

Top Ten Tips for a Successful Tradeshow Experience

1. Register early

To ensure that you're able to secure the space you want and maximize your exposure to potential leads, make sure that you register early. "Prime" booths go fast and location *does* matter. Booths near the front doors are desirable because they provide easy access to everyone who enters. Booths at the ends of aisles are good because you have access to front and side traffic due to the "corner". Or perhaps you want to be near/far from your competitors. Act fast so as not to be disappointed.

2. Promote your participation

Whether you use social media, newsletters or your website as just a few of the ways to reach out to your clients, don't neglect them as means to get the word out. Utilize all of your avenues to promote your participation and let everyone know where you'll be and when! Tradeshow publicity sites, parenting websites, newspaper ads, radio, etc. are all additional ways to spread the word.

3. Design a smart booth

As much as your budget allows, make your booth inviting – something that makes people want to stop and lean more. Use your promotional materials to create a strong presence! While it can be tempting to pack your booth with a lot of information, keep it short, bold and concise. You only have a few seconds to attract a visitor – don't scare them away with too much too soon.

4. Place orders for any rentals

Once you've determined if you will require A/V equipment, special lighting, furnishings, etc. make sure to order them at least two weeks ahead of time to be sure that the rental company has enough to go around and that you receive any shipments, or that you're able to pick-up, in enough time for tradeshow day.

5. Make travel and staff arrangements

Determine who will represent your camp at the booth and make travel arrangements accordingly. Staff your exhibit with trained, knowledgeable, approachable people; the image you project at the trade show is the image attendees will have of your business. Make sure the image presented is the one you want to linger in their minds!

6. Print banners / brochures

Unless you have a topnotch printer and you do all your printing in house, then give yourself plenty of time to print out banners and brochures. Print style on banners should be simple and easy to read from a distance – avoid too little or too much information/writing.

Consider investing in good graphics – if you need to cut back, don't let this be the area! Exhibitors spend thousands on the booth and travel expenses. Give yourself at least one month. Look at your logo, see if it needs tweaking; design your slogan for your banners; and plan what brochures you will be handing out. Don't leave your printing to the last minute – allow time for corrections/reprints if needed.

7. Packing List – Miscellaneous Box

Again, don't leave this until the last minute – at least one week before the tradeshow, jot down all the items that will be coming with you to the show and a few days before the show, review it and make sure you have everything ready and then check them off the list when you are packing up.

Bring the packing list to the event so that you can add to it once you are at the show, as you may find that you overlooked something that would have been great to have that day – make notes for the next show.

8. Generate Leads

When speaking with families, ask them to provide you with their contact details so you can send them a complete information package, or suggest they sign up for your newsletter to stay informed of upcoming events.

9. Follow Up

Families are busy so be sure to follow-up with your leads. Send them a personalized thank you note and invite them to any upcoming events or information sessions.

10. Evaluate

Most often, the success of a trade show is measured by the number of quality leads versus the quantity of leads, and it's estimated that 77% of tradeshow attendees are qualified buyers. How many were you able to reach?

Evaluate the effectiveness of your exhibit and plan for adjustments next time around. Be objective. Think – what would I have liked to see if I was the attendee? How critical would you have been? Remember, if you can think of something that someone else could have done better, chances are someone thought that about you!



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