

Exhibiting at Trade Shows

Because trade shows generally take place at a single location, have short runs (usually one to three days), and bring together thousands of exhibitors and potential customers, they are a very cost-effective way to market your product or service. To get the most out of a trade show, first determine what you want to accomplish. It may be to meet new customers, demonstrate your product to a large group of people, and establish a presence in the marketplace or all three of these things.

You may want to visit a tradeshow one year ahead of exhibiting to verify whether this is the right show for you. It will also serve to give you a good idea as to what your competitors are doing at the show.

Once you have determined what you want from trade shows and which ones to attend, the next step is making the proper advance preparations. You must alert your prospective customers about your attendance, and encourage them to visit your booth, for the effort to pay off. Consider calling your more important customers and prospects to personally invite them to the show, and try to set up appointments with them during the event itself. Some companies place ads in newspapers announcing both their attendance and booth number. Remember that buyers aren't looking for you. They are walking up and down the aisles looking for interesting products. And, because you only have between five and 15 seconds to attract the attention of those walking by your booth, booth graphics and advertising messages should resemble billboards. You need a very dramatic, colorful booth. However, it is crucial to keep your booth graphics simple.

Many small business owners fear that if they don't fully describe their products, people will miss something important. Just the opposite usually occurs. Too many messages confuse, and the viewer tunes out. List no more than three benefits of your product and be sure it's clear what your company does.

Tips For Running Your Booth

- Don't sit down in the booth. When you are standing, you are more approachable and appear to be more eager to answer questions.
- Don't eat in the booth. People will feel like they are disturbing your meal and will tend to keep on walking.
- Don't bring a phone into the booth. Again, people will feel like they are disturbing you.
- If you have someone else running the booth, make sure they are familiar with all facets of the business including product demonstration.
- Try to avoid improvising. Rehearse a sales pitch prior to the show and stick to it.