

## Use Promotion to Improve Lead Quality

Pre- and at-show promotions will measurably increase booth traffic and motivate pre-qualified prospects and existing customers to visit your exhibit. The more you promote yourself, the greater the return on your trade show efforts and investments.

### **Step 1: Determine Your Show or Event Goals**

Exhibitors should establish goals and objectives that are specific (quantified), time-bound (each half-day of the show) and measurable. According to Bill Lipscomb, an industry expert on strategic planning and measurement, “Exhibitors should establish three primary goals for a show: sales, press, and image.”

Sales goals can include the number of meetings with existing customers, and leads generated that represent new business opportunities. Press goals should focus on the number of interviews that are conducted during the show, and the number of lines of press generated as a result of these interviews. Image goals have to do with your company’s image (brand) in the marketplace. One easy way to measure image goals is to conduct a pre- and post-show survey of attendees to measure: 1) changes in their perception of your company; and 2) whether your target market clearly understands the breadth and scope of your current capabilities.” The more you define your goals, the easier it will be to achieve them – especially if you promote yourself at, during and after a show.

### **Step 2: Define Your Target Audience**

Target your promotions to:

Existing customers

- Prospects in process (actively involved in making a decision and your company is one of the short-list suppliers)
- Pre-qualified prospects in your target audience.

As shows become more selling events, the term “pre-qualified” should be defined from a joint sales and marketing perspective. Not everyone at a show will be a good prospect for every company on the show floor. To ensure that you are targeting the right prospects, ask your internal customers (product line managers, vice presidents of sales and marketing, etc.) to define the specific type of prospects or customers they would like to meet. Ask them what their definition is of a pre-qualified customer. The more you define your target market and the prospects within it, the better you can target your promotion.

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### Step 3: Create Your List

Several sources of lists are available for you to target your promotion. The best list will come from your sales representatives. They are calling on your company's best prospects and customers. If you do not invite these people, and your competitors do, it could send

a message that you don't want to send (they might perceive you take them and their business for granted).

The next source of pre-qualified leads is your own sales and/or marketing own data base. Names might include people and companies: 1) with whom you have done business in the past; 2) who have bought through your channels or strategic partners; or 3) who are most probably not aware of your current capabilities, but should be.

Some exhibitors purchase a list from their show manager or association. You might choose to secure a list from the show organizer of this year's pre-registered attendees. Another list might be obtained from the publishers of trade journals in your industry. Some exhibitors will "partner" with their strategic suppliers or other exhibitors to develop a list and do a promotion. Whatever list you use, your best results will come if you contact only those prospects that are pre-qualified for the products and services you sell.

### Step 4: Define Your Key Marketing Message to Support Your Brand

Show attendees are bombarded with marketing messages prior to, at, and after a meetings, conventions and trade shows. To "stand out from the crowd," and be remembered accurately, we suggest that you create and use a marketing message that is simple, clearly defined and easily remembered. Your message should:

- leverage, support and enhance your brand;
- be consistent with how you want your company, products, services, solutions and capabilities to be perceived and remembered;
- be conveyed in all of your pre-, at- and post-show promotions and advertisements;
- understood and supported by your booth staff (if your staff can't articulate your message, your marketplace probably won't be able to either).

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Some exhibitors have a different message for each product or service they sell. Prospects and customers can get confused when you send too many messages, or if your messages are not aligned with one another. A single message, or a “family” of a few messages, is easier to remember than diverse messages that are not tied together in one way or another. Create a company marketing message that serves as an “umbrella” for all of the diverse products and services you are displaying on the show floor. The more consistent the message, and the more it is repeated, the greater the probability that prospects and customers will remember your company (and your unique capabilities) as you want and need to be remembered.

### **Step 5: Create and Send Your Promotion**

Types of pre-show promotions include:

#### **Invitation Letters**

Send a personalized invitation or letter which conveys your marketing message and motivates the prospect to visit your booth — i.e., new product announcement, meet with a senior manager in your company, etc.

#### **Hospitality Function Invitations**

If your company is hosting a hospitality function, send invitations to pre-qualified prospects and customers. This invitation should invite them to your booth to pick up a pass for the hospitality suite. If you just send them a pass for the hospitality suite, they might miss your booth.

#### **Advertisements**

Advertise in newspapers, trade magazines, newsletters, the exhibitor directory, show daily or other industry related publications. Make sure that all the ads you run during the two months prior to the meeting have a tag line which mentions the meeting’s name and your booth location and/or number.

#### **Incentives**

Incentives can include discounts, better terms and conditions for show orders, or other offers that will motivate pre-qualified prospects to stop at your booth.

#### **Contests/Gifts**

Some exhibitors will use a contest or gift to motivate prospects and customers to stop by the booth.

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### **Additional Suggestions**

- Change the messages on your postage meter and voice mail to mention the name of the show and your booth number.
- About two months before the show, stamp all invoices and letters with the show name and your booth number.

### **Step 6: Promote Yourself at the Show**

- Actively promote your company and brand in Atlanta. Suggestions include:
- Convey your key message in all your at show signage; make sure it can be seen from every angle on the show floor.
- Ask your “partners” to promote your company in their booth - Microsoft has the “Windows” image everywhere you turn at a high tech show.
- Participate in the show’s daily newspaper.
- Sponsor activities or events that attract your target audience.
- Try to be interviewed as much as possible so that you will be quoted or written about after the show.

### **Step 7: Measure Performance**

Measuring and evaluating results will provide you and your associates with the vital information you need determine if you accomplished your goals, and improved the quality of your leads. It will also help you make key long-term strategic decisions as well.

Measurement will enable you to determine how successful you were (or weren’t) at an event, and why. A well designed and implemented measurement and evaluation program will ultimately lead you and your company to continued improvement, effectiveness and success.