



Why Pre-Marketing Your Participation is More Important Than Ever

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With tradeshow finally re-opening, one of the most important things every exhibitor must be thinking about right now is what specifically are you going to do between now and when you arrive to make sure that visiting your booth is “in the mind” and “on the agenda” of enough of the right attendees.

Chances are in the wake of the pandemic that overall show attendance may be down a little. It’s also possible that attendees spend a little less time in the exhibit hall and possibly even visit fewer booths. These are just some of the reasons why increasing your pre-show marketing efforts this year is more important than ever before.

Exhibitors have a limited or finite amount of capacity for face-to-face interactions in their booth. Take a moment to calculate your Exhibit Interaction Capacity:



Step One: Write down how many open exhibiting hours are in the show.

Step Two: Write down the number of booth staff you will have on duty consistently over those exhibiting hours.
(*Staffing rule of thumb is 50 square feet per staffer.*)

Step Three: Write down a target number of face-to-face, one-to-one interactions per hour, per staffer during the course of the show.
(*Three is conservative - four moderate - five aggressive.*)

Step Four: Multiply these three numbers together. This is YOUR Exhibit Interaction Capacity.

Your next critical action is to compile an Ideal Target Visitor list that is at least 3 to 5 times your Exhibit Interaction Capacity. For example, in this article, the Exhibit Interaction Capacity is 87 interactions. This means your Ideal Target Visitor list should be 261 to 435 people.

In building your list, start with your IN HOUSE list resources.

1. Compile a list of Customers - active and inactive - who are, have, or are likely to attend the show. Because of the pandemic, it’s likely you have not had quality face time with them for a year and a half or longer. Invite them to the show to make some form of a positive deposit into the customer relationship account, cross sell or upsell a product or service, catch up on what’s changed in their organization, and possibly use them for advocacy with potential new customers.

2. Compile a list of Prospects in your Sales Pipeline. Talk to your sales, business development teams and channel partners to help build this list. The primary goal for inviting them to the show is to use the energy, excitement, your product or service presentation, and your experts to advance them to the next step in the sales cycle.
3. Compile a list of Potential New Opportunities from people who have inquired into your products or services over the last several months. The primary goal for inviting them to the show is to build rapport, discover a problem to solve or an opportunity to help them seize, position your company as a credible potential partner, and secure a commitment to a clear next action step.

Next, reach out to your show organizer and inquire about the availability of pre-registered attendee mailing lists. See if the list can be sorted by company type, job function/title, geography or whatever else information is available. Surprisingly, only 6% of exhibitors use pre-registered attendee lists. And this is, next to your house list, the most valuable list you could acquire.

Combine all four of these lists to make sure your total list count is at least 3 to 5 times your Exhibit Interaction Capacity.

The next thing to do is to develop a crystal clear value proposition for each visitor type. Your value proposition should clearly communicate the key problem you can help them solve or the opportunity that visiting your exhibit presents. Be sure to describe your visitor experience in terms of what they will SEE, what they will DO, what they will LEARN, and what they will GET by visiting your booth.

Then, use as many marketing media as you have the time, skill set, and budget to deploy. This includes:

- promoting the event on your company website
- creating an event specific landing page that enables visitors to confirm an appointment and let you know they plan on visiting your booth
- adding show specific call to actions in your staff's email signatures
- delivering targeted email campaigns
- leveraging your social media channels
- integrating a well-designed direct mail program because very few exhibitors do this
- evaluating all trade show exhibitor marketing opportunities, free and paid, and utilizing the ones that fit your budget.

Be sure to include a crystal clear Call To Action asking the visitor to add your exhibit to their show agenda.

The two levels of commitment you are looking for from targeted visitors are 1) a confirmed appointment or 2) a verbal commitment that they plan to visit your exhibit.

To increase the number of people that make a commitment to visit your exhibit, you may want to offer some form of a reward for either booking an appointment or confirming that they plan to visit.

I hope you'll take the time to work on this critically important Selective Attraction strategy. If you do, you will put your company in the top 10% of exhibitors and more importantly, you will have a booth full of valuable people to interact with.



Jefferson Davis, President of Competitive Edge is North America's leading exhibiting productivity expert. Since 1991, his results-focused, process-based approach to addressing critical exhibiting success factors has helped clients generate over \$800 million in combined exhibiting results. Jefferson provides highly-intensive exhibit consulting and staff training services guaranteed to deliver results. For a no-obligation discovery meeting, [schedule a 30 minute meeting here.](#)