

Expo Marketing

**Ten Tips to Attract More Ideal
Prospects to Your Booth and
Get Better Results
Before, During and After
Your Next Event**

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the**remarkable**way



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So you've acquired a booth at your industry's big event. The investment you've made extends far beyond the reservation fee. When you calculate the time you'll spend preparing for the event, attending the event, and cleaning up – you've got quite a lot riding on the outcome...not to mention your investment in materials and giveaways. Your time and money is precious so I'm going to share 10 tips that will, if implemented, help you get the absolute most out of your investment.

Let's get to work:

1. **Send your friendliest people.** Manning a booth takes a high degree of energy, confidence, and friendliness. The best people for this job are people who are naturally gregarious and can easily strike up a conversation with almost anyone. That's the type of individual you want near the aisle drawing people in to your booth. Spend a few minutes determining who within your company conveys the right personality to attract prospects. If friendliness isn't your strong suit or within your employees' talent pool, consider hiring talent to engage passer-bys and prequalify the ones who should talk to you.
2. **Think of the day as a relationship starter.** People attend a trade show because they're looking for ideas and opportunities. They're also there for some degree of enjoyment - after all, this is a *special event*. Unless you're a retail business or a common purchase, your job isn't to sell from the floor, but simply to open the door for a follow-up call in most cases. This is not the time or place to close a deal or ask too much. Be smart and simply create an opportunity to get to know a bit about the person and their goals. If you have a demonstration to share, consider timing it so that you can show a handful of people at a time. After a few minutes of engagement, create a reason for you to continue the conversation later so they can enjoy the rest of their time at this event. Now you're free to move on to the next prospect as well.
3. **Consider the experience from the attendee's perspective.** What will it feel like to see your booth? How can you help someone determine quickly that what you offer is – or isn't – right for them. Not everyone is your ideal customer. You want your display to help you attract the right ones while helping the wrong ones move on and out of your way. Invest in some nice quality signage, photographs and video to create a powerful display that quickly communicates what you have to offer without having to say a word. You could even consider creative ways to use video like live streaming your booth activity to the web, or live stream offsite activity back to your booth.
4. **Try to staff your booth so you'll have time to mingle with other booth owners too.** I've always had the most success at an expo connecting with the other booth owners. Never forget this large crowd of opportunity around you. This is true whether you're a B2B business or a B2C business (business representatives are also consumers). If you can't break free for a few hours to mingle, at a minimum show up early to set up and then invest in helping your neighbors carry in and set-up as well. Some event coordinators offer an after-hours party as well. Find out if that exists for you and make plans to attend.

5. **Your mission is to capture good quality leads.** I've seen many people offer giveaways and drawings for everyone in attendance. A free flat screen TV may be an enticing offer for every passerby, but having lots of entries will only clog your follow-up list (quite frankly, many good prospects could be turned off by this type of marketing). If everyone in attendance isn't a potential good customer for you, then be smart about not collecting names of people you don't need to follow-up with.
6. **Bring your own audience.** Now that you've gone to the trouble of creating a nice exhibit, make the most of it. Take the time about two weeks in advance to contact all of your existing customers and prospects and invite them to stop by and say hello at the event. Having people intentionally looking for you and visiting creates a nice social buzz around your booth. That brings us to the next step and some creative ideas to incentivize them...
7. **Use advertising specialties (imprinted items) wisely.** Promotional items can be used very effectively as a component of your marketing mix. Pre-show mailers to a target audience, in-booth giveaways for prospective clients, a teaser campaign to select contact, etc. - each of these promotional efforts has proven worthy. If generating a pre-show buzz is your goal, send a mailing in advance of the event to garner their attention. If building booth traffic is your aim, select a promo item that relates well to your business / industry and "draw them in". Two-part teaser campaigns are a clever way to combine both concepts. Identify key contacts and provide them half of a two-part item and then encourage them to visit your booth to "collect" the missing half. There are endless creative ways to use advertising specialties to make a strong impression; don't just settle for the usual bowl full of pens and magnets.
8. **Block time now for the day or two after the event to follow-up on every lead.** Let's face it, the time you'll be spending out of the office will already create a backlog when you return. You need to block time within the next 48-72 hours to follow up. Which leads me to the next step...
9. **Have a plan.** You're on a mission. You've got to tell your product or service story to prospects. Part of that story can be told at the event...and part of it should be reserved for the follow-up connection. I recommend literally mapping or story boarding an "awareness process". Ask yourself, what are my prospects' most asked questions and what are the things they really need to know? From there, determine how much you should share at the event, and how much you'd like to reserve for a more controlled environment.
10. **Be remarkable.** At an event like this, you're just another business in a long line of businesses (including your competitors'). The smartest booth owners figure out how to do something that makes their booth or business worth talking about. You need to look for opportunities to become part of more people's conversations. When you have people saying "Be sure to check out..." or "Did you see XX's booth?", you've done something right. This doesn't always require money or a lot of drama. I've seen fantastic ideas that were implemented for less than \$500. It does require some thought and creativity. If you have trouble thinking outside your normal box, get help. The opportunities that come from being remarkable can be extremely profitable.

About Nicole Gebhardt



For more than 20 years, Nicole Gebhardt has been helping business leaders create compelling and effective messages in her signature authentic and inspiring way. Nicole's coaching brings clarity out of chaos and makes the overwhelming simple with step-by-step action plans. Most importantly, she does it in a way that equips, encourages and inspires her clients to achieve more than they thought possible. For more business-building ideas and support visit www.themarkableway.com or email her at nicole@themarkableway.com

Credit where credit is due:

A quick note of thanks to Greg Tudor of Excel Group for his contribution of ideas regarding Advertising Specialties (Tip #7) and Jay Patzschke of JP Video Productions (Tip #3). Find Greg and Jay online at www.BrainQube.com – the coworking space for creative minds.



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