

HOW TO TRAIN YOUR EXHIBITION STAND STAFF.



Welcome

Read on and you'll discover how to:

- **Find** the right people
- **Create** a good brief;
- **Deliver** it effectively;
- **Engage** your people with show visitors;
- **Motivate** your people; and
- **Avoid** the 9 things you don't want your people to do.

Having the right people on your stand will significantly increase your chance of success at the show. Visitors engage with a stand where people are enthusiastic and friendly, with good product and company knowledge. If you can add excellent listening and selling skills, you'll have a professional team that will put you ahead of your competition.

So, how do you get a team like that? (And it doesn't have to be a big team, if you're a small business it might just be a couple of you – but the same principles apply).

There are five steps to cover before the show:

- Decide who should be involved;
- Calculate how many people you need;
- Work out who does what;
- Write your brief; and
- Deliver your brief to your team.

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Before the show

Decide who should be involved

The obvious answer here is your salespeople, or whoever does most of the selling in your organisation. So, that's a good place to start. However, remember that the skills required to say, sell on the phone, are different to meeting people face-to-face in a show situation. Make sure your sales people are the right people for the job.

Now, is there anyone else who could add value to your stand? Here are some thought starters that may be relevant to your business:

- Representatives from other states if it's a national show;
- Senior management to handle VIP customers;
- A receptionist or similar who knows many of your customers;
- A key customer who would be happy to act as a human testimonial;
- A technical person to handle tricky questions; and
- Perhaps a maintenance/repair person to give advice.

Don't forget that helping out on a stand can be a great way for new people to get to know your business.

Motivation makes more

Think about individual or team incentives which are based on results. They might be sales, leads, details harvested etc.

Provide fast, regular feedback and get the competitive juices flowing!

How can you spot a good person to have on your stand?

There's no point in having ineffective people representing your company. They may be great at their other jobs – but it takes a particular skill set to be good on a stand.

Good people need to be comfortable about:

- Quickly greeting and engaging visitors;
- Qualifying them and acting accordingly;
- Demonstrating or explaining products and services;
- Cross selling;
- Gathering lead information; and
- Thanking and dismissing visitors.

To do the above they will usually need:

- Good product knowledge;
- Great sales techniques;
- A friendly engaging personality; and
- A heap of motivation!

It's important that the people on your stand want to be there. Put yourself in their position and think about how they might feel. For instance; do they resent being taken off the road if they are a sales rep, or having to work the weekend if they have a family or regular commitments, e.g. sports?

A word from the CEO or Sales Director, or a gift, such as a hamper, can generate a lot of goodwill and overcome any negativity.

Before the show (continued)

How to effectively select, brief and train your exhibition stand staff.



How many people do you need?

Now's the time for some calculation. Think back to the goals you set for your show participation (if you haven't set quantifiable goals, it's not too late – you'll find suggestions and help in the **"First Timer's Guide"** in this series of booklets) and plan accordingly.

For instance; if you want to generate 500 qualified leads and it takes 6 minutes to deal with each enquiry, a sales person can handle a maximum of 70 leads in an 7 hour day and 210 over 3 days. Then, you need to add in time off for breaks, the result is you'll need a minimum of 3 sales people on your stand.

Who does what?

Take the time to think about the roles you want each person to play and the skill sets you want on the stand. Correlate your show objectives with the roles of the people present. Think about the mix of skills and experience you will have on the stand at any one time.

Are there any specific situations you may need to plan for? For instance, how will you handle:

- Media enquiries – nominate one person;
- Any unhappy customers – have a plan and brief your team; or
- An accident or mishap on your stand – have a plan and brief your people.

Work out a daily schedule, including regular breaks to avoid fatigue and keep energy levels high.

Traffic estimates

Talk to your Diversified contact to gain an idea of how many people they expect at the show and when. You may find there are busier times when you'll need an extra person and vice-versa.

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Creating the brief for your people

Now that you know your objectives for the show and have chosen the people to help you achieve them, it's time to work out what you are going to tell your team to help them do it.

Some might be experienced at working at shows – if so, have a word to them beforehand and pick their brains. Ask them for suggestions – or even ask if they'd like to talk to the rest of the crew.

Your brief should, like all good presentations, have a beginning, a middle and an end.

In the beginning, outline the objectives for the show, why they were chosen to be part of the team and what the briefing is about.

In the middle, get into the detail and describe what's expected of every one, rostering, supplies, dress etc. There's a checklist below to help make sure you don't miss anything.

To end your brief, highlight key points, introduce any sales or targeted incentives and invite questions.

Fair shares

Involve your staff in the exhibition planning process and you will have buy in and motivated staff for the whole process. This is crucial for sales staff if they are to stress the relevant points and deliver the message.

OK, now here's a checklist to run through before you brief your team. Have you covered:

- Your show strategy, goals and objectives;
- Your main message for the show;
- Who is your target audience;
- How to spot the best prospects;
- Individual and team responsibilities;
- The show team and their contact details;
- Who does what on the stand;
- Demonstrations;
- How to handle enquiries – lead categorisation;
- Using and handing out sales literature;
- Competitions/incentives/giveaways;
- Stand layout and location;
- Dress code;
- Display components;
- Show hours;
- Rosters/schedules;
- Everyone takes plenty of business cards – they will need them;
- Travel and accommodation; and
- Incentives and targets.

This is not a comprehensive list, as every businesses is different, but it should be enough to get you started!

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Delivering your brief

Give lots of advance notice of the briefing meeting. Ideally plan to have it a week before the show and it should run for a maximum of 90 minutes.

If you can, have it opened by a senior person from your management team. They can stress the importance of the show and the briefing meeting.

Between the brief and the show

Use this time – a week or so – to prepare your people. Things to do in this time include:

- Ensure the team practices any demonstrations that will be used on your stand;
- Make sure everyone is up to speed with the latest product and/or service information;



If you can, have the brief opened by a senior person. They can stress the importance of the show.

He needs an energy bar



At the show

The big day has arrived and so have your stand people. Early of course, so they can get a feel for the stand and the atmosphere of the show.

Now's the time to check that:

- They are familiar with the location of things on the stand e.g. stocks of print collateral etc;
- You have a daily checklist for your stand coordinator to go through;
- People know when their breaks are (and the location of the nearest toilets); and
- Each person knows their own role and that of the other people on the stand.

Stand sales technique

Effective selling at the show is a simple four step process:

1. Greet the show visitor;
2. Qualify their interest or potential value;
3. Give enough information to engage them; and
4. Gain a commitment as quickly as possible.

The commitment may be as simple as agreeing to receive more information and handing over contact details, or it may be actually closing a sale.

Survival kits

Make up a kit for each team member, contents could include:

- Breath mints
- Insoles
- Energy bars
- Lip balm
- Coffee vouchers.

Discovery time

Give your people time to wander around the show themselves. It will help them identify with the show visitors and see what people on other stands are doing too.

Literature doesn't sell, people do!



Three helpful hints

1. Give your people a 30 second snapshot speech that captures facts about your company, clients, features and benefits – end it with a question or call to action
2. Literature doesn't sell – people do! Make sure your staff use sales literature to enhance a conversation – not replace it!
3. Consider limiting literature to qualified prospects and get staff to qualify first – or have two levels of material – a cheap flyer and a more expensive brochure.

Chat isn't cheap!

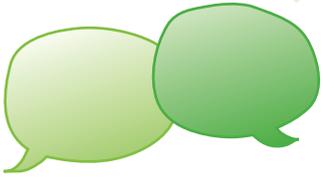
Chatting to visitors who are not likely to become customers can make your stand look busy – but it's wasting time and missing opportunities to sell to other visitors.

Qualifying customers

Not every show visitor will be a prime prospect or person you speak to a potential customer.

To maximise the returns from your investment in the show:

- Make sure your people understand your target audience and how to identify them;
- If you have different levels of potential customers (e.g. large buyer, one-off buyer etc.) make sure you have appropriate sales processes in place for each level;
- Prepare 3-4 open ended questions to probe needs, problems, and role of the visitor;
- Many trade shows have different coloured badges to identify different types of visitor. Make sure your people know who's who;
- If visitor's don't qualify as a prospect, use a simple tactic such as politely saying, "I have an appointment arriving in five minutes, can I take your details and send you more information?"; and
- Even try and limit time with qualified prospects. The main purpose at the show is to get leads. Leave the in-depth selling until after the show.



Tips and techniques

Don't ask a visitor: "Can I help you?"

Many conversations start – and end – with “Can I help you?” or “May I help you?” which are closed questions – questions that will generally elicit a yes or no response.

Most show visitors respond to these questions with “Thanks...just looking.” Closed-ended questions at the beginning of an interaction are not productive and can actually make it harder for both you and your exhibit visitor to start a conversation

Ask Open-Ended Questions

After you've introduced yourself, ask an open-ended question about the other person (e.g. their company; roles and responsibilities; etc.) which will serve the dual purpose of helping your visitor feel welcome to your stand – your “place of business” at the show – and helping you begin to identify (and qualify) who you're speaking with.

Next, follow-up with another open-ended question about the person's reason(s) for attending the show or for visiting your exhibit.

Examples of the type of questions you might ask include:

- “Good morning, (name). Welcome to (company name). What's the most interesting thing you've seen at the show so far?”;
- “I see you're with (company). What do you do?”;
- “What motivated you to come to (show name)?”; and
- “How can we make your visit to our exhibit of value to you?”.

Handling enquiries and logging leads

It's vital that all your people understand the system for logging enquiries. Ensure that someone is responsible for this process and that they check the correct information is being recorded. You'll find more information about this in another booklet in this series – “How to be a successful show exhibitor”.

Managing your team at the show

Working on a stand at a show can be a very tiring experience. Keep your team informed and motivated – occasional treats can be excellent!

Management duties can include:

- Conducting a daily stand debrief and brief for the next day. Get feedback from your people and invite suggestions;
- Keep your team up to date with your objectives and how they are tracking with regard to any incentives; and
- Give a quick team re-brief at the start of each day – remind them of the goals, key messages and roles.

Common mistakes

Warn your people about:

- **Not approaching visitors**
- **Chatting to visitors but not capturing their details**
- **Handing out but not receiving cards**

Tips and techniques (continued)

How to effectively select, brief and train your exhibition stand staff.



Dress and presentation

Take a cue from your customers – you should be dressed the same or slightly better. Suits and ties on sales staff can frighten off a more casual visitor crowd.

If you choose to create a uniform look for your staff, be specific. If you decide to use matching sweaters or colourful shirts with your company's logo, make sure you are also specific about the colour and type of pants, skirts and shoes your staff must wear to complete the look. Give careful consideration to the colours and styles of clothing you use.

Pay attention to staff shoes, hair and accessories. Make sure hands are manicured, especially at food shows. Visitors do notice this. If you are hiring staff ensure you stress this before the show.

A uniform can turn your staff into a network of moving advertisements for your company. Your staff become easily identifiable anywhere on the exhibition floor. Take advantage of the unified look to promote a team atmosphere among staff. An added benefit is that your staff are probably more comfortable and therefore more productive.

Be careful. The high visibility created by uniforms makes it essential that your staff are on their best behaviour at all times, inside and outside your stand.

De-briefing, during and after the show

Make sure you receive and record feedback from your stand staff during and after the show. Try to do it immediately after the show – don't leave it longer than a week.

This will help you plan even more effectively next time. Send out a short questionnaire asking about issues that arose, improvements and customer reactions.

Avoiding wardrobe shock

Giving your staff uniforms will eliminate the inevitable bad wardrobe choices like cheap suits and ugly ties.

Bonus list one

A dozen do's and don'ts for interacting with show visitors

It is vital that your people create a welcoming atmosphere that makes visitors feel attracted to your stand and comfortable in it.

What you don't do can be as important as what you do.

1. Don't sit

You give attendees the impression you don't care or you're lazy. Visitors won't interrupt your private time, as they see it.

2. Don't read

You aren't able to make eye contact with visitors as they walk by your stand.

3. Don't eat or drink

It is just plain rude and messy. Potential customers are too polite to bother you when you're eating.

4. Don't ignore visitors

If you're busy when someone approaches, either acknowledge him/her or try to include him/her in your conversation. If you're talking with a colleague, break it off immediately.

5. Don't talk on the telephone

Time on the phone is time away from potential prospects and tells everyone you have better things to do.



6. Don't be a border guard

Don't stand where you become a barricade or block the visitor's view. Stand near the aisle and off to the side.

7. Don't hand out literature freely

Your catalogues and brochures end up in a bag with everyone else's literature. Be discriminating in who gets literature. Better yet, mail them out to qualified prospects after the show.

8. Don't underestimate prospects

Get out of the habit of sizing up somebody simply by the way they look. Qualify them – don't classify them.

9. Don't cluster with friends and other staff

Don't be a "street gang". Nobody will approach a group of strangers; it's too intimidating. Be more approachable.

10. Do have fun

11. Do smile

12. Do aim for excellence

Meet, then exceed all your targets.

Bonus list two

Understanding the six visitor types

OK, life is a little more complex than six visitor types, but simplifying it to six for the duration of the show will help you achieve your goals.

Sorting the needs and motivations of visitors into the following six categories will help you to identify and interact with them more efficiently and effectively.

1. The go-getter

These visitors know what they want to achieve, are happy to be approached, keen to discuss their requirements knowing that information received will help them make a better buying decision.

2. The reluctant interviewee

These visitors don't like being sold to. They are wary of giving away too much about themselves for fear that they are handing over control. They require careful handling. They mustn't be pushed too hard for information, but gently encouraged to volunteer it.

3. The introvert

These people feel self-conscious stepping onto an exhibition stand. They will often hover on the edges; reluctant to commit to stepping in, but when engaged in conversation may be only too happy to discuss their needs. Be careful not to scare them off.

What visitor type are your sales staff spending time with?



4. The time waster

These people will discuss just about anything – drawn out detail. Unfortunately, they usually have no authority to buy or money to spend. It's a good idea to pre-arrange methods of extracting yourselves, or each other, from the clutches of such visitors – politely!

5. The freeloader

These visitors are more interested in your food or drink and giveaways than your displays and take up valuable space and time that are better spent on real business discussions. You should have a firm policy on how to handle such visitors.

6. The old friend

Exhibitions are great places for bumping into old friends and acquaintances. Precious sales time can too easily be frittered away catching up on old times. Socialising should be saved for the evenings.

Other booklets in this series that may interest you:

- **How to create an outstanding stand**
- **How to be a successful consumer show exhibitor**
- **How to be a successful trade show exhibitor**
- **What a marketing manager needs to know when planning for an exhibition**

*Help and inspiration are
only a phone call away*

We're here to help, inform and inspire you. The information in this booklet is just the beginning – talk to us and discover how you can make the most of your investment at the show.

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