



Trade Show Exhibitors Association

ExhibiTips™

## 200 ExhibiTips™

Two hundred valuable tips to save you time, money and effort; and help you maximize your exhibition results.

### Planning:

1. Do your homework.
2. Begin planning 6-9 months ahead for domestic shows.
3. Visit new shows first before making a decision to exhibit in them.
4. Write an exhibit marketing plan.
5. Reserve space early for the best locations and to take advantage of early bird discounts.
6. Set realistic budgets (guideline: space—24%; booth expenses—33%; show services—22%; transportation—13%; advertising/promotion—4%; personnel—4%).
7. Create realistic goals and objectives for each show.
8. Use historical data from previous shows you've attended to help plan for more realistic exhibiting goals.
9. Involve your exhibit team in the goal-setting process.
10. Determine what return on investment you expect from each show.
11. Determine your target audience for each show.
12. Investigate which of your competitors will also be exhibiting.
13. Have a contingency plan of action in case of emergencies. Example: what will you do if your exhibit, products or literature don't arrive on time, or your staffers get sick at the last minute and can't attend?

### Logistics:

14. Create an exhibitor checklist.
15. Know what products/services you want to exhibit.
16. Save by ordering show services early.
17. Avoid missing show service deadlines if you want to save money. Services ordered on the show floor are often priced 20% higher.
18. Read the exhibitor manual, as it is your complete reference guide to every aspect of the show and your key to saving money.
19. Understand the show rules and regulations.
20. Ensure all electrical items meet necessary show regulations.
21. Familiarize yourself with union labor rules, regulations and rates.
22. Know when straight time begins and ends and, where possible, avoid overtime rates.
23. Report any problems to the union steward and/or show management.
24. Rent a security cage for your equipment to avoid damage after show hours.
25. Have your computer presentation/demonstration converted to CD-ROM in case of a technical catastrophe.

### **The Exhibit Display:**

26. Consider your need—custom or portable.
27. Choose a design that best portrays your company image.
28. Request a sketch/rendering of your display and make sure you know exactly what you are buying.
29. Have your exhibit builder use parts that are readily available and inexpensive to replace.
30. Buy a display that is compact, flexible and versatile.
31. Investigate how quickly and easily the exhibit installs and dismantles.
32. Explore the ease of expanding your display in the future.
33. Check the weight of the display and project what shipping costs will be.
34. Consider the need for storage after each show.
35. Use color to create the right image/message and lighting to accentuate products.
36. Grab visitors' attention with moving objects.
37. Add life and color by using flowers and plants (consider using silk plants for durability).
38. Buy your own plants instead of renting.
39. Look into refurbishing an old exhibit before buying new.
40. Buy your own carpet and skirting instead of renting.
41. Protect your exhibit from theft after tear down; shrink-wrap all loose items to a pallet.

### **Exhibit Graphics:**

42. Utilize graphics to enhance your company/product messages.
43. Create impact with life-size photos.
44. Keep copy concise and buyer-focused.
45. Provide camera-ready artwork to save on production costs.
46. Consider creating your own graphics copy with desktop publishing programs and equipment.
47. Have copy proofread to avoid change charges.
48. Avoid rush and overtime charges.
49. Use color photos when you change photos often and durotrans for more permanency.

### **Transportation:**

50. Save money by planning transportation needs well in advance of the show schedule.
51. Choose a carrier who specializes in trade show transportation.
52. Always communicate both in writing and verbally with your carrier.
53. Never assume a carrier knows how to handle your pieces.
54. Give your carrier specific instructions for handling unusual or fragile pieces.
55. Label crates properly using international symbols.
56. Use arrows in addition to the words "This side up."
57. Respect the use of "Fragile" and use only when necessary.
58. Declare the full value of your load before shipment, for liability purposes.
59. Never skimp on packaging to save money—it never pays! Replacing damaged goods always costs more.
60. Complete short form bills of lading at the show site.
61. Develop a "team" among all of your show service vendors and include your carrier.
62. Keep accurate records of weight and number of shipments.

63. Know the weight of your shipping cases—full and empty.
64. Consolidate smaller boxes in one large box.
65. Shrink-wrap smaller boxes onto a pallet.
66. Use combination locks instead of keys.
67. Consider sharing shipping costs with another exhibitor.

**Promotion—Direct Mail:**

68. Send invitations to prospects and customers.
69. Use a qualified mailing list and first-class mail.
70. Consider e-mail invitations in place of mass mailings.
71. Use show logos on all correspondence.
72. Have a postage meter imprinted with your booth number and show name.
73. Have envelopes printed with a special message/teaser.
74. Use odd-sized promotional pieces and bold colors (stock and/or ink).
75. Have a theme and keep your message short, sweet and simple.
76. Create a three-part mailing.
77. Consider different mailings for different target audiences.
78. Use color postcards—people always read them!
79. Enclose promotional pieces in everything you mail (e.g. invoices).
80. Increase your credibility as an expert in your industry: have informational articles posted on your Web site.
81. Maximize exhibitor-to-exhibitor show hours. Scan the on-site program to see which other exhibitors might be a source of business for you.
82. Create a postcard as a one-sheet flyer to hand out when visitors ask for more information.

**Promotion—Advertising & PR:**

83. Investigate what promotional activities show management is planning and take advantage of their promotional materials.
84. Send customers/prospects calendars printed with show dates.
85. Advertise in the show catalog and show dailies.
86. Consider using hotel closed circuit TV.
87. Find exhibitors with complimentary products/services and save money on cross-promotional activities.
88. Add a banner to existing advertising with your booth number.
89. Investigate Web site linking opportunities with show management.
90. Use your own Web site to advertise your show participation.
91. Use an e-newsletter to promote your show participation.
92. Save by using one or two color printing and use screens to create different shades.
93. Save with quantity discounts when ordering premium items.
94. Give away an original item appropriate to your target audience.
95. Consider nicer gifts for key prospects/customers.
96. Reprint product/service application articles for handouts.
97. Produce newsworthy press kits, which include interesting action photos.
98. Support company/product information with relevant market information.
99. Hold a press reception for product launches and invite the relevant media to attend.
100. Investigate opportunities to conduct seminars/workshops.
101. Conduct market research, send out a survey and invite visitors to return it to the booth completed in exchange for a gift.

102. Promote your business with phone cards. Have your logo on the front and a prerecorded message when prospects use the card.
103. Encourage attendee participation by wearing large "ask me" buttons.

**Booth Etiquette—Do's:**

104. Choose people-oriented staffers who are good company ambassadors.
105. Make sure they are observant and good listeners.
106. Enforce the 80/20 rule—80% listening, 20% talking.
107. Conduct a pre-show meeting to ensure that all staffers are on the same page about company goals, objectives and expectations for the show.
108. Train representatives to effectively qualify prospects.
109. Show them how to demonstrate products.
110. Establish a suitable dress code.
111. Wear comfortable shoes.
112. Wear your nametag on the upper right.
113. Prepare 3-6 engaging questions.
114. Look to build rapport by being friendly and non-threatening.
115. Ask open-ended questions—ones that stimulate thought and encourage relevant conversation.
116. Determine the prospect's needs and investigate what created that interest/need.
117. Find out what particular problems exist and relate your product/service to their needs.
118. Explore time and budget parameters to help focus your demonstration.
119. Record all prospect information on a lead card.
120. Keep the booth clean and tidy.
121. Be very familiar with the equipment on display and practice demonstrations.
122. Get visitors involved in the demonstration.
123. Let prospects know how your products/services compare with the competition's.
124. Show existing customers new product lines/applications.
125. Anticipate questions.
126. Use literature to enhance conversation and only give it to qualified prospects.
127. Offer to send sales literature.
128. Avoid leaving premiums out for everyone to take.
129. Get some qualifying information in exchange for a gift.
130. Use premiums as a "thank you for stopping" gift.
131. Close the interaction by communicating your follow-up action plan with your exhibit staff.
132. Conduct a debriefing session at the end of each day.

**Booth Etiquette—Don'ts:**

133. Avoid sitting, reading, chewing gum, eating or drinking in the booth.
134. Don't ignore prospects by chatting with colleagues.
135. Avoid using either the booth telephone or cell phones while visitors are around.
136. Don't leave the booth without informing colleagues.
137. Don't be late for booth duty.
138. Don't leave the booth unattended.
139. Avoid closing off conversation by crossing your arms. Body language says a lot—make sure it's communicating the message you want your visitor to hear.
140. Don't stand with your back to the aisle.
141. Don't lean on booth furniture.

142. Don't say, "Can I help you?" Your visitor might not know whether your company can help him or her. Plus, yes-or-no questions don't foster an environment in which you can present your product or service as a solution to the visitor's needs.
143. Don't drink alcohol or eat garlicky or spicy foods during the day.
144. Avoid complaining about the show, using inappropriate language or bad-mouthing the competition.
145. Don't wear new shoes or high heels.
146. Avoid letting the booth get untidy.

#### **Live Presentations:**

147. Understand how the presentation will help accomplish the show objectives.
148. Use the presentation to convey company/product messages.
149. Have lead cards to qualify your audience.
150. Keep the presentation to 10-15 minutes and plan the optimum number of presentations to be given each day.
151. Consider different presentations for various product lines.
152. Seek expert advice for a professional presentation.
153. Give the audience a gift for attending.
154. Train staff to handle the presentation logistics.
155. Encourage visitors to talk to representatives and see product demonstrations.
156. Have a fax-on-demand service available at your booth for attendees needing specific information on products/services.

#### **Hospitality Suites:**

157. Reserve a conveniently located space in the convention center, nearby hotel or other off-site facility.
158. Consider hiring transportation if the facility is away from regular activities.
159. Plan a menu to fit the image you wish to portray. Consider serving soft drinks, beer and wine to keep budgets reasonable.
160. Make sure your company and products/services are properly displayed and have an adequate supply of literature or other promotional material.
161. Print special invitations and send them out prior to the show and/or distribute them at the booth.
162. Brief employees about the overall purpose of the function and let them know what is expected of them.
163. Recommend a dress code to avoid inappropriate clothing.
164. Encourage employees to avoid sitting and talking with co-workers and drinking too much alcohol.

#### **Lead Management:**

165. Design a customized lead card
166. Use your sales team to design a card that records necessary information.
167. Establish and use a prospect ranking system.
168. Plan a questioning strategy.
169. Establish a lead-handling plan.
170. Create a method for tracking existing customers who visit the booth.
171. Develop a follow-up system and use a computerized database for tracking.
172. Consider using an outside resource to manage a high volume of leads.
173. Send/fax a "thank you for stopping by" letter.
174. Make sales representatives accountable for leads, and withhold leads from sales representatives not meeting accountability standards.

175. Measure results: calculate cost-per-lead and your return on investment.

**Show Evaluation:**

- 176. Monitor how you performed in relation to goals set, and look at what improvements need to be made for future shows.
- 177. Discuss major show challenges with staffers and explore areas where more preparation is needed.
- 178. Address any problem areas with show management.
- 179. Decide if you should exhibit again at this particular show.
- 180. Analyze the effectiveness of your exhibit/layout/demonstrations etc.
- 181. Examine response to pre-show and at-show promotions.
- 182. Measure the quantity and quality of leads gathered.
- 183. Compare the effectiveness of your message versus the competition.
- 184. Evaluate the effectiveness of your booth staff.
- 185. Consider what revisions need to be made to next year's budget.

**Exhibiting Internationally:**

- 186. Research shows that attract your target market and allow 12-18 months for planning.
- 187. Question your product's suitability overseas and appreciate that many countries are not as technically sophisticated as the U.S.
- 188. Study international advertising and marketing techniques.
- 189. Work closely with the show organizer to avoid any surprises
- 190. Allow for hospitality at the booth, as it's expected.
- 191. Prepare literature in the principal languages of the show.
- 192. Use a native for translations, and have people work the booth who can speak the language and understand the culture.
- 193. Know and understand cultural differences and be sensitive to color, symbols and their meanings.
- 194. Carry plenty of business cards and have cards printed on the reverse side in the local language.
- 195. Develop relationships of trust and sincerity and remember that a smile is universal.
- 196. Be prepared to negotiate and agree on pricing terms at the show.
- 197. Be fully conversant with tariffs and various tax implications.
- 198. Use freight forwarders to assist with c.i.f. (cost, insurance, freight) costs.
- 199. Find out if you need a carnet for products you bring into a country.
- 200. Follow-up with contacts personally after the show, and be very patient.

*Written for the Trade Show Exhibitors Association by Susan A. Friedmann, The Tradeshow Coach, Lake Placid, NY, working with exhibitors and show organizers to improve their trade show success through coaching, consulting and training. For more information visit her Web site: [www.tradeshowsuccess.com](http://www.tradeshowsuccess.com)*

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