



# Effective Tradeshow Marketing

By Michael Flint

You're investing time and money to exhibit at a trade show. Are you taking full advantage of your marketing momentum? Here are a few things to think about Before, During, and After the trade show.

## Before the show:

### HTML Email and/or Post card

Send a post card out to your current customers to let them know you're still out there learning, exhibiting, and competing. Rent a list to mail or email to your target audience. Mention your booth number and **what you'll be bringing to the show**. Give them a reason to want to stop by and talk with you.

### Web site

*Please, please, please* make sure your web site is running, with current information! Do this before the show! If you are embarrassed by how your site looks and navigates, do yourself a favor... **and redesign it!** It could be your first and last impression to potential customers.

## At the Show:

### Booth Design and Graphics

Your booth graphics serve one purpose — **to get people over to you so you can talk with them**. Typically there is a "header," a horizontal banner that hangs over the top of the booth. This should have your name or logo, possibly a tagline, and **must be readable from far away**. Your other booth graphics should explain briefly what your **value proposition** is and should look good doing it. Booth graphics are not meant to be "read." Save your complex diagrams and long stories for your handout sheets. And don't waste a lot of space with your phone number and web address. No-one will remember it or write it down. They will, however, take some literature and

go to your web site once they get back to their office. Graphics should be exciting and easy to read from across the room.

### Handouts

Also known as Product Sheets or Slick Sheets. These are glossy colored handouts that are *very attractive* on one side, and chock full of content on the other. You can even use your same booth graphics on the front of these sheets. Don't be afraid to pack your data onto the other side. People will file these away and keep them. We're not big fans of "rolodex card" pop-out sheets. Who uses a Rolodex anymore? Business cards, though, are a must!

### Giveaways

You must have a way to collect names of people interested in your product. Instead of giving away another iPod, or a t-shirt, can you offer your product or service instead? Have a daily drawing for free training, a free trial period of your service, or even a free sample if you can. You're more likely to get genuine leads, plus it could cost you less. And, **you're promoting your company** (not an Apple iPod.)

### Public Speaking

We can't say enough about speaking at an event. As long as you sound intelligent and make sense — you will be perceived as an expert in your field (So prepare well!). You have the opportunity to brand your company over and over again through the use of visual displays, handouts, and frequent references to your company!

## After the show:

### Marketing Kit

A good marketing kit is essential. Collect all your leads and send out a more complete package of materials after the show. It's a great way to contact them again with a personalized letter. And you don't

have to ship all these materials to the show! (Your customers will also appreciate not having to carry them during the show.)

### HTML Email and/or Post card

Keep them coming! Post cards are cheap to print and fairly inexpensive to mail. They can be sent to people who you saw, or didn't see. Offer links to your web site for more information, free demos or trials if you can, even a well-written article on your industry! Emails are inexpensive to create (no printing costs) and practically free to send! Plus, you can litter them with links to your web site.

### The Importance of Branding

If you think branding is an expensive marketing term that doesn't apply to your small company — think again. **You need to be recognized, and you need to be trusted.** Branding simply means communicating the same message consistently. With a little effort, you can use the same logo treatment, with the same mix of colors, and communicate the same value propositions — *on all of your marketing pieces.*

### Follow-up

This includes current customers as well! All too often, a weak attempt is made to follow a lead, and the next thing you know months have gone by! Keep on them with a steady stream of "contacts". By employing a variety of marketing tactics, you'll be able to get in front of your customers at different times, in different ways. Hopefully one of those times, your message will resonate!

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