #1 – Square Footage

Take the total square feet of the booth:  $10' \times 10' = 100$  sq.,  $10' \times 20' = 200$  sq., etc., then subtract the square footage occupied by your exhibit, pedestal tables and demonstrations. The remainder should be divided by 50 to determine how many staffers.

EXAMPLE:  $10' \times 10' = 100$  sq. -  $8' \times 2'$  for booth display and  $3' \times 2' \times 2'$  for two pedestal tables or  $16$  sq.ft. +  $12$  sq. =  $28$  sq.ft.  $100$  sq. -  $28$  sq.ft. =  $72$  sq. /  $50 = 1.2$  staffers or 1 or 2 booth staffers; two would be preferable.

## Method #2 – Lead Objective

Another way to look at staffing is to establish an objective for contacts or leads to be generated. If the objective is 100 qualified leads, then work backwards. An aggressive staffer can contact 10-15 attendees an hour. If the show is open 6 hours per day – then 60 contacts per day are possible. If the show is a three-day show then one staffer can contact 180 attendees. If you have 30% qualification rate, then one staffer can qualify 54 attendees during the course of the show. With a goal of 100 qualified leads, then you need two staffers.

# Staffer Do's and Don'ts

## DO...

- Be familiar with all technology being used in the booth.
- Help keep the exhibit clean. Ensure there is no trash and that all counters are neat.
- Wear comfortable shoes and ensure your clothing is appropriate.
- Arrive at the booth 15 minutes before you are scheduled to be there to ensure there is enough time for set up.
- If you have it, wear your name badge on the right side of your shirt so it is visible to show visitors.
- Speak slowly and clearly and at a volume that can be heard over the show's ambient noise level.
- Be accessible. Position yourself on the threshold of your exhibit, about one step back from the aisle carpet.
- Ask open ended questions to attendees.
- Qualify your visitors. Introduce yourself, then make sure you know with whom you're talking to.
- Talk about what the visitor wants to talk about first.

## DON'T...

- Get nervous.
- Lean on the booth furniture, or cross your arms when talking to prospects.
- Talk amongst yourselves on the show floor. A crowd of exhibit staffers does not attract a crowd of visitors. Wait until show hours have ended.
- Eat and drink within the booth space.
- Sit down in the exhibit. Sitting down shows you are not engaged in the activity of the exhibit. Be sure you are standing.
- Ask questions that be answered with a dismissive, "No."
- Waste your time with unqualified prospects. Qualify quickly, so you can determine if the visitor is someone who fits your profile.
- Address complaints inside the exhibit area. If there is a complaint being aired, move the visitors to a remote location in the exhibit or outside of the exhibit hall to avoid disruption.

## ADDITIONAL TIPS

- Schedule your appointments with current customers during slower hall hours. Perhaps during a keynote session or pre- or post-show hours.
- Review your leads at the end of the day each day. Ensuring the information is accurate and adding any notes you may have missed.
- Schedule a 5-10 minute post-show follow up with your staff to review what worked and what didn't. You can adjust your strategy as needed.

# Who Should Train My Staff?

By Marc Goldberg, Marketech 360

You can train your staff if you feel comfortable and have a trainer's instinct. If you have a sales training department, you can enlist them, if they understand the medium. Or, you can hire a professional exhibit staff trainer.

## Before you select the "who" you need to think about the "what"

**What are your training objectives?** Booth etiquette, booth selling skill development or just getting your staff comfortable with the medium?

**What type of training do you want?** Classroom, at-show audit and feedback, interactive using role playing and small group work, part of a sales conference, one-on-one personal training?

**What topics should be covered?** Understanding the medium and its uniqueness, engaging, qualifying, communicating verbally and non-verbally, using lead forms, closes that work, dealing with distractions and objections?

**What type of trainer do you want?** Entertaining, motivating, educational, "just the facts?"

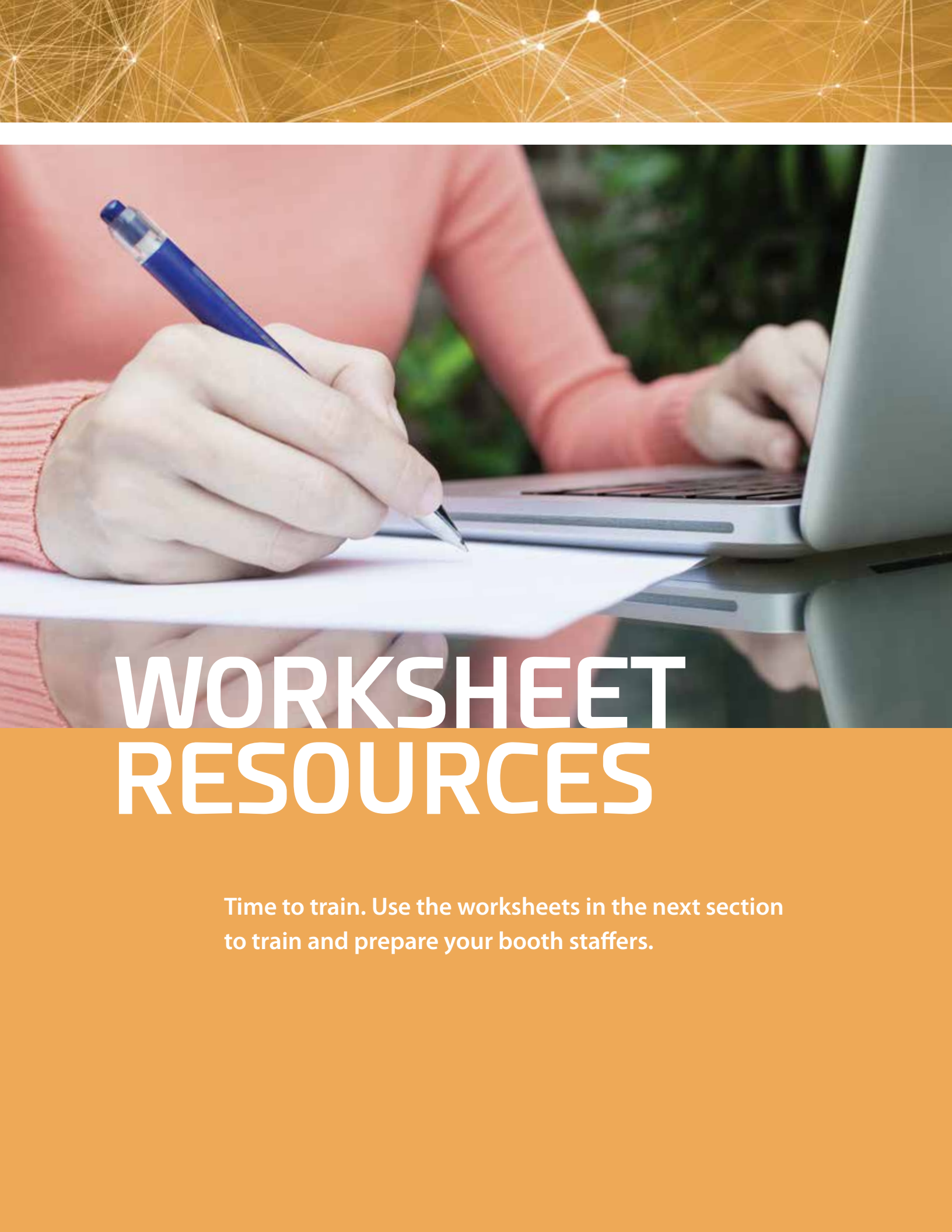
Once you have answered some of those questions, then you need to think about some of these questions to ask the trainer, whether they are internal or external.

## Questionnaire for External Professional or Internal Human Resource Trainer Selection

- What is the focus of the program to be offered? Boothmanship, communications, interpersonal rapport building, exhibit selling techniques?
- What type of formats are used? Full day, half day, 90 minutes, 2 hours?
- What differentiates this offered program from others that are available?
- How is the course designed to meet our specific needs?
- What type of handouts are used? Are they available for review?
- Is a demonstration tape (audio or video) available for review?
- What type of teaching style is used?

Ask for a bio of industry experience in "training."





# WORKSHEET RESOURCES

Time to train. Use the worksheets in the next section to train and prepare your booth staffers.

# Staff Selection

**Attitude** – Good attitude about exhibiting. Likes to work shows.

**Personality** – Is a smiling, friendly, approachable person.

**Product Knowledge** – Knows your organization's products and services and communicates effectively about them.

**Location** – Local or home office; they must be a team player. They must be able to put territory issues aside at the show.

**Experience** – Have had prior trade show experience and were successful.

**Technology** – Have aptitude or experience with any featured or used technology.



She meets the technology category, but not the attitude or personality category

## Four-Step Booth Staffing Process

1. Engage attendees in the aisle with good opening lines:
  - What are you looking for at the show?
  - Would you like to see our new products?
  - What do you think? (if they stop to look at your booth)
  - How would you use it? (if they stop to watch a demo)
  - Where are you from?
  - What caught your eye? (if they stop to look at your booth)
  - Have you heard of (your company name)?
2. Qualify the lead to discover what matters to them and if you are a good fit for them
3. Present just the part of your company story that is relevant to what they said about themselves
4. Close the conversation with an agreement on the next steps

# Staff Selection Worksheet

Selecting a staff is no easy chore. Sometimes they are chosen for you. Use the matrix below to evaluate your staff. Rate each characteristic 1-5, with 5 being the highest. If any staffer averages a 3 or below, see if you can find a replacement.

	Potential Staffer	Attitude (+)	Personality (+)	Product Knowledge (+)	Location (+)	Experience (+)	Tech (+)	Total
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								

Total the numerical rating for all six characteristics and divide by the number of staffers to get the rating average. Adapted from: Douglas McLean, McLean Marketing

# Pre-Show Briefing Worksheet

Marc Goldberg, Marketech 360

A pre-show briefing is, to a trade show, what a coach's pep talk is to a football team. It doesn't have to be elaborate, but it should contain all of the following subjects. Jot some notes to yourself so that you are sure to cover them all.

Show Schedule (Show Dates)

Show Hours

Special Events

Seminars (When, Where)

Social Activities

Objectives

Booth Theme

Organizational Message: (Key and Supporting Points)

Booth Interaction

1. Demonstration

2. Audio Visual

3. Attention Getting Device

Booth Staff

50

50

50

50



# How Do you Motivate your Booth Staff?

By Mario Huggler, Expoformer

Has this ever happened to you? You walk down the aisles of a trade show hall and are shocked by how many booth staffers hide behind counters, talk with colleagues or even talk on their cell phones.

I often walk trade shows and, unfortunately, I see the same uninviting situations described above. I wonder what their management would say and do about it. They invested a lot of money into their trade shows, but good opportunities for meeting new prospects are lost or barely taken.

If you look more closely at well-trained booth staff teams, you'll see that the biggest difference between a moderately rewarding trade show and a really successful one, is the booth staffers' level of motivation

## Ways to Evaluate Booth Staffers

### Trade show manager evaluation

*Most common*

### By number of leads

*Least preferred*

### Sales closed per staffer

*Difficult to determine*

### Estimated sales per staffer

*Difficult to determine and may be inaccurate*

### Company perception

*Try a post-show survey*

### Peer evaluation

*Conduct a 360 review*



While good advice can be expensive, there are exceptions to the rules. So here are a few free approaches to properly prepare your booth staff for your next show:

### **Collecting unqualified leads is out**

Do you know what happens to most leads and business cards after a show? That's right; Too many leads are quickly thrown in the trash. Moreover, you are doing it the easy way, if you simply collect unqualified leads at the trade show. A motivating goal for both the sales staff as well as for trade show visitors should be to get qualified leads, not just leads.

For example, each booth staffer should make 15 firm agreements with your booth visitors, such as agreeing to meet again, to submit a price quote, to provide a facility tour – anything that demonstrates higher commitment. This is the ultimate goal for someone to have, because such an agreement – after the show agreeing to a firm follow-up – requires highly developed communication skills.

### **Agree on the team rules**

Cell phones and other interrupters do not belong in the trade show booth. Other interrupters include booth staffers standing in groups talking to one another, and employees who are not booth staffers blocking the booth entrance. Get your entire team to agree on proper booth behavior before the show. Define the go's and no-go's. Violations against these rules will be punished symbolically. (For example, the last one to go on break.) Or even better: After the trade show, choose a Miss or Mister "Best Booth Staffer Behavior."

### **Teach the team to pay attention**

Do you know what makes an excellent waiter or a sensational customer service person? He or she has carefully observed the restaurant and is attentive regarding looks, questions and wishes of the guests. The same applies to trade show staff. Never let your visitors out of sight. Be sure your staffers know what to do if you are already engaged in a conversation with a visitor.

### **Practice the speech that you will give to booth visitors with your team**

And if it isn't possible for you to do that yourself, have a trainer do it. If you don't have the courage to take risks and to seek advice from others, you lose the best opportunities available from trade shows. Self-confidence is required to muster the courage to give a speech.

## Rehearse these open-ended questions

Questions are the tools of the trade show seller. Only by practicing questions out loud will your presentation become flawless. Remember, “The one who asks, leads.” Never let control of the conversation be taken away from you.

### Contact questions:

- What interests you about our booth?
- What exactly interests you about our solution?
- What interests you in general about this show?
- What are your objectives for this trade show?

### Visitor qualifications:

- In what capacity do you work at your company?
- What does your company do exactly?
- Where do you see potential to work with us on our products and solutions?

### Final questions:

- Do you have any interest in this innovation?
- When can I get in touch with you after the trade show?

## The message should be short and to the point

Ask five or six of your top sales people to explain what it is that your firm does and what advantages you have over your competitors. Challenge them to package the story into just 30 seconds, then compare the different statements with each other. The result will be that you will hear different stories. Agree on just one best message as a team to use with all your booth staffers. By the way, the best messages are short, concise, new and interesting. And the best messages are even more memorable when told as stories.

## Use booth visits to forge agreements

Your return on investment improves when conversations continue after the trade show. You are therefore called upon to do the job so well that the visitor wants to meet with you after the show.

**I wish you — and your motivated staff —  
a successful and profitable trade show!**

## Sample Lead Card

SHOW NAME:		
DATE:	SCORE LEAD: A B C	STAFFER NAME:
NAME:		TITLE:
COMPANY:		
ADDRESS:		CITY: STATE:
PHONE:	EMAIL:	

– CAN STAPLE BUSINESS CARD IN ABOVE AREA –

What are you looking for at the show? \_\_\_\_\_

What caused them to stop? Please Circle      Demo      Presentation      Video Content

Other? \_\_\_\_\_

Budget: Yes/No      Authority: Yes/No      Need: Yes/No      Timeframe: \_\_\_\_\_ months

Products or services discussed: \_\_\_\_\_

Did they take any marketing or sales material? If yes, what? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Agreed-upon next steps (appointment set, follow up by, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Summary

Your company has invested in the opportunity to exhibit at the trade show. Protect that investment by preparing your staff to effectively communicate your company capabilities and benefits gained from your products or services to qualified attendees. You have already taken steps to prove that investment is worthwhile by having this reference guide and training worksheets. Good luck at your next show!



# BOOTH STAFFING TIPS & TOOLS FOR THE DIGITAL ERA

A cluster of several squares of varying sizes and shades of purple and white, some solid and some outlined, arranged in a scattered pattern in the top right corner of the page.A complex network of thin white lines connecting numerous small white dots, creating a web-like pattern across the entire lower half of the page. The background is a solid dark purple.

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