



Exhibit Staff Training Tips

By Keith Reznick

Your exhibit staff is your most important asset at a trade show or customer event. According to the Center for Exhibition Industry research (ceir.org) 85% of an exhibitor's success is dependent upon the exhibit staff. Exhibit workers will interact with hundreds (thousands) of your company's best customers and prospects. Each of these interactions is a sales call because prospects' and customers' perceptions and buying behavior will be influenced by everything your exhibit staff says and does. Regardless of their roles outside of the show, exhibit workers are perceived by attendees as professional representatives of your company who can provide them with information about your products, services and solutions. Your staff should be properly trained to ensure that each interaction is positive and mutually beneficial. The following tips and suggestions will help you train your exhibit staff.

Define Roles and Responsibilities

Think about your goals for the show, and then ask yourself "What skills, capabilities and knowledge will I need in the booth to accomplish our goals for the show?" Once you determine the answer, select people accordingly. Prior to the show make sure that your exhibit workers understand their specific roles and responsibilities (i.e., meet-and-greet, demonstrator, floater, etc.) and what's expected of them in that role. If appropriate each person should also know how their performance will be measured and evaluated, and by whom. Train to address deficiencies.

Schedule

Review the schedule for the show and for exhibit duty each day of the show. Find out if anyone has made any commitments (i.e., customer meetings, meetings with a high level manager, etc.) that will impact their time in the booth and adjust accordingly.

Press

Explain your plans for interacting with the press. If you have a dedicated PR person or PR team, make sure that people in your booth know who they are, when they will be available, where they'll be located (both on and off the show floor) and contact information if the connection can't be made during the show or event. Discuss press and/or product announcements that were made before, or will be made at, the show. Mention interviews that are already scheduled, and who will be interviewed.

Do's and Don'ts

Trade shows have their own unique set of rules and etiquette. Review the Do's and Don'ts before the show begins, and throughout the show as necessary. If possible, provide your exhibit workers with a list of Do's and Don'ts during your pre-show strategic briefing and ask them to identify the most important ones. Doing so will get them more involved in your meeting and display more appropriate behaviors on the show floor.



Show Goals and Marketing Message(s)

Convey both your goals and marketing message(s) for the show. Role-play with your staff to ensure that they understand, and can clearly articulate your key marketing message(s). If they can't clearly convey your key message(s), the probability that your customers and prospects will understand or remember them will be greatly diminished.

Product Training

Explain which products, services or solutions will be highlighted at the show. Prepare a diagram of the booth noting: 1) where each product or service will be located; and 2) the subject matter expert(s) for each product or service. This will enable your staff to professionally transition prospects to the right part of the booth or the right person in the booth when they get questions they can't answer.

Sales Skills Training

Most interactions on the show floor last between three and five minutes. Discuss with your exhibit workers how to make the most of these short interactions. They'll need to be able to: 1) professionally engage prospects; 2) use open-ended questions to qualify both the attendee and the sales opportunity; 3) identify specific customer needs and requirements before they present; 4) present information that relates to each prospect's specific needs (at the right technical level); 5) suggest the most appropriate post-show activity; and 6) complete the lead form and professionally disengage. Don't assume that they can do this. Role-play and practice.

Lead Processing

Teach people how to process leads. Have them practice asking the questions that need to be asked to properly complete the lead form. If the show is using a scanner or card reader, have them practice using it and, if appropriate, explain how to key in additional information and how to process the lead. Also, explain how and when your company will follow up after the show so that your staff can convey this information to your customers and prospects.

Maximize your investment in shows and events by selecting the proper mix of exhibit workers and providing them with the training they need to make the most out of each and every interaction on the show floor.

About the Author

Keith Reznick's company, Creative Training Solutions, designs, develops and delivers live and online training programs. Since 1989 he and his associates have conducted more than 2,000 workshops and trained more than 40,000 people how to:

- ◆ Be more effective communicators; and
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