



The Top 5 Mistake Experienced Exhibitors Make:

1. No post-event stress test.

How to approach your next show really starts as soon as your last one ends. And the only way to really know how the show did is to measure it against what your goals for it were. Specific, quantifiable goals. “We wanted to collect X amount of leads for our products, we surpassed that by Y (or, we missed it by Z, *and here’s why we fell short*), we wanted A amount of leads for our services etc. etc.” **Stop being content with vague metrics. They are costing you a lot of money.** Clear, actionable next steps are a lead. Lots of great conversations with people who want you to call them in maybe two weeks or so, is not.

2. Vague game plan for show.

Impossible to figure out point #1 without a game plan. How much will your show cost, what’s your trade show readiness (ready Freddy, sort of ready, fly by the seat of your pants). Trade show readiness encompasses:

- the booth (and anything that needs to be replaced that is part of the booth.)
- the shipping (pickups and drop off arrangements for booth.)
- the marketing (social media promotion, free gifts, catalogues, etc.)
- the people (room and board accommodations, training.)
- the tech (to collect leads, automate emails and workflows from said leads.)
- the appointments (with prospects and clients.)
- the goals (from point #1.)

How will you get ready Freddy in time for the show, how much revenue do you want to close from the show, how many leads will that require, how prepared is your staff, how will you measure whether your show is on or off pace to hit those goals? **It's ok not to hit every one of your goals every time. The problem is that many companies go in blind (or nearsighted)** without knowing budget, expectations, or results.

3. Not innovating or trying new things.

The same way your marketing department does A/B testing to figure out what approach is most effective, **your approach to your trade shows should always be evolving.** And just like A/B testing, change one small thing, make sure it's being enforced for the show, then break down (with numbers) if that change created the desired uptick (traffic to the booth, engagement with attendees, follow-up time, social media impressions, etc. etc.)

You might test out 10 different things in 2018, and 9 of them add little to no appreciable value. But you could have 1 surprise you with improving some metric. It's not about expecting a 1,000% return, you're just refining your approach to your shows bit by bit. And isn't your own business run that way anyway?

4. "Not great, but also not broken" mentality.

When was the last time you went through every expense that goes into your shows (or better yet, went through every show) and cut the dead weight? When was the last time you looked at your lineup of booth staff, and had them qualify to attend shows? Lastly, when was the last time you role played with them so there's a consistency in your qualifying process at the booth? *Everyone* needs practice to stay at the top of their game. Wouldn't it be weird if an athlete refused to have their sprints timed? **Wouldn't it be sheer arrogance if their reasoning was, "I don't need to be micromanaged, I've been running for 20 years!"**

5. Disparate operations.

This can take the form of: each rep in the booth having their own method for qualifying leads, collecting lead information, scheduling next steps, what those steps would be, follow up method and time, etc. etc. For example. if an attendee doesn't become a lead is it because: they don't have a need right now, or they don't have a need at all, and are they put into the CRM? If they don't have a need right now, is their information given to marketing? Or just the sales rep continues to reach out occasionally? What's the follow up process (email, card, singing telegram?) and how soon should it happen?

Conclusion: Trade shows get really fun when excited, qualified people are going, they know what they're aiming for and how to do it. Getting organized makes shows fun and incredibly productive.

Credit: tradeshowstars.com