

# 7 Deadly Sins of Tradeshow Exhibiting (and How to Avoid Them)



*From not doing preshow marketing to simply not having good booth staff - you'll learn the top 7 reasons why exhibitors don't make sales at trade shows. This report will also teach you the best trade show exhibitor practices.*

## **Sin #1:** **You didn't do any pre show marketing.**

You're making a significant investment. Let potential visitors know where your booth will be located and what products will be displayed. Effective methods: email, postcards, mentions on your website, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and all customer communications. Here's some quick tips:

1. **Send eBlasts** to the preshow mailing list inviting them to your booth. Include an incentive such as a show discount or a free gift with demo. Include a "call to action."
2. **Announce your show participation** on your website, blog, Twitter page, Facebook page and LinkedIn groups.
3. **Send a press release** about your participation at the show. Google "Free Press Release Distribution" to post your release. Include the show name and your company name in the title; this will get your release found.
4. **Use direct mail in a creative way.** Think handwritten cards, or an unusual shape. Provide an incentive such as adding a

QR code and instruct them to bring to your booth so you can scan it to see if they won a prize.

5. **Pick up the phone.** Your salespeople should contact local prospects to set up appointments and see if they are attending your industry show.

Make sure you establish the correct goals for your sales staff. The true measure of a successful show is not how high you fill the fishbowl or how many badges you scan. It's how many qualified opportunities you generate.

## **Sin #2:** **People look at your booth and ask, "What is it you do?"**

Plan your booth layout so that it is inviting and so that signage makes it clear what your company offers.

If your booth display and signage does not grab people's attention, and represent what you sell – people won't know to stop at your booth.

Your sign should say more than just your company name. It should also explain what your company sells and its key benefits.

## **Sin #3:** **Snacking on the job, instead of greeting customers.**

Your booth should be free of clutter and maintain a professional and welcoming appearance.

**Scenario:** A booth visitor looks around helplessly to find someone who can answer her questions...but the booth staff is making phone calls, talking with one another or away to get a snack.

Staff can take breaks to eat and drink outside of the booth. Booth staff should be trained with talking points and sales messages and be informed of objectives. For example: to introduce a new product or get new orders for existing products. Booth staff should be able to demo your product – effortlessly.

## **Sin #4:** **Packing up before the show is over.**

**Scenario:** The exhibit hall doesn't close for another 10 minutes, but your booth staff has already made a break for it...and here comes another prospect...

The show floor is only open to attendees for a limited time, make the most of it.

## **Sin #5:** **Members of your staff are all nursing hangovers – and it shows.**

It is expected that you attend networking events – but getting too drunk with potential prospects (*or worse...your competitors*) doesn't leave a great impression.

You'll be too tired to give good sales pitches at the booth the next morning – easy does it!

## **Sin #6:** **“Leads” consist of notes scribbled on the back of business cards.**

**Scenario:** You rented the lead retrieval at the show but you don't know how to use it – instead you scan everyone that walks by without talking with them.

Remember:

1. Not everyone at a trade show is a prospect. Don't focus on lead counts, focus on lead quality.
2. Not all leads are created equal. You need to determine if the lead is hot, warm or cold. This is accomplished by having a conversation with booth visitors – not just scanning random people's badges.
3. Leads captured should have qualifiers and notes so you remember the interaction. Gathering critical information about each potential customer's needs will make your post-show lead follow-ups more effective.

4. Don't forget to capture leads at parties, dinners and luncheons during the tradeshow, too.

The end of the show is not the end of the show. It's the beginning of the all-important follow-up process. Most of your competitors (Over 70 percent according to the Center for Exhibition Industry Research) will not follow up, not even once. Here is where you can get a huge return on your investment in the show.

Why do so few exhibitors actually follow up on their leads? It isn't necessarily that they are lazy – the vast majority are not. Follow-up can be time-consuming. It can be unproductive without the right tools. Fortunately, at your show the right tools are available. The cost of renting lead retrieval is a tiny fraction of your total show investment.

And post show; don't just send out a thank you. After all, everyone gets the generic "it was good meeting you" boilerplate message and if you do the same, you're lost in the pack. Your post show message is your best chance to differentiate yourself. If you've done a good job of capturing their information and putting that into your CRM or other lead management system, use that knowledge to add a unique message to every thank you sent out.

### **Sin #7: Wasting time with unqualified attendees.**

We have all met these "time wasters" and as a result, have missed out on connecting with customers and qualified sales opportunities.

You can't control who comes to your booth. But you can control what happens when they do.

Make sure your sales staff in the booth understands that they should *not* approach people who are just gathering goodies. Let them take their toy and move on to waste your competitors' time. Much better to waste trinkets than to waste time.

Attendees send off plenty of signals (for instance, a low-value visitor is likely to ask "what do you do" while a high value visitor is more likely to start talking about their needs). Solid training in this will yield significant results.

*It takes a skilled show rep to know how to quickly spot the real prospects from rest. Also, they have to be skilled on moving the unqualified prospects back to the "trail" and away from your booth so you can focus more of your time on those that offer true customer potential*

Your booth, even if it's a tabletop display, can be designed to both attract and distract. Think of your booth as having three zones:

#### **1. Low-value**

These are the people who are just walking by, or who are interested only in your giveaway (if you provide one). Station the goodies table as far from the sales force as you can and hope that once they satisfy their greed for goodies, they go away.

#### **2. Future value**

These are the just curious who might one day want to do business with you. These can be dealt with en masse, providing product demos, a general discussion of features and value, or similar. Make sure the people handling this have a keen eye and ear for those who might be qualified leads, and that they direct them to the third station ("that's an interesting question: let me get John our expert on that product to answer that for you").

#### **3. Immediate value**

Here's where you deal with those customers that might have an immediate value or at least very qualified need.

### Close

You can't manage the herd. Nor should you try. But you can manage how you control the herd once they enter your booth space. By creating techniques that naturally eliminate the low-value attendees (for instance, providing simple and uninterrupted access to your giveaways), you'll quickly find that those that *do* enter your booth are more qualified and more valuable. And by removing the need to generate large numbers of useless names, you'll free your staff up to have more contact with people that might become qualified sales opportunities.

### A Final Note

These are not prescriptions, they are observations. Something we at Bartizan thought worth sharing with our customers, and our customers' customers. We don't expect that it will apply to all of you. But we do expect that it will apply to many of you.



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