

Tradeshow Tip Sheet

This month: Mentally and Physically
Surviving the Tradeshow

- > 1865 Beach Ave NE
- > Salem, OR 97301
- > 503-371-9411
- > Fax: 503-371-9402
- > www.interpexhibits.com
- > info@interpexhibits.com
- > Editor: Tim Patterson

Connecting With Prospects and Customers

Connecting with customers at trade-shows can take on several forms from casual meetings with attendees to a high-level pre-arranged meeting between company leaders. And everything in between.

As you plan your next tradeshow, are you planning not only WHO to meet, but HOW to best meet them? Are you scheduling appointments, or just loose arrangements that might unravel under the shade of a chaotic show?

Your planning should probably take on several approaches: from scheduled

meetings to casual arrangements, media appointments and product demos, leaving room for serendipitous meetings that might lead to a breakthrough new client.

Beyond meetings with customers, plan on other events that either draw in new prospects, do a lively demo or meet with the media. It's all part of your broad tradeshow promotion plan. Go over the 'big picture' plan and then aim a rifle-shot at a few well-picked targets.

Plan a Meeting

It's old-fashioned, but it works. Planning meetings with your top-tier clients may be old hat, or it may be something you've been intending to 'get to' when you get organized. Nothing like getting organized now.

Your three or four choices for meetings at tradeshow are 1) on the show floor, 2) in a private meeting room at the convention center, 3) a hotel suite or meeting room off-site, or 4) treating your client to dinner at a nearby restaurant.

Every meeting should have an intended objective. It may be to build on a strong relationship. It may be to smooth over ruffled feathers. Perhaps you're trying to increase distribution by bringing in another player that is familiar with one of your current clients. In any event, the clearer you are about your desired outcome, the better your chance at success.



Start a couple of months before the show with e-mails and phone calls to schedule meetings. Touch base about a month before the show; confirm your meeting about a week before. Get a cell phone contact number and ask if you can call them in case something comes up that forces a change in time.

Be as communicative as possible without being a pest!

Schedule meetings with as many clients and prospects as you can. Make it easy for them to book with you.



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Your first approach to reporters should be short, sweet and to the point. Most prefer e-mail.

Give a Demo!

Demos are typically simple and straightforward promotions, but it's often an effective way to bring a lot of people into your world in just a few days. By hiring a professional tradeshow presenter, you'll be able to schedule several product or service demos each day during the show. A well-organized demo follow-up plan will get contact information and level of interest from each person that attended the demo. Armed with that information you can follow up in several different ways: e-mail, snail mail, phone calls or in-person visits, depending on how those prospects want to be reached (you did ask them, right?).

A good demo will also help separate the wheat from the chaff as the saying goes. If someone is really not interested in your product after seeing a demo, they likely won't stick around and give you their time and information. On the other hand, if your demonstration piques their interest, you'll have a good solid

lead, whether for immediate follow-up or to put them into your sales funnel for future contact.

And naturally a good demo will draw a crowd. And at a tradeshow nothing draws more people like a crowd. The more people you can draw for an initial demo, the more you will draw as a result of that initial crowd!



Meet the Media to Get the Word Out

Of course one of the best ways to get the word out is for the media to write about you. Whether it's a story in a trade magazine or website, a cable or TV channel or a mainstream newspaper or magazine, it's worth a lot of free publicity. Especially if the story is controlled by you from your appearance at the tradeshow. Some tips on shaping the story and getting the media to cover you comes from Koopman Ostbo in Portland, Oregon, a branding and advertising agency that also excels at putting media together with their clients for coverage of new products, changes and updates at companies.

"Your first approach to media should be via e-mail and should be short and to the point," says **Amber Lindsey of Koopman Ostbo** in Portland, Oregon. Lindsey helps coordinate media coverage of clients at tradeshows, adding that you should treat it as a sales call. "You're trying to make a connection, offer a benefit to them and ultimately help them – which helps you." Building a relationship takes time, but is an important key to getting good and continued coverage of your company's products and services. Listen to the podcast here: <http://budurl.com/w37e>.

Bottom Line

Reaching out to your clients and potential customers can take many different forms. Depending on the size of your marketing department, you may be able to work all of the angles. If the marketing budget or department is smaller (maybe just one person!), decide what may work best for the next show and concentrate on the best ways to achieve your objectives. Whatever the situation at your company, take it upon yourself to examine new

ways to reach out to your target market. Those clients and prospects all come from different places and information zooms at them from a variety of sources. The more you're able to tap into the myriad 'touch points' the more effective your overall tradeshow marketing strategy will prove to be.