



MONDAY MOTIVATOR

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Trade Show Mastery

No one would believe the economy was in a slump based on record attendance at the countless conferences, conventions and trade shows taking place in every major city in the U.S.A. These shows tend to be non-stop from the giant CES show in Vegas on Jan. 3rd to the late 4th quarter shows taking place right up to the 15th of Dec. Just about every industry sector is showcased at these conventions and it's a great time to do several things:

- Renew old acquaintances
- Revisit existing customers
- Setup new business relationships
- Show off your company's latest innovations
- Expand existing contracts
- Learn what your competitors are up to
- Find new sources of information for your data base



TRADESHOWS



I've attended the CES show a few times and to say it's big is like saying the Pacific Ocean is a big lake. I went to introduce our coaching firm to many of the smaller companies that are on display there. Such shows are a hit because it affords people from around the country a chance to

meet with suppliers, manufacturers, regulatory officials, brokers and design specialists just to name a few. But the size of this show makes it impossible to visit every booth even over several days. That's the bad news. The good news is that you would not want to. Ask yourself a few questions before you head to the convention center.

1. Why am I going to this show?
2. What do I expect to get out of being there?
3. What follow up will I commit to now before I start looking for opportunities?
4. Do I have my scripts memorized for short 1 minute meetings up to longer ones?

Here are some additional tips to make the trip to a trade show worthwhile.

If You're Exhibiting

Do your research to select the best show for business development. Talk to colleagues who have attended the same show before you make final plans.

Read the promotional brochures as soon as they arrive. Take advantage of early-bird discounts on booth space, travel and hotel accommodations. Try to book a booth in a busy aisle near a big corporate booth that will attract lots of traffic.



When you receive the exhibitor's kit, read it carefully. There are many confusing forms to fill out. You'll usually have to deal with two or more companies; one producing the conference and another responsible for renting equipment, phone lines and electrical power. In many cities, you will be hiring union workers to carry your displays and materials in and out of the convention center.

If you can't afford to buy a custom display, be creative and make one. Some clients we work with create their own sets on the expo floor by renting stools and bringing along their own backdrop, lights, cameras and posters. Most booths come with one draped table, a few chairs and a trash can.

Create a realistic budget. Consider travel expenses: ground transportation, accommodations (ask employees to share rooms if possible), meals, snacks, giveaways and the cost of being out of the office for a few days.

Create a press kit or a press release and make sure it gets into the press room or distributed at the press conferences. Ask the show's press reps to arrange introductions to the reporters covering the show. Try to set up interviews in advance with local radio and newspaper reporters. Just about every show has some sort of daily rag they print up overnight and distribute the next morning so it pays to see if you can arrange an interview to get your own story in front of more eyes.

Set up a schedule that lets you work in the booth part of the day. You also need time to walk the floor to make contacts. This is important. You gain very little by sitting in a lawn chair waiting for people to come by then getting up to chat for a while but with no script, no call to action or no request for a conversation later by phone to further discuss possible needs.



Bring a clever giveaway. One show I attended was all about machine shops and one of the larger vendors was giving away ball bearing assemblies that were sitting in the warehouse due to an overrun

created by mistake a year earlier. They were precision and very shiny stainless steel. They simply hired a firm to laser engrave their company name, phone number and web site on the sides of the bearings. They were a hit and they got a lot of calls later because of it.

Bring a supply of chocolate or mints to serve as magnets to passersby.

Bring your friendliest and most informed employees. You want high-energy, happy people in your booth. They must be well-groomed, attentive and not chewing gum, sitting or talking to each other. It helps if you can provide them with shirts that all match. It gives a nice impression of your firm to those who may not be that familiar with your company. Creating large colorful neck badges are also a nice touch and lends an air of authority to your team. These would be in addition to the show exhibitor badges provided to you from the show organizers.

If You're Attending

One of the great advantages of attending a trade show is the vast amount of information available to those in the room. Here at Performance Strategies we have a saying ... "If you're out of the room you're out of the deal." No matter how tired you may be plan to attend a few seminars and all the group meals. Target industry leaders and contacts you want to meet. Spend some time each day circulating and schmoozing. Set up your "dance" card in advance of the show. This is to show your appointments before, during and after the exhibit floor hours. Try to fill this card so you will see the most important people while you and they are both there.

When you finally catch up with a person you wanted to meet, ask them to join you outside the hall where it's quieter. If it's an industry leader, you will only have a few minutes to make an impression before they are distracted or led away. For this reason, you need a script to accommodate such opportunities. We have a person on our associate staff who specializes in

creating scripts for just this scenario among dozens of others. For a small price, you can have all your team ready for a 10 second conversation or a 10 minute one. But it needs to be planned for in advance.

If a reporter or producer approaches you, give them a good quote for their story. Any press is good press so mention names and contact data for your company as part of the interview.

Consider handing out postcards. Unlike a larger, heavier, more expensive brochure, postcards are light and easy to carry. They are also very inexpensive to print. Just about any printer will offer you a quote on the phone or online and turnaround times can be very quick.



If you don't have a stylish, comfortable outfit to make a good impression, go shopping before the show. Do not make the mistake of thinking that it makes little difference how you dress. It makes a lot of difference. The ladies always seem to know about this. For the guys just wearing a blue or white shirt with a sports jacket or blazer gets you a little more respect.

In summary, trade shows are all about business. Don't fall into the trap of thinking that with all the glitz and glamor that the show is just about having a fun day. While you can enjoy the process, bring your work attitude and create a list of contacts that will take you a full week to follow up on. Use a few of these tips and you can create your own trade show mastery!

Until next week, if you know of any business that would benefit with a little coaching in the areas of organization, time and task management, social media, sales, marketing, customer service, operations, HR, leadership or team-building, have them give us a call at 562-577-7000 or send us an email. We will keep you in the loop on how it's going.

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Our consulting and coaching focus supports management, sales, customer service and operations. Included are sales and management assessment surveys as well as leadership, teambuilding, sales operations efficiency and online tracking projects. Our other team members bring additional disciplines as well. We will showcase them in future editions of this business journal. We are all committed to driving the results you want.