

# Tradeshows Tip Sheet

This month: Guerrilla Tradeshows Marketing

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## The Guerrilla's Edge in Tradeshows Marketing

It seems that in hard economic times marketing is often the first to go. Yet many marketing experts will disagree, saying that marketing is what keeps the sales funnel filled and prospects moving through the sales process from tire-kicker to sampler to customer. And when dollars are tight, the smart marketer may have to cut his marketing budget, but it doesn't stop him from getting creative and squeezing more out of those dollars.

**Jay Conrad Levinson** coined the term 'guerrilla marketing' in 1984 with the release of the book of the same name. In it he detailed a marketing approach that didn't need big dollars and instead relied upon creativity, time, energy and imagination.

The concept of guerrilla marketing is to aim for

publicity at little or no cost; to cast your ring in the marketplace in an imaginative way; to grab your prospect's attention and pull them in. With the release of '**Guerrilla Trade Show Selling**' in 1997, Levinson, **Orvel Ray Wilson** and **Mark S. A. Smith** took on the specific method of using trade shows in their guerrilla marketing approach.

So let's take a gander at some of the ideas and concepts they talk about in their book and see how you might apply them. By all means, feel free to pick up a copy of the book at Amazon.com or a bookseller of your choice. If you use tradeshow marketing at your company, this little book offers a ton of great ideas – even if you have a healthy marketing budget.

## Start With the Exhibit

A smart low-budget tradeshow marketer will opt for a hyper-targeted show and aim at a focused niche. Once you've committed to the show, plan your booth. It may be a small exhibit, but the floor plan should aim at inviting customers into your booth. No tables, desks or other barriers. Keep it clean and uncluttered. The more inviting it is the more apt people are to stop and mill about while they learn about your product or service.

So dump the typical drape and skirted table – you're not required to use them – and open the space up for visitors. By standing in your exhibit (yes, lose the chairs too, or at least fold them up and put them off to the side) you're subtly saying to the visitors, "Yup I'm here and liking this...just like you!" If you're sitting down, you're communicating just about the opposite. It's a psychological tactic that other exhibitors may not know about – and it positions you against them in a positive way.

A true guerrilla's booth will be lightweight, quick



and easy to set up and transport. You might also consider borrowing, renting, leasing or buying a used exhibit to save money.

The floor plan of your booth should be designed with the idea of inviting visitors to come in and get to know you and your product or service



## Who's on our latest tradeshow podcast?

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If your visitor is not ready to buy today, offer a valuable item, such as a free report, in exchange for their name and email address to put them in the sales funnel

## Team Up With Other Exhibitors

Many exhibitors cringe at the idea of teaming up with other exhibitors. They wonder why you'd even consider sending people away from your booth to find another. Yet if you can find a half dozen businesses that have similar target audiences offering different products or services, get together and plan a 'Team Map' to hand out at all booths. Offer small prizes or discounts if a visitor gets a stamp from all of the team members.

Put a short paragraph on the flyer about each business describing what you do, how you do it and why now is the time to take advantage of your offer. Show people where to go on the tradeshow floor, and explain what the attendee will get if they visit each booth and get the flyer stamped. This circulates people about the show floor with the aim of getting them to stop specifically at your booth and those on your team.

## Selling on the Trade Show Floor

According to 'Guerrilla Trade Show Selling,' there are four essential skills for selling on the trade show floor: 1) product knowledge, 2) competitive knowledge, 3) Guerrilla Selling® skills and 4) moving people on gently and quickly.

If your booth staffer can speak with knowledge about your newest product offering, the visitor is impressed. If they know how it stacks up competitively that's even better. Once you've got a person engaged, ask questions to *disqualify* them. Try and find reasons to send them on their way. The less time you spend talking to tire-kickers and unqualified buyers the more time you'll have to talk to those who are qualified and have the bucks to spend

## Bottom Line

Guerrilla tactics require thought, planning, and action. It also takes refinement, a sharp eye to keeping your budget to the bone and the ultimate goal of selling as much of your service or products as you can. If you don't sell immediately to a prospect, find a way to get them into your sales funnel. One method is to offer a free valuable report via email so they're willing to give you their name and email address. Something like "17 Low or No-Cost

If you're going to do this, you'll need to coordinate the flyer a few weeks ahead of time once booth locations are nailed down. Print the flyer on 5 1/2" x 8" bright (maybe even fluorescent) card stock so it'll stand out. Visitors who see other attendees carrying the flyer will stop them and ask where they can get theirs, which in turn brings even more people to the 'team' booths.



and the authority to make the buying decision.

As to the part about moving people along gently and quickly, keep in mind that the tradeshow floor is chaotic. If your product is popular there will be people waiting to talk to you. If you've discerned that one visitor is not a prospective customer, gently say 'thanks for coming by, I appreciate it. I've got to talk to this person here...' and shake their hands. They'll get the hint and move on so you can spend time with someone else.

Ways to Increase the Value of Your Home" or a similar-sounding title. This shows your expertise and knowledge and makes you more attractive to them.

If the low-budget, under-the-radar marketing approach isn't natural to you, don't worry. The more you work on it the better you'll get. And for good measure, make sure to add the book to your library. It'll pay you back many times over!