

The Ultimate Insider's Guide to Trade Show Planning



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Truly great trade show results are achievable.

While the global pandemic took a significant toll on the exhibition industry, it has revealed the resilience and commitment of all the people who make trade shows such an integral part of business-to-business marketing. We know our industry has changed forever. We'll have to do some things differently. But the foundation of what makes an event successful remains the same.

Whether you are new to the industry, a seasoned trade show professional, or somewhere in between, this guide will help you navigate the complexity of trade show planning and management. It's packed full of insider information on audience targeting, booth selection and design, show services, trade show marketing tactics, and more.

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Section 1: Getting Back to Shows Safely



Leading exhibition organizers are going above and beyond to ensure the health and safety of attendees and exhibitors as trade shows make their long-awaited return. Wider aisles, open spaces, dedicated entrances and exits, and changes to food and beverage services are all things we can expect to see as we get back to live events.

Venues are getting their Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC) STAR Accreditation for sanitation protocols. HVAC systems are being upgraded to ensure better and cleaner airflow. Employees are being trained and certified on a myriad of new health and safety protocols.

As an exhibitor, you should plan for frequent cleaning and disinfection, and managing physical distancing inside your booth. Every exhibitor should have plenty of masks and hand sanitizing stations on hand for anyone who enters your space. And you may want to consider establishing a plan for responding to anyone who reports feeling ill or in need of medical attention.

We all have to do our part to ensure a safe and sustainable return to live events. To stay abreast of the latest recommendations and requirements, visit the show's website frequently, and follow the [CDC's guidelines for large gatherings](#).



Section 2: Selecting the Right Shows



There is a reason why so many companies are committed to doing trade shows – they work! The most successful exhibitors reap the rewards of high lead counts, solid relationship building, and increased brand awareness.

Choosing to exhibit at the right events is vital to achieving that level of success. Even before the pandemic, the selection process involved thoughtful research and tough decisions. Now, the contrast between pent-up demand as shows return and the uncertainty of attendance and public health requirements make those decisions even more difficult.

Regardless of the timing, it's essential to define and prioritize your exhibiting goals before choosing your events. Write a list, then prioritize it. Some goals to consider are listed below.

Trade Show Goals

- **New Product Introductions** – Attendees consistently rank discovering new products as the number one reason they go to shows.
- **Lead Generation** – There is simply no other platform that can deliver as many qualified leads in as short a time as trade shows.
- **Brand Recognition** – Whether you have been in business for decades or are a newcomer to your field, trade shows yield a generous amount of brand impressions, depending on attendance and your booth design. Trade shows hold a distinct advantage over other types of branding, as they allow attendees to interact with you on the spot.
- **Market Penetration** – When you are trying to enter new markets, vertical trade shows provide an ideal platform to get your products seen by hundreds of potential buyers in a short amount of time. Buyers recognize that you are a true player in their industry when you exhibit.
- **Relationship Building** – Trade shows are an excellent opportunity to connect with customers and prospects, both in and away from the booth. Whether an existing customer or key target account, spending quality face-to-face time helps shape the relationships at the heart of every business transaction.
- **Sales Channel Training** – Many exhibitors send their sales representatives to trade shows to build their industry knowledge. Distributors do this, as well. The knowledge gained about your products and those of your competitors is significant.

- **Competitive Landscape** – Whether you hear it through the grapevine or do the research yourself, you should have some awareness of which of your competitors is exhibiting at a given show. If all your primary competitors are exhibiting and your company is not, you should consider how much market share you may be losing by not having a presence. Conversely, if you have identified a show as ideal for your business, and your competitors are not there, then the attendees are yours for the taking.
- **Investor Relations** – Publicly-held exhibitors often invite their investors to their trade show booth. Shows are ideal for investors to see and interact with your products.
- **Media Coverage** – Journalists and editors scour the show floor for news on innovative new products to share with their readers. Inviting the media into your booth for some show-and-tell can result in plenty of free advertising.



Section 2: Selecting the Right Shows



Trade Show Attendees

Once you know *why* you are planning to exhibit, it's time to define *who* you need to reach. Knowing your target audience is perhaps the most significant step in the selection process. How deep you go in your targeting depends on your company data.

At the very least, you should know the industries of the companies that currently buy, or are likely to buy, the products you intend to exhibit. It helps to understand your other buyer demographics, such as job function and decision-making authority, too. Company size and locations may also be important to you. You may even have specific companies you want to reach.

Trade show organizers want your business, so they will provide you with as much data as needed to convince you to exhibit with them. This information is typically available on the show website, either through an Exhibitor Prospectus document or on-page content.

Pro Tip:

Don't exhibit at shows where your audience is other exhibitors. The people staffing those booths are focused on selling, not buying. Booth personnel may be reluctant to provide contact information for the buyers you need to meet. And that business card you leave behind? Chances are it won't get any attention after the show.

Typical data on past show attendees include:

- Number of Attendees
- Company Industry
- Attendee Job Function
- Attendee Decision-making Authority
- Company Revenue
- Company Locations/Regions
- Leading Brands

Other important information may include:

- Size of the Event (typically in square feet/meters)
- Number of Exhibitors
- Product Categories of Other Exhibitors
- Exhibitor List

Now, match up your target list against the show's attendee list. The more your lists align, the better your chance of having a terrific show.

Section 2: Selecting the Right Shows



Cost Considerations

Cost, of course, consistently tops the list of things to consider when selecting a show. Trade shows can consume a substantial portion of your marketing budget. Before you dismiss a trade show simply because the square footage cost seems high, remember that many factors go into that price tag – and every event charges them differently. This paper examines those costs more closely in Section 5: Understanding Show Services. Additionally, simply looking at costs without estimating your ROI could cause you to miss important events. See Section 7: Calculating Your ROI for tips on calculating your return on investment.

One final method of evaluating whether a show is right for you is to walk the show before committing to exhibiting. That means you'll have to wait until the following year to exhibit, but it will add peace of mind to your selection process. Going as an attendee will help you see how others exhibit, which types and locations of booths are well attended, and how your competitors represent themselves at the show.

Section 3: Securing Your Ideal Booth Space



Now that you have chosen your shows, it's time to think about your space requirements, booth configuration, and location.

The single most important thing you can do to ensure an ideal booth space is to submit your booth application early. Since that application will require a non-refundable deposit, it is equally as important that you review the show rules before submitting your application. The show website typically enables the completion of both tasks. If booth applications are not yet accepted, be sure to sign-up for notifications from the show organizer, so you don't have to keep checking for updates.

Your booth application may provide an option to select your top three booth spaces in order of preference. Some show organizers will use this list to assign booth spaces to their exhibitors. Others use this information during what is called a booth draw (more on that below). As you navigate the floor plan, you'll want to consider your preferred booths' sizes, configurations, and locations.

Booth Size

To select your ideal booth space, you'll need to know how many square feet it will take to demonstrate your products, as well as other considerations. Be sure you understand your display needs and the rules of the space you require.

Different booth sizes may have different rules, such as height limitations and setbacks from the aisles. Some show organizers will allow you to combine spaces into one or split a large area, as well. Examine the following when calculating your size requirements:

- The number, type, and size of products you will demonstrate
- Fixtures to display those products, such as shelving, slot walls/peg hooks, risers, kiosks, racks, counters, etc.
- Backdrops, signage, and other promotional fixtures
- Storage space for consumables, literature, spare parts, or personal items (Note: Some shows provide additional storage areas with rules and associated fees.)
- Secure storage for high-value items you need to lock up each night
- Audio/Visual equipment
- Meeting or theater space
- Reception / Lead collection / Workspace areas
- Furnishing and décor, such as tables, chairs, and foliage
- Personal Protective Equipment, such as barriers and hand sanitizing stations
- Trash cans
- Ready access to cleaning supplies

Finally, for efficiency and the comfort of attendees, leave plenty of room for multiple people to watch a product demonstration simultaneously. Show attendees may not have the patience to wait their turn if they cannot see or hear the presenter.



Section 3: Securing Your Ideal Booth Space



Booth Configurations

As you look at the show's floor plan, you will see many different booth configurations. An inline booth is contiguous with other exhibitors, meaning you will have neighbors on more than one side with access from a single aisle in front of your space. A peninsula-style booth typically sits at the end of a row and has three sides open to aisle traffic. An island booth stands alone with traffic flow on all four sides.

While you may innately want to grab that island or peninsula space, keep in mind that booth properties for any layout with more than one exposed side often requires a different type of booth design. For example, if you intend to use portable displays, such as pull-up banners, an island configuration will allow visibility of the non-decorative backside of those portables. Conversely, if you are displaying very large products, more open sides will enable visitors to enter and navigate your space easily.

Ultimately, booth size and configuration go hand-in-hand. Look for a booth that provides adequate space for all your booth fixtures while creating a traffic flow that makes attendees and booth personnel feel welcome and comfortable.

Location, Location, Location

At trade shows, there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to location. Each venue is unique, and each event has its own set up.

Most exhibitors want to be in a high traffic area at the front of the show hall. These premium spaces tend to be large and cost-prohibitive for the average exhibitor. They also sell out very quickly, typically to those very early in the booth draw.

Generally speaking, you want to choose locations nearest to the hall entrances or on a main aisle. These areas will have the highest traffic flows. However, there are usually plenty of great booth spaces available. One way to identify an ideal location is to visualize an "upside-down" triangle on the floor plan. With the point at the main entrance, draw diagonal lines to the back left and right corners of the hall. Any booth site inside the triangle has a higher traffic potential.

Pro Tip:

Expect wider aisles and more open spaces to accommodate health and safety protocols in 2021 and beyond. Be sure you have easy entry and exit to your booth and leave room for social distancing. A self-serve, touchless badge scanning device near the aisle could generate leads from attendees who would rather not enter a crowded booth.

Section 3: Securing Your Ideal Booth Space



Other considerations when selecting your location include:

- Specialty pavilions focused on a certain market segment
- In the path to/from central registration, cab lines, and busses
- Proximity to dining areas or restrooms
- Close to meeting rooms your company may be utilizing
- Visibility from key vantage points, such as escalators, corridors, and adjacent halls
- Perimeter walls that allow taller structures
- On a main level in a non-prime location vs. a prime location on a subordinate level
- Density of large booth spaces that could indicate higher traffic flows
- Correlation to freight aisles/docks (closer means last-in-first-out, and vice versa)
- Obstructions like columns or ceiling height variations
- Proximity to direct competitors

Remember that your pre-show marketing will impact the traffic to your booth. No matter your location, proactive promotion before and during the show will improve your results.

The Booth Draw

The purpose of the booth draw is to assign spaces to exhibitors that have submitted their application before a given date. Your rank in the booth draw selection depends on your longevity at the event and booth size. Returning exhibitors with the largest booths get priority.

The show organizer gives every exhibitor an appointment date and time to select their booth space. Booth draws move quickly, without delays or rescheduling. It is critically important that your designated show contact be available for this appointment. Should you miss yours and your preferred booth spaces get sold before your appointment time, you run the risk of being assigned a booth or being put to the back of the line.

If you miss the deadline for the booth draw, chances are there won't be many ideal locations from which to choose. In this case, call the show organizer and ask to be placed on a waiting list for spaces canceled by exhibitors before the show.

✓ Start planning early. ✓ Know the rules. ✓ Meet deadlines.

Section 4: Designing Your Booth for Impact



Every show provides drapes to separate booth spaces. Most also offer shell schemes for rental, which are typically boxy, rigid, plain white walls with a small overhead sign. As an exhibitor, you have the option of using just that basic framework with a couple of pull-up banners, a table, and chairs. But let's be honest – is that the brand impression you want to leave with show attendees?

When it's time to design and layout your booth, you should enlist the help of an experienced trade show exhibit provider. No one knows more about the show rules, contractors, vendors, and venues than a professional exhibit house. The knowledge they've gained by working with multiple clients across many industries at countless events will save you a lot of time and trouble before, during, and after the show. Even the smallest spaces and tightest budgets will benefit from the inspiration of professional design.

The physical properties of your booth can be purchased, rented, or a combination of both. Your trade show vendor will help you determine which is right for you. Options range from simple tabletops and pull-up banners to multi-level, custom structures with private meeting rooms, lounging areas, concierge service, and much more.



Section 4: Designing Your Booth for Impact



Purchased Booths

If you plan to do multiple shows, buying a booth is your most economical option. When you buy a booth, you have more choices on structural, graphic, lighting, and other materials used in the design.

There are three basic categories of purchased booths:

- **Custom, build-to-suit designs** – The most customizable of booth styles. Build-to-suit booths are prefabricated structures that are assembled onsite by qualified contractors. These booths can be used repeatedly over many years and re-skinned to create different looks over time. Custom booths typically have a much longer life than their depreciation schedule, as long as they are set up, taken down, and stored properly between shows.
- **Customizable, modular booths** – Modular booths come in a wide variety of materials and styles to accommodate any design preference. Modular booth providers offer pre-fab kits designed for the most common booth sizes and configurations. Plus, a seemingly unlimited selection of a la carte backwalls, kiosks, lightboxes, arches, and other add-ons and accessories provide layout flexibility from show to show.
- **Portable booth fixtures** – As the name implies, portable booth fixtures are made for easy transport, storage, set up, and tear down. From custom table covers to pull-up banners to counters, portables are an inexpensive, limited-use booth design solution.

Rental Booths

Rental booths are a popular choice for the budget-conscious exhibitor. They're ideal if you only do a few shows each year or have capital expense limitations.

High-tech, lightweight materials, and advanced design elements mean you don't have to sacrifice style for cost. Graphics in a rental booth are fully customizable. Ideally, a turnkey rental kit that includes your custom graphics, counters, backwalls, and other assorted booth elements is the most economical choice. You can choose to rent booth properties individually or supplement a pre-made kit with other custom rental fixtures. Like modular booths, this adds flexibility should you want to add or change matching pieces for different booth sizes and configurations.

Section 4: Designing Your Booth for Impact



The WOW! Factor

Your business goes above and beyond for its customers every day. Don't let that mindset fade when it comes to booth design. Ultra-stylish booths aren't just for consumer brands. Even conservative b-to-b brands can include design elements that maintain their corporate persona while having great visual appeal.

Your trade show vendor can design for you, or work with your internal designers, to create your perfect space. Some design tips include:

- Keep your audience in mind – their age group, technology preferences, and how they interact with your brand – and design for them
- Consider a design theme that represents something your company does well, such as sustainability, or generating customer satisfaction, or leading the way in new technology
- Create strong visuals that communicate the problems you solve for customers, and let your product demonstrations speak for themselves
- Use headline-style text and leave out the details
- Put the brand up high, and the key messages at eye level
- Dress up conservative design styles with shapes, structures, and accessories that add visual appeal
- Capture attention from the aisles with light, movement, and sound
- Be a good neighbor – Always be considerate of other exhibitors on the show floor

Pro Tip:

Attendees tend to avoid entering a too-crowded booth, even before the pandemic. Make sure your layout provides plenty of open access to your displays. You may also want to consider plexiglass barriers, social distancing signage and stanchions to manage traffic flow and crowd density.

Always remember to maintain your brand integrity in your booth design. Attendees need to recognize you across all forms of media and marketing. Using the tips above, you can effectively create a space that will engage your audience without compromising your brand identity.

Section 4: Designing Your Booth for Impact



Layouts That Work

There is a lot to consider when you're laying out your booth. If you're like most exhibitors, you'll go through multiple iterations before you finally get to your completed floor plan.

First and foremost, remember that the number one reason people attend trade shows is to discover new products. Use this knowledge to your advantage by placing new products on the aisles and making sure they are well-marked, so attendees know they are new.

If you serve many markets, consider creating zones that mimic real-world applications, so your products become instantly relatable. Products that move or make noise are always good attention getters. A staffed reception desk placed several steps into your booth will encourage even the most timid attendees to step inside. Touchless technology, such as QR codes, can provide product, application, and company information from any location in your booth – especially near aisles.

Your imagination and budget are the only limiters for booth design and layout. Working with a skilled trade show vendor will help you bridge the gap between creativity and economics.

- ✓ Choose whether to purchase, rent, or both. ✓ Design for your audience.
- ✓ Get help from an experienced trade show vendor.

Section 5: Understanding Show Services



Experienced exhibitors know that working with show services is both an art and a science. You already know that different cities, venues, and events have varying labor regulations from the information presented thus far. Even if you have the skill and knowledge to perform any of the services provided by the show, you may not be allowed to do so. Knowing who's who and where to get help and answers can make or break a trade show budget. Let's dig deeper.

The Exhibitor Manual

Several months before the show, the show organizer will provide all exhibitors with a digital or hard copy of the Exhibitor Manual. This manual includes all the instructions, rules, forms, dates, deadlines, and contact information you'll need to plan your show.

It's smart to get familiar with the manual as soon as it arrives. Not only will you be informed of everything you need to do, but you can save money. Most shows offer discounts on show services when forms are submitted by the deadline – sometimes as much as 30%.

Show Services

The term "Show Services" collectively refers to every service provided to exhibitors before, during, and after the show. Show Services personnel are experts at orchestrating the complex operations required to execute a successful event.

They are the central hub for scheduling freight in and out, material handling, rigging, communications, exhibitor badges, catering, and everything else you might need for a show. One of the first things you'll want to do during set up is to find the onsite Show Services offices. That way, you'll know where to go when you need assistance.

And you *will* need assistance.

Pro Tip:

As an exhibitor, you will be required to show proof of insurance for liability against personal or business injury claims. A Certificate of Insurance naming the show organizer as additionally insured must be provided.

This insurance does not cover product loss due to mishandling at the show, and your exhibitor contract will reflect minimal, if any, responsibility from the show organizer.

To limit or avoid product loss during move-in and -out, pack and protect your products and booth properties to withstand the excessive and fast-paced material handling of a trade show environment.

Section 5: Understanding Show Services



So Many Contractors

Just like building or remodeling a house, there are many different types of contractors needed to set up, maintain and tear down a show. Those contractors fall into three basic categories:

- 1) The official show contractor; also known as the General Contractor (GC)
- 2) An Exhibitor Appointed Contractor (EAC); also known as an Installation & Dismantling Contractor (I&D)
- 3) A preferred subcontractor designated by the show organizer

For many services, exhibitors must use the official GC or a designated subcontractor. These include:

- Material handling, otherwise known as drayage, moving your freight into and out of the show hall
- Utilities, such as electricity and plumbing
- Rigging for any structure or product that requires cranes or special lift equipment
- Internet services
- Catering, water coolers/dispensers, alcohol (when permitted)
- Badge scanning and lead tracking software (and hardware)
- Trash removal

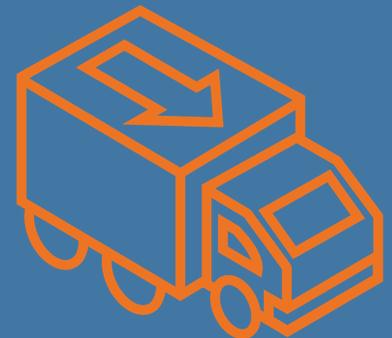
For all other services, exhibitors can use either a designated subcontractor or their selected EAC. These include:

- In-booth flooring
- Booth construction and tear down
- Furniture and décor, such as tables, chairs, and foliage
- Audio/Video rentals
- Badge scanning and lead tracking hardware (if compatible)
- In-booth cleaning and vacuuming

Show Services manages the official show contractor. Everything you need or want on the show floor is coordinated through the Show Services office. Many exhibitors prefer to use the official show contractor because it's convenient to get everything in one place.

While an EAC is technically a subcontractor of the GC, and must follow all the same rules and regulations, you have much more input on the process and timeline using an EAC. The more you work with an EAC, the more familiar they become with your booth structure, design, layouts, and personal preferences. As familiarity grows, so do efficiency and cost savings. Using an EAC is ideal when you do several shows a year or have complex set up and dismantle requirements.

Keep in mind that EACs must be approved in advance and meet strict regulatory and insurance requirements to work the event. If you choose to use an EAC through your trade show vendor, you'll benefit from volume discounts and on-floor labor management, as well.



Section 5: Understanding Show Services



Freight, Warehousing and Material Handling/Drayage

The Exhibitor Manual includes the target-in and target-out dates for every booth within the floor plan. These dates are fixed and generally can't be moved. However, while not guaranteed, if you believe you need more time to set up your booth, you can request a special move-in date through Show Services.

Your target-in and target-out dates are critical when shipping your show freight.

Direct to Show Shipments

Even the largest convention centers have a limited number of loading docks, so all freight must be meticulously coordinated. Most venues utilize an offsite marshaling yard to prevent congestion at the docks. Truck drivers check-in at the marshaling yard and are dispatched to the venue, typically in the order they arrived. Depending on the size of the show, these waits can be hours long.

Show organizers work with carriers who are familiar with this process. You can hire the show-appointed carrier or one of your choosing. Just make sure any carrier you hire fully complies with the target-in and -out times. Arrive too early or too late, and you will incur additional charges. Miss your target-out time, and you will incur additional charges. And be sure to negotiate any premium rates or wait time charges before selecting your carrier.

Advance Warehouse Shipments

Most shows allow shipping to an advance warehouse, where your freight is securely stored until showtime. While this leaves less time for preparing your shipments, it does thwart the anxiety that comes with strict target-in/-out dates. Advance warehouse freight is generally unloaded before direct to show freight, which is ideal when you have a lot of booth properties to set up. While material handling/drayage fees are typically about 10% higher with the advance warehouse, you may find that more economical than waiting.

Section 5: Understanding Show Services



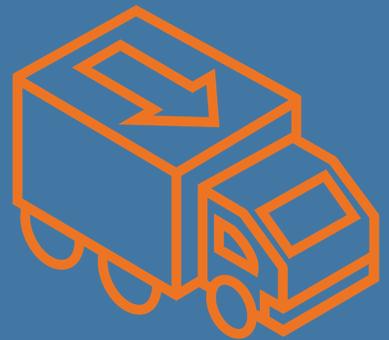
Drayage/Material Handling

Drayage, or material handling, is the process of transporting goods short distances – in this case, from a convention center dock to a trade show booth. Drayage also includes storing your crates and pallets during show time, and returning those to your booth for tear down. Drayage is one of the mostly costly services you will incur as an exhibitor.

Your drayage costs are based on several factors, including weight, the type of shipping containers used, special handling requirements, and more. Each charge is based on hundredweight or "cwt". A minimum cwt charge usually applies for all shipments, and any weight beyond that is charged in 100-pound increments. For example, if the minimum cwt is 2 (or 200 lbs.) and you ship 125 pounds, you will be charged for 2 cwt. As another example, 3 cwt of freight that requires special handling will be charged at a higher rate than 3 cwt of standard pallet freight.

With so many variables, it's nearly impossible to calculate exactly how much drayage will cost prior to a show. Most exhibitors try to manage drayage costs by bundling for cwt, floor-loading their freight to avoid extra handling, and not shipping unnecessary items to show. Lightweight booth properties are another great way to reduce drayage costs.

Finally, if you need to ship a small parcel into a show, it's best to have that sent to your hotel and carry it in. Parcels are easily misplaced in the rush of a trade show set up and can end up costing you a cwt minimum to have delivered to your booth.



✓ Read your Exhibitor Manual. ✓ Work with experienced contractors.

✓ Use Show Services to get things done.

Section 6: Marketing Your Show



Simply put, no other marketing medium can deliver the volume of qualified buyers in as short a time as a trade show. But trade shows are not simply an "If you build it, they will come" endeavor. Savvy marketers double down on their trade show presence by leveraging many other resources from their marketing toolbox.

The simplest way to boost your presence at a trade show is to take advantage of show-provided marketing opportunities. That could be as simple as completing a company profile on the show's website to investing thousands of dollars for unique sponsorship opportunities. Long gone are the days of getting registered attendee lists from shows. But trade show organizers have found many other creative ways to put your message directly in front of your targeted buyers. These opportunities are usually included in the exhibitor manual and are on a first-come, first-served basis.

Use email marketing to invite existing customers and prospects to visit you at the show. Entice them with new product announcements, show specials, or complimentary passes.

Promote your booth and take advantage of SEO opportunities with a dedicated landing page on your website. Preview your products, post your virtual exhibit, and offer a sweepstakes giveaway for booth and virtual visitors.

Leverage social media and hashtags to generate excitement leading up to and during the show. Livestream and record demos for customers and prospects who couldn't attend, and offer online appointment setting for an in-person demo after the show.

Publish and circulate a news release about any new products you'll be featuring at the show. Most events publish a daily report about things seen on the show floor. Invite media representatives to your booth for a demo.

Pro Tip:

Booth literature and giveaways are likely a thing of the past in our post-pandemic world. You can still remind attendees why they visited your booth with virtual goodie bags delivered after the show. You can send links to videos of the products they found interesting, product literature, e-gift certificates, or coupons and special offers.

You're reading this guide, so you already know that trade shows are good investments. Enhance your success with pre- and post-show marketing.

- ✓ Do more than just show up. ✓ Engage at-home prospects with online marketing.
- ✓ Use both pre- and post-show marketing for best results.

Section 7: Calculating Your ROI



At face value, the cost of exhibiting at a trade show may seem beyond your means. If you don't have a way to measure your results, it can be hard to justify the expense. However, once you have mastered tracking revenue earned from a show, chances are you'll want to do more of them!

To measure your ROI, you must first be able to track your show leads. That starts with using a show-compatible lead retrieval system to scan visitor badges. Whether you use the show-provided scanners or your own mobile devices and a dedicated app, all the attendee's information filled out when registering for the event is included. At a minimum, you'll get the contact's full name, company, location, phone, and email. More sophisticated show organizers collect valuable marketing demographics, too, like buying interests, purchasing authority, and more. Most systems even allow for custom fields so you can gather data that's helpful to your sales process.

The software used by today's lead retrieval systems is compatible with leading CRMs, such as Salesforce or HubSpot. If you use these tools, you'll be able to scan a badge in the booth and instantly load the opportunity into your system for sales follow-up and tracking. If you don't have a compatible CRM, you can still export your leads to an Excel or .csv format for manual tracking or import after the show.

At this point, everything hinges on whether your CRM communicates with your order entry system and/or your sales reps have the time to update their show leads. Either way, expect to spend some time gathering the information you need to track your revenue. Whether it's creating custom reporting from your CRM or calling your sales reps and adding sales lines to an Excel spreadsheet, every marketer should be able to measure trade show results.

To calculate your ROI more accurately, you should only count revenue earned in the same year as your trade show investment. You can track customer lifetime value over any timeline that fits your business model to form a longer-term perspective.

Pro Tip:

Garbage in. Garbage out.

The key to measuring ROI lies in the processes you put in place for tracking leads. Even the most sophisticated marketing technology won't give you accurate results if the data is inaccurate.

Whether tracking manually or digitally, defining your sales processes and ensuring everyone uses the same guidelines is the only way you'll be able to know your true ROI.



✓ Use scanning devices. ✓ Leverage custom fields for better intel.

✓ Revenue minus cost = Return on Investment.

Section 8: Choosing an Exhibit House



With so much time, effort, and money on the line, choosing a knowledgeable exhibit house that acts as an extension of your team is one of the most important trade show decisions you'll make.

Trade show vendors do more than just provide you with a booth structure. An experienced trade show vendor adds enormous value to your planning process. They can recommend booth properties and designs that have worked well for other clients. They are intimately aware of venue layouts. Most importantly, they understand all the ins and outs of preparing for and executing a successful show.

Look for an exhibit house with longevity. This shows their resilience and adaptability and means they have probably seen and done it all. They should know how to resolve issues before they become problems. Ask about the level of support they provide during a show. Chances are, you will be working a lot of unconventional hours preparing. The last thing you need is lost or broken items on a Sunday afternoon with no one to call.

You want full-service capabilities. An exhibit house that helps you create a comprehensive plan and comes through with a roll of Velcro during set up will be your most valued resource. Look for a vendor who can create your layouts, design your booth, build your structures, and provide logistics help to and from the show. As mentioned earlier, a trade show vendor with EAC relationships can reduce your costs through volume discounts, as well.

Finally, make sure your trade show vendor *listens to* and *partners with* you – providing solutions that meet your needs while remaining on budget and within your required timeline.

Trade shows require a lot of planning and hard work – but you knew that already. As a trade show professional, you're responsible for the big deals and tiny details. We hope the information contained in this guide helps you plan your shows with greater confidence, understanding, and hopefully, a few new tricks up your sleeve.

Yes, great trade show results are achievable – and they are yours for the taking.

Have a great show!



ROGERS



experiential storytellers

About Us



The Rogers Company is an award-winning experiential storyteller that helps its clients convey powerful brand stories that stand out from the competition. With over 75 years in business, we continue to evolve and remain committed to delivering exceptional service levels and innovative solutions to our customers.

Learn more at therogersco.com.

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