

## **TRADE SHOW CLOSING TIPS**

*By Sondra Brewer, President of Sondra Brewer Communications*

Companies spend exorbitant amounts of time and money introducing and exhibiting their products at trade shows. In fact, it is a major source of promotion within almost every industry. Yet the one area where trade shows specialists insist on a return for mega dollar input - trade show sales - is relegated to a corner of the booth and often neglected entirely. Your final and most objective goal from a trade show should be to close new business either at the show itself or as a result of contacts made on the trade show floor.

In order for your trade show to be successful, your booth must function as a branch office of your company. Your booth staff represents your company's image. Their professional conduct will ultimately convince attendees they can take your company seriously and depend on your staff to care about the business they give you. Common mistakes made by exhibitors while on booth duty can turn a prospect off faster than a water faucet. The nine "Don'ts" listed below are easy to avoid once you're aware of the trade show rules of the road.

Every conversation you have should lead to your objective: a sale. Remember, people buy your first before they ever consider your product. At a trade show a salesperson has an opportunity to reach people who ordinarily are not accessible and to uncover new buying interests. You can make contact with more qualified people during a three day show than you could reach in a whole month of field sales calls. The Trade Show Bureau tells us that 80% of trade show visitors are buying influencers for at least one of the products exhibited at the show. Studies also show that trade shows, when worked correctly, are the most cost effective way to reach a buying audience. According to McGraw-Hill Research, a typical industrial sales calls costs over \$229, compared to the Trade Show Bureau survey figure of \$107 per qualified buyer contact at a trade show.

A trade show is the start of a buying relationship. Select the booth staff with care. Choose your best sales and technical representatives. It should be an honor, not a duty, to be selected for membership on the exhibit team. Make sure your booth staff is trained to sell and to give effective demonstrations on the trade show floor. Stress the team effort. If possible, utilize the talents and experience of a trade show consultant to help them make the conversion from field sales to selling on the trade show floor.

Your exhibit area should be a sales tool for your trained booth staff. It should be large enough to hold booth staff, attendees and product comfortably. A booth should be staffed by two people, otherwise you risk the chance of the prospect feeling uncomfortable and threatened. A prospect who is uncomfortable will not make a commitment.

The booth should be bright, well lit and have a simple direct message along with a convincing demonstration of the product or service. Product benefits must be stressed at all times as prospects buy the benefits, not the product's features. Too much information is as bad as not enough. The booth should have a single strong focal point to make people stop and want to come in. Remember, the prospect comes to see the product, not the booth. Don't let the booth overwhelm the product.

As a rule of thumb, industry experts quote exhibit design and manufacturing costs as \$100 per square foot or \$1,000 per linear foot. To realize more from your exhibit dollars, design for flexibility of configuration and future adaptation. Examine other uses for the booth such as: lobby display, shopping mall, or in-store use. Consider how many times you will be using this exhibit. Modular displays can be used in a number of different configurations to keep the cost of exhibiting down.

It is very important to maintain a professional image throughout. That means all salespeople should know what is expected of them such as: qualifying skills, benefit selling, and prompt follow-up. Your booth should be designed to help the booth staff sell the product benefits and to reflect the professionalism of your organization. By working a trade show correctly, you will be guaranteed increased sales through trade shows.

#### Trade Show Don'ts

1. Sitting (except with a prospect)
2. Smoking, drinking, eating or chewing gum
3. Talking with fellow personnel instead of concentrating on show attendees
4. Ignoring prospects
5. Being overly aggressive
6. Obstructing the exhibit entrance
7. Handing out literature to everyone
8. Reading the newspaper
9. Underestimating the prospects

#### **Success Tips for A Trade Show**

1. Be carefully groomed
2. Be enthusiastic (enthusiasm sells!)
3. Use the prospect's name
4. Know all there is to know about your product
5. Know the competition
6. Be prepared to demonstrate
7. Be on time for booth duty
8. Qualify all prospects
9. Set a commitment to action
10. Wear your badge on your right side

Guest Blogger: **Sondra Brewer** is president of Sondra Brewer Communications, a full service trade show marketing firm offering workshops, training, script development and sales lead tracking services for trade show selling.