

USING PROMOTIONS & SOCIAL MEDIA TO GET MORE TRADE SHOW VISITORS



Skyline®

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Introduction

It's been 7 years since Skyline published the pre-cursor to this book, **Creating Effective Trade Show Promotions**. At the time, it was perhaps the most complete book ever compiled about how to boost trade show results through pre-show and at-show promotions. Yet now it's become horribly out of date.

That's because, during those intervening years, a little thing called social media came along. And promotions would never again be the same.

Social media, once thought the potential death of trade shows, has become a powerful tool to reach, engage, invite, and inspire attendees to visit exhibitor's booths. Exhibitors that once only had to mail, call, and advertise, now know they must also tweet, connect, and post, in order to reach trade show attendees who now exert far greater control over the media they consume.

This book contains 28 articles that have been published on the Skyline Trade Show Tips blog (find new blog posts at www.skylinetradeshowtips.com). Half the articles are geared to trade show promotions, including areas such as selecting promotions, creating an invite list, pitfalls to avoid, details to watch for, and more. But in this era of established social media, there are also 14 articles about integrating social media with your trade show program. These articles give you guidance over how to tailor your messages, what social media sites to use, how to use specific sites like YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter, and more.

There are also three worksheets from Marc Goldberg, of Marketech, Inc., to provide more ideas on determining which promotions to choose, and how to execute your plan.

And while social media has changed how to do trade show promotions, it has not changed the strong need to do promotions overall. With about 400 exhibitors at an average trade show, and visitors only spending quality time at about 5% of them, exhibitors still need to excel at promotions in order to get those valuable visitors to move out of the aisle and into their booth.

Use the ideas in this book to your advantage, and get more brand awareness, attendees, leads, and sales from trade shows.

Your Local Skyline Exhibiting Consultant



Trade Show Promotions

10 Top Tips For Trade Show Promotions

Mike Thimmesch

Trade show promotions drive more traffic to your booth. Yet there are nearly an infinite number of promos and giveaways, and almost as many ideas about how to do promotions better, too. So what should you do first?

These 10 tips are the hidden gems, secrets, and guideposts that I've uncovered in the 25 years I've been doing, reading, and researching trade show promotions. Follow these best practices to ensure your trade show booth is a hub of meaningful activity:

1. Invent a great product demo to do in your booth, to pull in attendees, get them involved, and start valuable conversations.
2. Giveaways are worthwhile because they get more people to enter your trade show exhibit and help you be remembered after the show, but can attract the wrong people if their appeal is too broad and beyond your target market.
3. Set client and top prospect meetings in advance if at all possible, by offering them something of value such as a gift, access to decision makers, or exclusive information.
4. Promotions are great conversation starters — but your booth staffers have to keep the conversation going, rather than let the prospect walk off.
5. Discounts and show specials help you close the deal when you get rare face-to-face time with hard-to-reach prospects.
6. It's a guy thing: Choose giveaways and promotions that appeal to the demographics of your target audience.
7. Assertive, friendly, and persistent crowd gatherers are worth their weight in gold-dipped foam stress balls.
8. Before the show, reach out to attendees at minimum with email that offers something of value, potentially with direct mail, and for top prospects, by personal telephone calls.
9. Put more effort into social media for trade show promotions — but only when you are already maximizing traditional pre-show and at-show promotions. Your social media efforts should be proportionate to the social-media adaption rate of your target audience.
10. Giveaways that tie into your marketing message are much more memorable after the show.

I hope you get more attendees into your booth eager to engage with your booth staffers thanks to these ideas.

3 Key Things That Get Attendees Into Your Trade Show Booth

Mike Thimmesch

It would be very easy to think that simply by building a beautiful trade show exhibit that many, many visitors will willingly come into your booth space. And for many years, that had been true. But today, trade show attendees have become more skeptical and reluctant to leave the aisle and enter into booth spaces.

This is not to say that people stay away from trade shows – trade show attendance is actually increasing. But buyers at shows have become more skeptical because they have gained control of the buying process, thanks to the wealth of information available about products and companies on the Internet.

So while they still go to trade shows to shop for new products, it takes more to get their attention and get them to buy from you.

Here are three things that will persuade more trade show attendees to become your trade show booth visitors – and all three can be achieved with promotions:

1. An exchange of value

Attendees will venture into a booth if they feel they will get enough value in return for their time. After all, attendees are spending anywhere from a few hundred dollars to \$2,000 to travel and attend their industry show. Value to the attendee may be in the form of a free sample, a discount or show special, food or drink, a useful, fun or exciting giveaway that has a high perceived value or a chance to win something even more valuable, or #2, an experience or #3, learning.

2. An experience

You can engage the eye and make a memorable impression on visitors with a well-choreographed demonstration of your products that proves what makes them superior to alternatives. Other valued experiences include entertainment that they can't see anywhere else, an activity that appeals to their senses, a chance to see or even meet a celebrity, and a personalized interaction that shows they are valued.

3. Learning

Attendees come to trade shows to find out what new products are available and to find companies and product that can solve their problems. So help them learn what you offer that is new, how you are on top of the trends of your industry, how they can be better at their jobs, and how your company can solve their specific needs.

Promotions are no longer a luxury; they are a necessity for maximizing your trade show potential. Get creative about how you can provide value, experience, and learning in your exhibit to get more of the right people into your booth.

Pre-Show Marketing to Create Awareness

Mark True

Serious trade show attendees make a list of their planned trade show booth stops before ever arriving on the show floor. Serious exhibitors use pre-show marketing to get on those lists. By creating a compelling draw – a new product introduction, product demonstration, educational presentation, show discount or relevant contest – visiting your trade show exhibit becomes a can't-miss appointment.

But, how do you get your message to your audience when they're making their list? It depends upon your goals.



If your goal is to create widespread awareness, be sure to include the show name, location, dates and booth number in your pre-show advertising campaign. An ad in the pre-show guide will also get you in front of attendees. If your budget allows, check out visible opportunities on the show website and smart phone app, if they offer one.



You can also purchase the show's attendee list (last year's and this year's so you get the broadest spectrum of those likely to attend the show – even late registrants) and use direct mail, email or a combination to put your message into the hands of attendees several weeks before the show.

Sponsorships offered by the show help exhibitors reach every participant. The show may sell ads on email alerts, confirmations and reminders to attendees. Placing your ad on hotel key cards is an expensive option, but it gives you one more chance to make the list by putting your message

in the hands of attendees as soon as they arrive to the show city.

Got a new product or service? Submit a news release announcing the introduction to your industry's trade media, free Internet news distribution services, bloggers who cover your industry, and on your own website. If it's really unique, pitch the story to the most appropriate publication. Be sure to include the show name, dates and your booth number in your release so

people know where to see the product.

Afraid you might be overwhelmed by attendees who aren't prospects? A product or service discount, free trial, or contest offering your product as a prize will help prospects self-select. After all, who's going to enter a contest for a peristaltic metering pump, for example, if they don't need a peristaltic metering pump?

100 Trade Show Lead Generation Ideas

Mike Thimmesch

For most exhibitors, lead generation is their #1 reason for exhibiting at trade shows. Exhibit marketers want leads to replenish their sales pipeline, bring in new and repeat customers, and generate sales revenue.

So to help stoke the lead generation fires, here are 100 ideas (over half are promotions!) to get you more leads at your upcoming trade shows, divvied up among 5 main areas:

Get more trade show leads by how you select shows

1. Go to more trade shows outside your local region
2. Go to more trade shows, in your best vertical markets
3. Go to more trade shows, in foreign countries
4. Go to fewer trade shows, but put more effort into booth staff preparation and promotions for each remaining show
5. Exhibit at trade shows where your buyers are
6. Track leads to determine and expand in the shows with the best ROI
7. Evolve show selection to match changes in company's best vertical markets

Get more trade show leads with your exhibit design

8. Get a bigger booth
9. Get a booth space closer to the hub of traffic, or by a bigger competitor
10. Get a corner booth space
11. Backlight your trade show display graphics
12. Design your exhibit to more boldly and clearly say why attendees will benefit from working with you

13. Put fewer elements on your exhibit, but make the remaining images and messages bigger and more concise
14. Use graphics with images and benefits that appeal more directly to attendees at your vertical market shows
15. Put benefit statements on your trade show exhibit graphics
16. Replace your tired old display with a new trade show exhibit
17. Make your exhibit architecture more inviting to enter
18. Pick more exciting colors on your exhibit
19. Bring fewer products, such as only your most popular products, to minimize clutter
20. Get a taller exhibit
21. Add more lighting
22. Put messages on your flooring
23. Avoid an exhibit that looks like everyone else
24. Keep your booth neat and clean throughout the show
25. Move interesting equipment and technology to the outside of the booth
26. Use a theme that gets attention and memorably ties into your competitive advantage or offering
27. Match your exhibit message to your other marketing materials

Get more trade show leads with pre-show promotions

28. Send an inexpensive postcard offering a free gift in your trade show booth
29. Run a banner ad on the show website
30. Send a pre-show email blast to your clients and top prospects located close to the show location
31. Put stickers with booth location and show info on all outgoing mail
32. Email invitation to a pre-show microsite with targeted messages and offers
33. Have your sales people invite their prospects to visit your booth and set up meetings in advance

34. Send an email invitation to the show's pre-registered attendee list for this year, and the registered attendee list from last year
35. Use social media to reach more attendees
36. Send half of something of value to attendees before the show, and promise to give the other half in your booth
37. Contact your industry press and tell them about the innovative new product you will be introducing at the show
38. Put your booth number on all your pre-show promotions: email, mail, ads, website
39. Design more creative and compelling pre-show promotions to cut through the mailbox clutter
40. Invite top prospects to lunch or dinner at the show
41. Send a pre-show promotion offering a more valuable gift in the booth, but not to the entire list, but only to the subset of show attendees that match your target audience
42. Send free tickets to the trade show to clients and best prospects
43. Post your trade show schedule on your website with a link to sign up for appointments
44. Ask the show for additional promotional opportunities

Get more trade show leads with at-show promotions and activities

45. Introduce a new product at the trade show
46. Add motion to your exhibit
47. Offer food, especially if it smells good, like baking cookies
48. Offer drinks to your booth visitors
49. Give your attendees something entertaining and fun to do
50. Do an engaging demo in your booth
51. Get your client to hold your product
52. Go beyond sight to appeal to attendees' sense of smell, sound, taste, and touch
53. Add interactivity
54. Run presentations or video loops on large video monitors

55. Offer healthy food, not just candy
56. Put out a candy or chocolate dish to slow down attendees long enough to engage them
57. Offer in-booth massages
58. Give a free sample of your product



59. Give a free sample of a product made with your product
60. Hire a celebrity for your booth, where the celebrity is popular with your target audience at the show
61. Hire a celebrity lookalike for your booth, where the celebrity is popular with your target audience at the show
62. Giveaway something useful to your target audience
63. Hire a performer, such as a magician, to attract attention to your booth
64. Have a raffle, sweepstakes, money machine or a game
65. Hold a press conference if you have

newsworthy news

66. Sponsor something highly visible at the show
67. Have a contest for attendees in your booth
68. Get signage in the show hall promoting your booth presence
69. Offer a show special or discount
70. Get someone from your company to be a speaker at the show
71. Give presentations or educational sessions in your booth
72. Do door drops that target only show attendees at their hotel rooms
73. Pay to include an invite or a gift in the official show bag each attendee gets
74. Put an ad in the show book
75. Brand your staffers with outfits or similar attire
76. Offer one really big prize (worth thousands of dollars) to get more attention

Get more trade show leads with better booth staffing

77. Bring more booth staffers
78. Bring booth staffers who actually want to be there
79. Hold a contest to reward the staffers who take the highest quantity of qualified leads
80. Leave your wallflowers at home
81. Train your booth staff how to work a trade show booth
82. Communicate to your staff the company's goals and your expectations of them in the booth
83. Don't use booth staffing as a training ground for brand-new employees
84. Ask visitors open-ended questions and listen to their answers
85. Get faster at recording each lead by not writing down every visitor's name and address, but instead using a badge scanner
86. Have enough badge scanners to avoid lines with your booth staffers in busy times
87. Bring crowd gatherers (not booth babes)
88. Smile

89. Keep your booth staffers fresh by giving them regular breaks
90. Learn to more quickly disengage with unqualified attendees
91. Thoroughly train your booth staffers on the new products you are introducing at the show or just introduced recently
92. Make friends with your neighboring exhibitors, and refer attendees back and forth
93. Bring your top management to booth staff, and tell attendees they will be there
94. Get staffers out of the bowels of your booth and out to the edge of the aisle
95. Don't sit down in your booth, unless you are talking with visitors
96. Don't hide behind tables
97. Instead of giving away literature, offer to mail it to attendees, and get their contact info
98. Prepare your booth staffers with several good engaging questions
99. Arm your booth staffers with answers to common objections
100. Train your booth staffers to know your products and how they solve your clients' problems

Which of these 100 ideas will you choose?

Perhaps you are already doing several yourselves. Some can be combined to be used simultaneously. It's a long list, and there's no way anyone can do all 100. Some of them even contradict each other.

Yet as Bob Milam advises, while knowing a lot of tactics is useful, knowing which tactics to use and when to use them is even more useful.

Determine your strategy first, then choose among these trade show tactics the most appropriate ones to support your strategy and generate more leads.

Also, while I've listed many tactics to get more leads, of course you need to also strive for getting higher quality leads. And if you can do both, go to the head of the class.

8 Wrong Ways To Use Trade Show Promotions

Mike Thimmesch

Done right, promotions increase trade show booth traffic, make positive impressions, deepen relationships, and boost memorability. Done wrong, they can waste booth staffers' time, be a drain on your trade show budget, and erode your reputation.

Here are 8 wrong ways to use trade show promotions that exhibitors unfortunately do again and again – and how you can avoid making these same mistakes yourself:

1. Get the cheapest giveaways possible

That thing you bought to give to booth visitors? It has your company logo on it. Do you want people to equate your brand with cheesy, cheap, and poorly made? And when it breaks in two weeks, do you want your logo on it? Nope, I thought not. So invest in quality, as befits your quality brand.

2. Pile giveaways in your booth – then ignore the people they attract

You heap an enticing stack of giveaways on the edge of your table, and lo and behold, the trick-or-treaters appear. They grab and dash, and you feel helpless. Instead, either put the giveaways further in your trade show displays, or out of sight altogether. Better yet, guard them with a capable booth staffer, who can quickly qualify attendees with a single question. You may find your giveaway trap is worth it, if you can find enough qualified leads amidst the treasure hunters.

3. Offer giveaways that have no tie-in to your message.

Is your strategy to buy the latest cool gadget as a giveaway? While people will love it, that gadget will not help them remember your competitive advantage. Want to be remembered for the right

reasons? Find a giveaway that is appealing AND that you can memorably hook into your marketing message or theme. That way, you create a deeper, more meaningful impression your booth visitor will remember after the show.

4. Don't tell your booth staffers about your promotions

Skip telling your staffers about your promotions. Then, have that awkward moment when an attendee hands your staffer your pre-show mailer inviting them to come get your at-show giveaway, only to be met with a blank stare. Feel how your company (and professional) reputation takes a hit. Unprepared staffers won't know about contest requirements, fulfillment expectations, or how to tie your giveaways to your marketing messages. So train them.

5. Offer a prize or raffle – without qualifying entrants

Want a big list of people who just want an iPad? Raffle it off at your next show. Unfortunately, that list will be pretty useless when you get back to the office – unless you are an iPad salesperson. Instead, require attendees to answer a few qualifying questions on an entrance form first, so you know who are the good prospects right away. Better yet, only do a broad-appealing raffle like this when most of the show attendees could be prospects for your products. Otherwise, you waste a lot of time talking to non-buyers.

6. Treat your customers like strangers

Don't reward your customers for their loyalty. Give them the same \$1.29 giveaway you handed over to everyone else. Let them feel how special you think they are for giving you their valuable business. Don't like the way that feels? Then have a second, higher-level giveaway stashed away that's only for clients. A welcome bonus – you'll be surprised how often when you give that to a client while thanking them for their business, that they answer you by saying, "You know, we do have this new project coming up..."

7. Hire a celebrity, then ignore the line

Celebrities, especially those within your industry, can draw a crowd. But that crowd is worthless if your staffers ignore the line waiting to meet the celebrity in your exhibit. Staffers can engage attendees by talking about the celebrity, but then also ask them about their needs, and record their answers. So your staff will know who the qualified leads are before they get the celebrity's autograph. The same applies to other entertainment you hire that gets a line forming.

8. Give a great gift – but then don't follow up

After you've invested \$5, \$10, \$20 or more on a high-quality, memorable gift with your best

prospects, you let those valuable opportunities die on the vine by not calling them after the show. Sure you can hope the gift alone will compel them to pick up the phone and place an order with you. But their desk will be cluttered with work that piled up while they were at the show. Instead, be sure to prioritize your leads by quality, so your sales force can reach out to those top-level prospects while they are hot. And tell your sales people what giveaways the leads received, so the sales people can refer to the gift in the follow up call, and tie the goodwill of the gift to them.

Promotions are a powerful tool for trade show marketers. But like all tools, they need to be used the right way for full effect.



7 Kinds Of Trade Show Giveaways

Mike Thimmesch

Giveaways are an extremely popular way to get more people into your trade show displays. But not all giveaways are created equal.

To help you whittle through the nearly infinite choices of giveaways, I've grouped them into 7 types, with the strengths and weaknesses of each type listed below. Keep this chart handy the next time your team gathers to brainstorm ideas for your upcoming trade show.

Giveaway Type	Strength	Weakness
Cheap stuff	Doesn't cost much so you can give them to a lot of people	Will not reflect well on your brand if they appear too low in quality, let alone break quickly
Nice stuff	Will get you noticed favorably by your clients and prospects	Usually can't afford to give to everyone at a show
Trendy stuff	Can get more people's attention	May not get the right people's attention
Educational stuff	Can use to attract only the people who are qualified prospects	Takes effort to research and publish, and may not attract all your best prospects
Your stuff	Can use to attract only the people who are qualified prospects	Will not motivate people who only care about themselves personally; plus may get fewer leads (bad if lead quantity, not lead quality, is your sole metric)
Wearable stuff	High perceived value and can put your logo on it	If not good looking no one will want it, and it may end up in a drawer; plus "I've got enough t-shirts."
Edible stuff	Will attract grateful attendees	Prospects are left with nothing that has your name on it, and you may pay double – cost to buy, plus cost to pay show hall a corking fee to giveaway food and drink

I hope that gives you some good ideas about which direction you take next when strategizing for your future events.



And if you get bored saying “giveaway” over and over again, here are 10 more words you can use to describe them:

10 Other Names For Giveaways:

1. Promos
2. Promotions
3. Tchotchkes
4. Premiums
5. Incentives
6. Corporate gifts
7. Swag (acronym for “Samples, Wearables, And Gifts”)
8. Freebies
9. Advertising specialties
10. Bribes

No matter what they are called, a well-chosen giveaway can help you drive more traffic to your trade show booth, boost your brand awareness, and help you deepen relationships with clients and prospects.



19 Details For Smoother Trade Show Promotions

Mike Thimmesch

To have a successful trade show promotion, you need to offer something of value that will bring your prospect out of the aisle and into your booth. Sound simple? At first blush, it is. Yet, you also have to think through an unexpectedly large number of details to get trade show promotions right. Why? To ensure you sand out all the awkwardness that could unwillingly put splinters of friction into the hands of your booth visitors and booth staffers. Here are 19 questions to ask yourself about the details of your trade show promotions to ensure best results at your show:

Ordering Promotions:

1. Will the giveaway be high enough quality to represent our brand? And still affordable for our budget?
2. How much time does it take to customize the promotion with our logo? And what size and format do they need our logo?
3. Are we adding any messaging besides our logo to the promotional item? Who signs off on that message?
4. Do we have enough time to get them customized and shipped to the show, and still see a sample before the entire production run is begun?
5. If we are doing an overseas show, can we source a giveaway supplier with inventory in country, to save time and shipping costs?
6. Will the giveaway fit into staffers’ pockets?
7. How many giveaways do we need, enough for every lead, or more for trick-or-treaters, or fewer so only best prospects get them?
8. Do we need to have one giveaway, or multiple levels of giveaways for different levels of visitors?

9. Do we need to have different giveaways to appeal to various audiences at vertical market shows?
10. Are there any rules prospects have to follow to receive our promotion? Or legal rules for us in offering it?
11. Are there more environmentally sustainable versions of our giveaway choices?

Promotions In Your Booth:

12. Where are we storing the promotional items in the trade show exhibit space? Is there enough space? Are they easily accessible during the show? And secure?
13. Do we need to unwrap the giveaways before the show to save staffer time during the show? Or, conversely, put our own branded wrapper on them?
14. How will we display the promo items in our booth — out on the edge in the open, back further in the booth, or hidden away?
15. Is our promotion complicated enough that we need emails/letters/ads to promote and/or explain our promotions before the show, and signage to promote and/or explain our promotion in our trade show booth?

Booth Staffers and Promotions:

16. What point in the conversation with attendees is the best time to give them the giveaway? Will they receive it during or after the show?
17. How do we train booth staffers to tie a themed promotion to our competitive advantages?
18. If we have Crowd Gathers, do they hand out the giveaways, or will our employee booth staffers give them out?
19. What do we tell attendees if we run out of promotional items, depending on how aggressively we promoted it before and during the show?

Here's your goal: Get this all figured out long before the show starts, so that you don't spend the first day trying to work out the kinks, or worse yet, have kinks that can't really be resolved during the show. Because it takes a surprising amount of time to think through all these details. But it's so worth it, when your booth staffers have much smoother interactions with prospects, and your promotions do their job to entice, entertain, engage, and remind visitors why you are the best solution for their needs.



Make Your Trade Show Booth More Memorable With Great Demos

Mike Thimmesch

Want to be remembered by visitors to your trade show exhibit? Then do a great product demo in your booth.

This really hit home for me when I recently read new research about memorable exhibits shown by Joyce McKee on the CEIR blog. While Joyce's article focused on the changes in the impact various factors have in exhibit memorability over the last ten years, I was struck by this important insight:

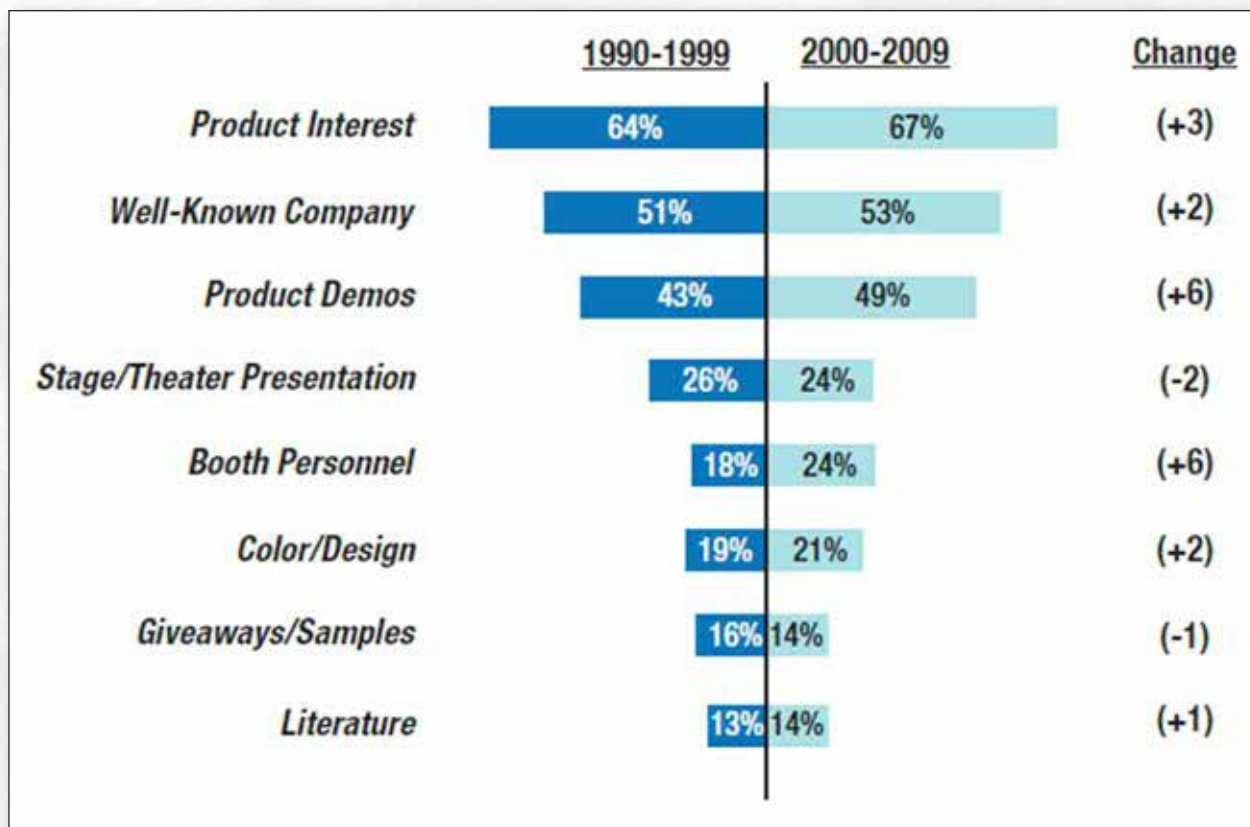
Product demos are the most important element you can control in your exhibit to create more memorable exhibits.

Here's why. The top two reasons for remembering exhibits, "Product Interest" and "Well-Known Company" are factors mostly dependent on what your company has done **before** the show and **outside** the exhibit hall. (See the chart below.) So, as the exhibit manager you can have less immediate effect on these two (although you can affect it long-term).

But product demonstrations take full advantage of the face-to-face, interactive trade show environment. A good product demo can set you apart from other exhibitors who just sit there, even if they have a popular product and a well-known company.

This is jump-up-and-down, shout-it-from-the-show-hall-rooftops news. This is where you can make your trade show marketing more powerful, more memorable, and more effective than your competitors.

So if you are not doing a demo in your booth, create one. And if you are, congrats – now make it even better.



To help you, here are **7 elements that make a great trade show demonstration:**

1. Motion:

The eye is drawn to movement, so use motion to catch those eyes as they walk down the aisle. You can even start a demo before there's anyone in your booth, to help draw people in and gather a crowd.

2. Makes your benefits obvious:

Do you know what are the most popular and unique benefits of your product? That's good. Now create a demo that makes those main benefits obvious to your prospects, too.

3. Proves your product works:

Your prospects are skeptical about the marketing claims they read on your website and in your brochures. At a trade show you have the perfect opportunity to overcome their skepticism by demonstrating how your product really does what it says it does.

4. Interactivity:

If you can get your booth visitor involved in the demo, by either a discussion or actually getting hands-on with your product, they will engage more of their brain (and thus memory), and also be more likely to believe your claims as they are experiencing them for themselves.

5. Practice:

Train your exhibit staff how to do the demo, so that it flows smoothly and without a hitch. And train more than just one person, so that person can take breaks, or if your booth is large enough, you can do demonstrations in multiple places.

6. Technology:

Especially for services, there are products your booth visitors can't actually hold in their hands. For those products you can use presentation technologies to demonstrate your benefits and to get people engaged.

7. Space:

Rather than consider a demo after your trade show booth is built, design your exhibit from the start with the demo in mind, giving it space, lighting, supporting graphics, and any architectural elements needed, such as a stage, table, or kiosk.

Do a great demo and you'll entice more people into your booth, overcome their natural skepticism, and be remembered after the show.



Turn Trade Show Attendees Into Booth Visitors With Better Promotions

Mike Thimmesch

Because some trade shows reported double-digit attendee drops during the last economic downturn, you need to work harder at getting the attendees that do come to the show into your trade show booth.

One of the most powerful tactics is Pre-Show Promotions – marketing your presence before the show. So we've gathered together 29 intriguing Pre-Show Promotion ideas shared by your peers when surveyed for our White Paper, ***What's Working in Exhibiting***.

So Many Ways to Reach Them

There are many Pre-Show Promotion activities beyond the standard ad in the show directory. Here are a wide variety of Pre-Show Promotion mediums available to you that exhibitors told us they use to reach their target audience before the show:

"Direct mail, emails, and phone calls." *unknown*

"Send out new catalogs prior to a show."
Ana Tenreiro, LeStage

"Mailings, door drops, bag inserts."
Henry Gardiner

"Mail outs, web tag line, e-mail tag line."
Paul Shepherdson, Scale-Tron Inc.

"Email, traditional mail, printed advertisements in journals, online banners."
Sean P. McCall, Integrated DNA Technologies

"Increased targeted emailings, and full page ad in trade publications." *Maria Pensato, Viconics Inc*

"Targeted e-newsletters."

Cathy Campbell, WAGO Corporation

"We do small ads in secondary tabloids."
Steven Helton, National Cremation Society

"Trade advertising."
Andrew Lippman, EverNutrition, Inc.

"Trade show section on our website."
Don Strahle, Acoustical Solutions, Inc.

"Advertising on the web page."
Pat Stewart, BD Power

Great Pre-Promotional Strategies and Tactics

Your peers are great experimenters and have come up with methods that get more people to their trade show booths. Here's a sampling of some of their best ideas.

These exhibitors remind us that trade shows are about the personal touch. They reach out to clients and best prospects before the show, to invite them for a visit, or even set up meetings and demos:

"Book meeting with important clients and prospects before the show & education session at our stand."
Valerie Danger, Nstein Technologies

"We send our existing customers tickets to the show to encourage their attendance."
P. Gibson, Intle Design

"Informing – usually through e-mail – of our intent to exhibit and setting up appointments/dinners."
Jeff Lawson, Spongex

"Email blasts reminding people of our booth location, including free access to the show, and trying to set up meetings."
Ryan Marsh, Bright Systems

"Letting some of our good leads know we will be at the show."
Joyce Collins, Chestnut Cove Log Homes

“Direct notification of potential attendees by mail or email of new developments, offers and/or technology improvements to our processes and products.”

David Stellwagen, The Buckhead Coffee Co.

“Call large specific potential customers to invite to stop by.” *Ash Luthra, LSL Industries*

“We try to personally contact leads that we feel are a good fit for each show.” *Mary Hamor*

“We send out mailers followed up with phone calls inviting them to a product demo and contest entry.” *Dan Laninga, Cygnus Incorporated*

“Very targeted, personal contacts to specific individuals.” *Christine Stamm, Wisconsin Department of Commerce*

These exhibitors use their Pre-Show Promotions to give prospects a compelling reason to visit their trade show booth, with a compelling or creative offer:

“We are sending early mailers. At the show they will get a card to attendees with a show special discount.”

Kathi Graham, JCI Industries, Inc.

“Invitation cards with a gift draw upon presentation of the card.”

Margo Renoir

“Pre mailers “Bring this card to booth for a free ...”

Jessica Adkins, Sodexo

“Mailings and participating in “new product” announcements.”

Bill Wilson, Carriage House Products, Inc

“We send show planners, thumb drives loaded with company information and a letter from the company owner.”

Scott Williams, SiteHawk

“We sometimes offer special events at our booth, such as bring an object for us to do a live demo on.”

Jamie Churchill, Cold Jet

“Scratch-off mailers in which attendees don’t scratch until they get to the booth. They win product discounts and various other prizes.”

Emily Riess, Assay Designs, Inc.

“Using a theme that stems off our advertising campaign and focuses on our show objectives.”

Mary Sheldon, Mate Precision Tooling

Use Pre-Show Promotions to get more people – and more of the right people – into your trade show booth. You have many ways to reach out before the show, and lots of ways to creatively and personally appeal to your clients and prospects.



Promotions Guide

Marc Goldberg

Promotion	Advantage	Disadvantage	Objectives
BEFORE THE SHOW			
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inexpensive • Greater credibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need established list of followers to get wider reach • Lots of Social Media channels to cover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image awareness • Generate leads • Pre-schedule appointments • Product introduction
AT THE SHOW			
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat exposure • Attendees carrying smartphones with them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time to execute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image awareness • Generate leads • Pre-schedule appointments • Product introduction
Show Issue Trade Pub Ads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not targeted or selective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image awareness • Generate leads • Product introduction • Sales
Show Daily Ads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide reach, show related editorial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readership varies from show to show 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image awareness • Generate leads • Product introduction • Sales • Promote an at-show event
Hall Ads/Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat on-site visibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image awareness • Generate leads • Product introduction
TV/Photo Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local or National visibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited time exposure • Little control • Limited audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image awareness to a public audience • Generate leads • Product introduction
Press	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inexpensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image awareness
Briefings/Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coverage exposure through a credible source 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires additional staff to handle the press 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product introduction • Press coverage
Show Directory Ads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outer covers provide good exposure • Selective reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited availability • Costly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image awareness • Generate leads • Product introduction • Sales
IN THE EXHIBIT			
Contests, Games, Drawings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to draw a large audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming • Audience too general 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate qualified leads • Product introduction
In-Booth Premiums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate qualified leads • Relatively inexpensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently misused by staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate leads
Celebrities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to draw a large audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience too general 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build traffic
Live Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to draw a large audience • Ability to deliver a targeted message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can draw too general an audience • Can lose targeted prospects if staff fails to interact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build traffic • Product introduction

Creative Direction Worksheet

Marc Goldberg

Show Name: _____ Show Dates: _____

Major Message: _____

Theme/Tagline: _____

Strategic Positioning: _____

Creative Approach: _____

How will this be applied before, during, and after the show? _____

Explain why this will appeal to your target audience: _____

Sample Promotion Plan

Marc Goldberg

Here is a sample promotional plan for a fictitious company to inspire you. You can write out your own 7-step plan with similar ideas and metrics.

Step 1 – Gather Strategic Marketing/Promotion Information

- Show: ACUTA conference, 524 net attendees, 84 exhibitors
- Attendees: Administrative directors, managers, supervisors, coordinators
- Hot buttons: Concerned about cost control, interactive, cooperative, like to be challenged

Step 2 – Identify Show Opportunities

- ACUTA conference is directed to telecommunications professionals
- Industry decision-makers and influencers
- Educational show/exhibit hall closed during education sessions
- Many innovative technologies on display
- Competitors have a major presence at the show

Step 3 – Show Objectives

- Communication Objectives: Present ourselves as a committed partner and innovator in telecommunications
- Tactical Objectives: Facilitate flow to the demonstrations to raise awareness of products and services. Increase pre-show awareness of participation
- Measureable Objectives: Present turnkey solutions to 150 visitors. Present company products relative to visitor needs. Generate 15-30% qualified leads.

Step 4 – Assemble the Plan

- Promotion developed around the theme of booth – gift reward for participants
- Room-drop with call-to-action to visit the booth for a gift and chance to earn more by participating in the booth activities
- Validation process to familiarize attendees with range of products and services
- Post-show lead tracking and lead distribution to business units

Step 5 – Develop a Message and Creative Approach

- Theme: Innovative Solutions for Education
- The Masters Communications to capitalize on the audience's interest in educational innovation and inclination to get involved in the exhibit

Step 6 – Execute the Promotion

- Staff receives training on how to participate in and utilize the promotion
- A walk-through in the booth and role assignments to ensure successful execution of the strategy

Step 7 – Evaluate the Promotional Results

- How did we do influencing the perception of the audience about corporate capabilities
- How did we do exposing 30% of the attendees to the company?
- Did we attract 150 attendees to the exhibit from the pre-show promotion?
- How did we do attracting 15-30% qualified leads out of total leads collected?

How To Build A Great Pre-Show Promotions List

Mike Thimmesch

Pre-show promotions are one of your best methods to get people to visit your trade show booth. And you need that help, because the average attendee only visits about 25 booths – while the average trade show has about 400 exhibitors!

Pre-show promotions are direct marketing for trade shows. You use direct mail, email and telemarketing to invite trade show attendees. And while you have other pre-show promotional methods (ads, social media, room drops), exhibitors have told us in surveys that these three are their favorites.

It's an old saw for direct marketers that the success of your direct marketing relies first on the list, second on the offer, and third on the creative. Since list building is the most important (and probably the least discussed!) we're going to cover it in this article.

To build a great list for your pre-show promotions, get names from one or more of these 5 sources:

1. The Show Organizer: This is your best list source, as they know who is actually coming! Get both the list of this year's pre-registered attendees and last year's actual attendees, and merge them together. Order only the part of the list that matches your prospects, filtering the list by industry, job title, company size, and whatever other choices the show producer gives you that help you target your audience. Filtering the list is more important if you only want to reach a small portion of the attendees. Most importantly, don't order the names of your competitors.

If the show organizer doesn't give you the ability to segment the list before you buy it, consider getting the whole list and then manually deleting

at least your probable competitors. If it's for direct mail and you have an expensive mailer, take even more time to weed out the wrong recipients.

Append email to your list if the names of the attendees were given to you without emails. You may have that person's contact name already in your company database, but knowing they'll be at the show you are exhibiting at makes them even more valuable. Even take the time to visit their company website and figure out what the email pattern is for your targets –

is it first.last@company.com or is it flast@company.com?

Do this especially for the very valuable list from the show organizer, but you can also do these steps after you've gathered names from all your list sources (show organizer, company marketing database, sales, and other sources).

Some show organizers will not allow you to directly receive their attendee list for your promotions, but will send your promotions for you. In that case you send them your email and they forward it to their attendees, or you send your mail piece to a mail house, and they mail it for you.

Timing on when you get the pre-registered list is tricky. Get it too early, and you won't get the names of the people who will register closer to the event (and that proportion is higher than it was a few years ago). Get it too late and you risk your mail package arriving after the attendee has left for the show. (And don't mail your pre-show promotions standard/bulk rate – send them first class so they get to attendees before the show!)

2. Your Previous Leads From That Show:

Many people attend the same show year after year. So go back to your own leads database and pull the previous leads you collected from the show over the last three years. Those same people may be further along the sales cycle and you will have more success with them because they already know you, having visited your trade show exhibit.

3. Your Marketing Database: Your marketing department may have also built a database of likely prospects, too. So ask your marketing department (if that's not you!) to get you a list of clients and prospects that live in the show's geographic region or who are in the show's vertical market.

4. Your Sales People: Your sales people probably know more about the best prospects than your marketing database reveals. So tell your sales people you are exhibiting at the ABC show, and ask them to set up meetings with their existing clients and best prospects that will be at the show. Those can be some of the most productive meetings you'll get from the entire show!

5. Other List Sources: If you can't get lists from the show organizer and your company database is anemic, you can also buy names of potential attendees via a list broker. Ask to get names of people who fit your target market: Industry, company size, job title, and location. They'll get the names from the top industry publications, associations, and list compilers. You may even get names from the media company or association that owns the show!

Combine the lists into one file, and take out any obvious duplicates, so you don't mail them the same invitation multiple times, which is annoying and expensive. Check the list for completeness: Put the whole list into Excel and sort the list by various fields, such as state or city or email address. Find the names that are not complete, look them up on Google, and fill in the missing data. If you don't have the time and experience to merge/purge the list, work with a mail house who can.

One last point – almost certainly you have received these names from the show organizer or the list broker for one-time use, the trade show. If you are going to send multiple waves of pre-show promotions, get permission up front, and pay for that. But don't add any rental names you did not already have into your company database.

It can take some finesse to build a strong pre-show promotions list. But it's worth it! You'll have a much better chance of attendees receiving your great offer and creative promotion, and visiting your trade show display.



Use E-mail Marketing To Get More From Your Trade Shows

Scott Price

Connecting with potential customers, website visitors and past clients becomes easy with email marketing. Unlike any other tool, this resource allows a company to gather emails and then use that contact information to announce new products, invite people to future events and introduce upcoming developments. During every part of a convention or trade show, e-marketing can boost the results of a trade show booth.

Gain Interest Prior To The Trade Show

Leaving the advertisement of the event to the convention's promoters does not guarantee success of your individual trade show booth. Because the promoters for the convention must focus on bringing people into the exhibition, they are not focused with the success of each business that participates. Although it's good to have a large crowd, people who come in the front door may or may not even see your trade show booth. To get visitors to walk over to your booth, you must stay on top of the competition and reach out to people through email marketing. This low-cost method will easily lure attendees to come by your booth while they are at the event.

To collect email addresses before the convention, consider having a subscription option or newsletter sign up form on your website. When people agree to receive these notifications, take the opportunity to keep them updated about upcoming events. Since they requested the information, they want to stay informed. By writing friendly and short emails, you will stir up hype before the event even happens.

Gather Data During The Trade Show

Once you have built up interest and drawn people to your trade show booth, make sure to seize the opportunity to get their email address. Gathering emails from every single visitor should be a priority since not everyone who stops by knows about your company. Because email continues to be one of the most commonly forms of communicating along with LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, instant messages and other social media, it's a premiere advertising tool. When sending out newsletters, email is the best choice.

Follow Up After The Trade Show

After the convention ends and you pack up your trade show booth, follow up with prospective customers through all the email addresses you received. E-marketing is less invasive than calling someone on the phone and it gives individuals an easy way to respond back. In addition, emails can quickly be forwarded to managers and business owners who must approve purchases. Contacts typically are more receptive to emails than snail mail or phone calls because they can open it at their convenience and aren't interrupted during an important meeting. Most people don't even see snail mail that is delivered to a workplace. Numerous executives have their assistants sort out the solicitations before they bring them the mail. Most likely, the intended boss never knows that you sent them anything. Put the hard work of collecting emails at the convention to use and gain great results. When used correctly, online marketing can be a highly effective marketing tool for any company.

Trade Shows Are Great For Public Relations, Too

Mike Thimmesch

Trade shows are a great place to meet face-to-face and build stronger relationships with your industry press.

A major strength of trade shows is the ability to meet face-to-face with many people in a short amount of time. Guess what — you can also build much stronger relationships by meeting face-to-face with your industry reporters, too.

Think about it — would your company ever pay to fly you around the country to visit all your industry press? Well, if you're a big enough company, yes, but for most of us, it's just not going to happen.

But at your industry trade show, you're there, your executives and subject matter experts are there, and so are the industry media. It's a match made in (convention center) heaven.

"Trade shows enable the most economical face-to-face meetings/product demos/introductions to company/organization execs in one place at one time," says Lorelei Harloe, Principal, Ascend Communication, LLC.

"Trade shows also offer an editorial audience for major news announcements and new product rollouts or product upgrades. Companies should maximize their PR opportunities at trade shows as they maximize their marketing and sales opportunities."

Ah yes, but perhaps the idea of meeting the press scares you. If so, relax. Your industry press is not a hotbed of **60 Minutes** reporter wannabees. Instead, industry press become subtle advocates of the industry they cover. They look for positive news about your industry, and if

you can share your significant successes, innovation, or insightful feedback on trends, that's news they want to hear.

So, how do you meet the press at your trade shows? Prepare before the show by looking for the pictures of your favorite writers so you can recognize them at the show. Their pictures are sometimes printed with their articles, and almost always on their publication's website. If you can, get the names of the pre-registered press, and call them before the show to set up an appointment. Be sure to offer something newsworthy to get their attention.

At the show, find out what the badge color is for the press, and then look for that badge color on attendees in the aisle. Train your trade show booth staffers to look for them, too and bring them to you, or to bring them to the top company executive in the booth. Bring copies of a press kit, either printed or on a thumb drive, or have a link to an online press kit you can email them.

After show hours, look for the press at the show's networking events, too. You will both be more relaxed and less rushed — a perfect time to get to know them better. I've found that writers are usually smart, often funny, and can be a great source of information on industry trends. You'll learn more from them than they will from you.

And it's worth it. The value of press coverage you get after the show may exceed the cost of the show itself. Consider that when you get several articles placed, how much would it have cost to place ads the same size in those publications? Plus, the articles arguably have more credibility to your audience than the same size ads.

Take advantage of the narrow window of time a trade show offers to meet face-to-face with your industry reporters. You'll build a relationship at the show that will benefit you and your company all year, and for years to come.

Going Mobile on the Trade Show Floor

Reggie Lyons

Let's face it, our mobile devices and smartphones are a big part of our lives. We take them everywhere with us like our wallets and keys. And with the rise of smartphone usage we are also seeing an increase in mobile marketing. As event professionals and trade show marketers there are some great ways to implement mobile marketing with your trade show promotions.

How To Use Mobile Marketing On The Trade Show Floor

Mobile marketing gives exhibitors another way to engage with users on the show floor and drive traffic to your booth. Make your messaging concise yet compelling. Set yourself apart from your competition and share the benefits of attendees visiting your booth. Remember this is not a time for selling, this is a time to share your value proposition. Use mobile to engage attendees with promotions like text-to-win contests, informing users of speakers or product promotions in your booth.

Need real time information from your attendees about their experience in your booth? Use your mobile marketing efforts to learn more about the demographics of your attendees to ensure future success. Poll your attendees while on the trade show floor to discover their impressions of products, your booth staffers, and services.

Mobile also has a green element to it. We've all attended events and walked away from them armed with a stack of literature only to dispose of it once we've returned to our hotel. Instead of lugging around all of those brochures and whitepapers, use a QR code to scan or give attendees the opportunity to receive information via Bluetooth on their mobile device. Or, have

attendees text you their email addresses requesting these materials. Your clients and prospects also see the value in the innovative ways in which you've managed their trade show experience by lightening their load.

Getting Started

So, what's the best way to get started in utilizing mobile marketing for future events? David Miller, VP of Strategic Partnerships at ConnectMedia Ventures, offers these suggestions on how to get started:

1. Make sure the firm you select has experience working with trade shows. Ask to see demos and testimonials from current clients.
2. Start small. Start with a mobile landing page for a text-to-win contest. You can always add more features to your site as you discover what functionality works best for your company.
3. Don't over-engage! You will quickly lose interest if you take advantage of those who have opted in. Mobile phone numbers are private and personal to us all, by over-engaging you will easily lose the following you've worked to build.

Miller also says, when combined with an attractive offer and when attendees are told to go to the trade show booth to complete their registrations for contests, "text-to-win contests are very effective at generating traffic."

And for those of you who have an excess of traffic at your booth space and can't keep up with the masses that surround your booth, a mobile marketing campaign may be an effective way to reach those who are intimidated by the crowds surrounding your booth. "Interacting with attendees via mobile can actually act as a buffer to some attendees so they don't feel as if they're being 'sold'," says Miller.

Are QR Codes Worth Putting On Your Trade Show Displays?

Mike Thimmesch

There's a growing interest in QR codes for trade show display graphics lately. While already very popular in Asia, QR codes are just starting to take off in North America. If you've been considering them, this article is for you. I describe what QR codes are, why to use them, and what the hurdles are to a good experience. I finish with a short list of recommendations if you put QR codes on your trade show displays.

What are QR codes?

QR codes can act as a hyperlink for print and multimedia when scanned by a smart phone. When you take a picture of a QR code with a smart phone that has a suitable app, it will launch the webpage automatically on your phone. Just search your app store for "QR code scanner" and get a free app. You can try it with the QR code here:



If you take a picture of this QR code with your smart phone that has the proper bar scanning app, it will take you to www.skyline.com.

QR codes are free to make. They can't be stolen, as they will only direct people to a web address you control. Just search on Google on "free QR code generator" and find a website that can make them for you. You give the QR code generator the URL of the webpage you want to

link to, and it will generate a unique QR code you can download and use as art on a brochure, ad, business card, or even your trade show display graphics.

I've had two great experiences with QR codes. Once I wanted more info on a new toy in a catalog, and there was a QR code next to the product photo. I snapped a photo and was rewarded with a great two-minute video that demoed the product way better than any paper catalog could. I've also worn a shirt to events with the QR code for the Skyline blog, and started conversations with it.

We test QR codes at EXHIBITOR2011

Skyline tested QR codes at EXHIBITOR2011 in March 2011. We put 6 QR codes in our two booths. Each QR code was a link to a YouTube video about the specific Skyline display system the QR code was on. Below each QR code was the headline, "View the Movie" to give them a reason to scan them. We linked to YouTube movies, expecting YouTube to have the fewest issues streaming the videos.



In the picture with the red rectangles around them are some of the QR codes we had in our EXHIBITOR2011 Booth. The QR codes linked to movies for each specific Skyline display system they were on. As you can see, the attendees preferred to interact with live booth staffers.

Actually, our QR codes didn't point directly at the YouTube URLs for the movies, but instead made a hop via bit.ly, a free service for shortening URLs. That way we could use bit.ly's reporting ability to track how many times the URLs were accessed, each day of the show. Here's what happened:

QR Code View Counts on Skyline Exhibits at EXHIBITOR2011				
QR code "clicks" per display:	Monday, March 28 2011	Tuesday, March 29 2011	Wednesday, March 30 2011	ALL DAYS
Occasions*	0	0	0	0
Myriad*	3	0	0	3
Arrive*	1	0	0	1
DesignView*	0	0	0	0
PictureScope*	1	0	0	1
Envoy* (highly used for training)	21	9	3	33
Total all QR codes	26	9	3	38

Overall, the counts were disappointingly small for all the graphics space we used, and compared to the much, much higher number of face-to-face conversations we had and the hundreds of leads we took. Plus, many of the "clicks" on Monday for Envoy were actually the booth staffers trying out the QR codes, because that's where we held booth staff training. So, there just weren't that many "clicks" to make QR codes worth using — for our audience.

And for the small number of attendees who did access the QR codes, it still wasn't a good experience. Within the confines of the Mandalay Bay show hall, many smart phones simply did not work because of bad connections to the internet. The bar code scanner app within the smart phone would recognize the QR code, call up the web page, but then the page would not load. How often does the same thing happen in other show halls?

QR codes interfere with clear trade show graphics

The best place to put a QR code is right about eye level, so attendees don't have to stoop or stretch to take a picture with their smart phones. But that's very valuable graphic real estate!

That's the same place you need to also have a clear graphic message about why attendees should stop and visit your booth. The QR code gets in the way of that.

It's true, having someone take a picture of your QR code and walk away is better than taking a brochure and running away — at least they won't toss the brochure in the hotel room trash can. But don't miss the opportunity to interact with the attendee and get their contact info.

While smart phones are becoming more and more prevalent, not every smart phone automatically scans a QR code when you take a picture with it — some require a bar code scanner app to be loaded up. If your clients and prospects are more tech savvy, like attendees at CES or BlogWorld, then QR codes could be worth it for you.

7 tips to using QR codes on your trade show display graphics

If you feel your audience is a tech-friendly group and thus decide to add QR codes to your trade show exhibit graphics, then do these 7 things:

1. Place them on your trade show graphics where they can be seen and easily scanned — if you're going to use them, really use them.
2. Give show visitors a reason to scan the QR code, such as "Get more info" or "Sign up for our newsletter" or "See the movie" or "Scan to enter contest," and then link to a show-specific landing page or a webpage that has the great content you promised and is optimized for mobile devices.
3. Explain how they work to your staff...and ensure each staffer has a smart phone in case the attendee doesn't.
4. Make sure your staff knows to approach anyone who is scanning your QR code and use it as an opportunity to engage them in a conversation.

5. Test if the QR codes launch the internet inside the show hall every show ... before the show starts.
6. Set up the links so that “click” counts can be tracked during the show days, such as with bitly.
7. Track them especially close the first few shows to see if they work for your audience.

Sure, QR codes have the cool tech factor, and we'd like some of that to rub off on us. But let's not get so caught up in the technology that we forget our marketing goals. I would rather spend our very valuable trade show time talking with prospects about what their problems are and how

we can help solve them – instead of explaining how to use a QR code, or worse, explaining why the QR code isn't working in the show hall. And why have a booth visitor go off onto a website, when you've got a live booth staffer right there to engage them?

If your audience has reached the technology tipping point and you can use QR codes to quickly advance your trade show interactions, then use them. But if not, then think twice before you use up your valuable display graphic real estate and your booth visitors' time.



Social Media

How To Write Your Social Media Plan In 8 Steps

Mike Thimmesch

Maybe it's because you're in marketing. Maybe it's because you're from the younger generation assumed to be digital natives. Or maybe it's because you're already experimenting with social media and your success has been noticed.

For whatever reason, The Powers That Be have chosen you to write your company's social media plan. Or perhaps they haven't asked, but you know social media is big and getting bigger, and so you want to write a plan to persuade your management to get involved.

Where do you start?

Here are some ideas on the main topics you need to cover in creating an impressive, yet realistic social media plan that garners executive buy-in and a clearer path to success.

1. Paint The Picture of The Big Opportunity of Social Media

Start your social media plan with some startling statistics and pithy quotes about the huge shift away from traditional publishing towards social media.

If you wrote this plan two years ago, you would have leaned on the endorsement of old media with quotes like this:

"Consumers are flocking to blogs, social-networking sites and virtual worlds. And they are leaving a lot of marketers behind." – The Wall Street Journal

But now you can tell the big opportunity of social media by just relying on social media's accomplishments. Include nuggets like:

- 5 of the top 9 highest-traffic websites (Facebook, YouTube, Wikipedia, LinkedIn, and Twitter) are social media websites
- Two-thirds of the global internet population visit social networks — Nielson, Global Faces and Network Places
- More than half of all people in the U.S. over 12 have set up a social media profile
- With over a billion users, if Facebook were a country, it would be the 3rd largest country in the world
- Twitter now has over 500 million accounts and over 200 million active users

Add with a flourish a quote or two from a top social media book, such as *Trust Agents* by Chris Brogan and Julien Smith, or *The New Rules of Marketing and PR* by David Meerman Scott.

2. Define Social Media

Because social media is such a nebulous thing for many, you need to put concise parameters on what it is. However, don't start your plan with the definition of social media because it's not as exciting as the first section about the big opportunity. Get their attention first, and then you can go Webster on them. Include something like this:

"Social media is user-generated content on the internet. It's created with free or inexpensive technology, is easy to update, and can reach a niche audience or millions. It can be mere words in a blog, but also user-generated videos, photos, and audio. It can be interactive with unfiltered comments from visitors. And as user-generated

content, it does away with controls associated with traditional media – and most of all, it removes the need for big media.”

3. List Tangible Business Goals

If you don't already have a social media plan, it's very possible that your top management fears that social media is only a plaything. You have to show them you mean business. Tell them how you will use social media activities to:

- Build awareness
- Strengthen relationships with clients, prospects, and influencers
- Better understand your buyers
- Improve customer service
- Identify new product ideas
- Increase web site traffic
- Improve search engine rankings
- Drive traffic to your trade show displays at events
- Generate leads
- Generate sales

You don't have to promise to do all these things. And preferably your goals will match top management's goals. But whichever goals you choose, make them attainable, and include a measurement plan. Ask for a grace period (at least several months) for learning and experimentation until you have to start proving tangible results.

4. Plan A Timeline Of Steps

You can't just push a button and have a full-fledged social media marketing program running full-swing. But management won't wait forever, either. Give them an idea of what your steps will be, which may include:

- Time to define goals, objectives, and strategy
- Time to get trained on social media
- Time to determine team, either internally, choosing a social media consultant, or both
- Setting up accounts on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube

- Finding your existing community of clients, prospects, and influencers on the main social media sites listed above, on niche social media sites, and on established industry blogger sites (if you determine your clients are not yet on social media, you may not have a plan!)
- Time to set up your own blog
- The sequence of social media sites you will concentrate your efforts
- Time needed for listening to each online community
- Time to develop a following
- Time to create content, such as a blog (which is ongoing), videos, white papers, podcasts, and more
- Time to learn time-saving tools such as RSS feeds, Technorati, Hootsuite, Bitly, and more
- Dates of pre-scheduled progress reports

Write this timeline of steps on paper, not in stone. This is a working plan that you use every week, and change as you learn what works and what doesn't.

5. Set Realistic Expectations

Because social media revolves around so many free tools, and because it has become the darling of marketing hipsters everywhere, expectations run high. So you also need to help your team understand there's no guarantee it will be a silver bullet. Tell them things like:

- Social media is not a panacea: if your company or product sucks, social media is not going to make that go away
- While many of the tools are free, it can take a substantial investment in time and consistent effort to build up a loyal following on the main social media sites
- Social media is not just another advertising channel – old-school product messages will go down in flames
- There is a substantial learning curve of the technology, language, and culture of the various social media sites

- Social media is always evolving, so successful methods can stop working
- Success may require effort from a team, not just one person

6. Ask for Resources

Getting this plan accomplished will require resources. Don't be shy, ask for help, be it training, people's time, or budget to pay for consultants, website hosting fees, a video camera, or useful web applications you later determine you need. Because social media requires near constant attention, tell them you need a laptop with broadband access, and a smart phone with an unlimited web access plan, too.

And ask for something free but priceless: For your top management to share their buy-in with your plan to help you get more cooperation from the rest of your company.

7. Recommend Who Does Social Media For Your Company

The first step of choosing who does social media for your company is deciding between doing it internally, hiring a consultant to do it, or a combination. You can shorten your learning curve with social media consultants who can train you and help identify online communities where your clients already gather. But ultimately, your social media activity really should be done by people who work for your company. It's just too hard to hire an outsider to be the authentic voice of your company.

Then figure out who does social media within your company. Just remember that while the youngest member of your marketing or customer service team may be the most familiar with social media, they may not be the best choice to represent your company in social media. You want someone who has:

- Deep knowledge of your customers, industry, products, and company
- Exemplifies the personality of your organization
- Insatiable curiosity
- Integrity
- Good people and communication skills
- A quick study on technology
- Very strong work ethic

That person, of course, may end up being you.

8. Finish with an Urgent Call to Action

While similar to how you started your plan, you want to finish with some more strident points that create a sense of urgency. End your plan with things like:

- "We no longer control our brand – it is being shaped by our customers in social media with or without us, so we must engage with them to protect and enhance the brand."
- "Social media is where our communities are shifting their attention; we ignore them at our peril."
- "If we delay our entry too long we risk being left behind by our customers and our competitors."

Social Media is a vast universe of communities, cultures, and ultimately, for the marketer, choices. I hope these 8 parts of a social media plan will help you to inspire your organization to get engaged with your clients, prospects, and influencers via social media.

7 Levels of Social Media For Trade Show Marketers

Mike Thimmesch

Perhaps you are an exhibit marketer who has yet to send your first Tweet, write your first blog post, or record your first YouTube video. Or maybe social media has already become a regular part of your trade show promotions. Either way, what's next?



Whether you are a social media rookie, a digital native, or somewhere in between, there is a progression of tactics you can follow to expand your reach, influence, relationships, and results.

Here are the 7 levels of social media, for business to business marketers, and especially trade show marketers:

Level 1: Listen To Your Audience

The most basic thing you can do on social media is simply to listen to what your target audience is saying and doing on popular social media sites. Listening doesn't even require setting up any accounts. Just go to the search pages for

Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook, and blogs, and do searches on your industry keywords, such as product names, job titles, and industry buzzwords. Find out what people are talking about -- their issues, their joys, and their dreams. This is the first, simplest step, but it's too often skipped.

For exhibitors, search on the names of the trade shows you exhibit at, to find out what attendees are saying about the show. Find your show's Facebook page and Twitter account as a

shortcut, and learn Twitter hashtags for your main shows to find even more messages people are sending about the shows.

Level 2: Share Content To Engage With Your Audience

The next level of social media is to share good content you've found with your target audience. Share content you think they will value, content that will help them with their jobs, content that will entertain and connect. Most of all, share content that echoes

your viewpoint, and add your opinion to messages as you send them. The fancy term for this is "content curation." To share content, you'll have to set up accounts on sites like Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. You may want to start with one site first, and then expand when you've got the hang of the first one. By sharing content, you can also join in the great conversations taking place all over social media, and start to build relationships with people online.

Sharing content as a trade show marketer can be as simple as retweeting interesting Tweets about your main show, or liking on Facebook about new products being introduced at your upcoming

trade show, or sharing blog posts and YouTube videos produced to highlight what will be new and interesting at the show.

Level 3: Create Your Own Content

After listening and sharing, it's time to step up to the next level -- creating your own content to share on social media sites. This is not for the faint of heart. It takes a commitment, because once you start, you have to sustain your pace of content, or else you'll look worse off than if you had never started. Write a blog, create videos for YouTube, and have regular ideas from your own perspective to share via Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Hint: It's a lot easier to have a blog, and then share your blog content in bite-sized chunks via Twitter and Facebook, than to create lots of little content just for Twitter and Facebook. Content that will get shared and build your brand is the same as content others produce that you've been sharing -- useful, entertaining, funny, and newsworthy. But now it's from you and your company, so you are even more actively building your reputation with the millions of people online.

Content you create as a trade show marketer can be a pre-show or post-show video you post on YouTube and Facebook, pre-show Tweets about all the great things you are giving away in your trade show displays, or a blog post post-show recapping the new product you introduced at the show.

Level 4: Engage With The Influencers

Now that you have created a solid footprint online, it's time to up your game and start networking with the hubs of the network. Brian Solis has said that when you engage with the influencers within your niche on social media sites, it's like you are engaging with an audience of audiences. These are the connectors and the thought leaders who can help share your content with a much broader audience, and help you

build relationships with other influencers in your industry. These are the people with high Klout scores, thousands of followers/friends/connections, and a well-read blog. Many are also influential offline, too. They can also be some of the best friends you will make online, as they are as passionate and insightful on your industry as you aspire to be. On Twitter, follow them, retweet their best tweets with a comment, and get a dialog going over time. Comment on their blog posts, and like their content on your Facebook account.

Trade show marketers can engage with influencers by searching on the show's hashtag on Twitter, and see who's Tweets are getting the most retweeting. Search on Google blog search with the names of your top shows, and find out which bloggers write about your show, and then comment on their blog posts, and even invite them to your trade show exhibit to see what's new. Find out if there is a Tweetup (a live meeting of Twitter friends) at your show, so you can meet face-to-face with these online influencers who are more likely to attend it.

Level 5: Create "Wow" Events To Provoke Sharing

The next level is to invest creative energy and money into making events that are so cool, so awesome, that people who see it or participate in it will whip out their smartphones, take pictures, and share what they're seeing with all their social media contacts. Business-to-consumer brands do this a lot, when they are more focused on building brand awareness to millions. Brands that do this are seen as cooler and more fun.

For trade show marketers, it means creating an activity in your trade show booth that excites your target audience so much, that they will stop walking down the trade show aisle, watch, participate, and share. You can create moments

in your booth where attendees will want to have their photo taken, and then design a backdrop that includes your logo repeated on it, so your brand is seen when they share the photo (or even video) across their social media accounts.

Level 6: Create A Community

For most of us, we can draft off of the efforts of others who have brought together our target audience within a part or niche of a larger social media network. For the truly dedicated, the next level is to launch your own community on social media. That may be your own group on LinkedIn or Facebook that you administer, or a Tweet Chat (a regularly scheduled chat on Twitter) that you host. The effort is greater, but by taking a leadership role you boost your reputation and instill gratitude among your target audience. You gain relationships with the very people your company serves, who can give you valuable feedback about their needs and their problems. Some companies go so far as to set up their own private social network to have these conversations away from their competitors' eyes.

For trade show marketers, creating a community specific to a show is probably not necessary, because the show owner will have the best list to start from in creating the show's online community, and most likely already has started one that you can interact with. But if you have set up your own community, you can lead discussions about what will be happening at your upcoming industry shows, and be sure to mention what your company will be offering there, and reach out to the members who say they will coming to the show.

Level 7: Expand Your Social Media Footprint

Now that you have a viable, consistent presence on all the main social media networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and blogs, you can expand in many directions. You can

create more content on the main networks – such as doubling the number of videos you post on YouTube or increasing your blog posts per month. You can add more accounts on the main networks, training more people in your company to use Twitter or to help everyone build or improve their LinkedIn accounts. You can refine your social media activities by creating content specific to your best vertical markets or market segments. And you can go wider by starting and continuing accounts on other social media networks, such as Google+, Pinterest, Quora, StumbledUpon, Tumblr, Instagram, and more. You can also be the first in your industry to dive into new social media networks as they emerge. This highest level of social media is never fully accomplished – it's a question of how far you can go before your extra efforts are not worth it.

For trade show marketers, this means increasing your social media activities before, during, and after the show. Pre-show you can have multiple people talking up with their social networks what your company will be doing at your upcoming show, or ask all booth staffers to send a LinkedIn update that they will be booth staffing there. At show, it could mean bringing a dedicated team of social media savvy people to booth staff, where they are constantly sharing on your social media accounts what is happening in your booth, including photos and videos of interactions within your exhibit and at the show's networking events and educational sessions. And post-show, it's producing and posting lots of content about what happened in your booth and at the show that is newsworthy to your industry, be it in blog posts or YouTube videos.

No matter where you are in your social media and trade show marketing program, there is always room for growth. I hope this article inspires you to raise yours to the next level.

12 Tips About Social Media for Trade Shows

Mike Thimmesch

When Skyline exhibited at EXHIBITOR2012, we gave mini-seminars in our trade show booth to attendees at the show. By far the most popular topic was “12 Tips About Social Media for Trade Shows.”

The idea was to communicate in just 10 minutes, 12 actionable tactics exhibitors could use on the most popular social media networks to get more people into their trade show displays. Not a lot of strategy; just quick, usable ideas.

I covered just the most popular networks: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and blogs. Here we go:



Twitter

1. **Tweet Reasons To Visit Your Booth:** A lot of markers are reluctant to use Twitter because they simply don't know what messages to send. But with nearly 500 million accounts and about 6% of the U.S. population on Twitter every day, it's worth using! So here's a great start: Tweet reasons to visit your booth that you are already sharing via email, direct mail, ads, and the phone. Tell attendees all the great things you will be offering in your booth, such as show specials, giveaways, contests, new products, special offers, and the like. Those are

messages attendees will want to hear, and will get them interested in visiting you in your booth. You can send a few messages a week for the month or two leading up to the show.

2. **Pre-Schedule Tweets:** Now that you've got a lot to say, you don't want to be tied to your desk or have to remember to go back to Twitter once a day or two to send out those messages. Fortunately, you don't have to remember. There are free, web-based programs such as Hootsuite.com or Tweetdeck.com that allow you to pre-schedule your tweets, even down to the five minutes you want. For our Exhibitor 2012 event, we pre-scheduled 46 tweets starting almost 2 months before the show. Just remember to adjust for the time difference between your location (where you set up the account) and the local time at the show.
3. **Learn the Hashtag (#) for Your Shows:** One of the reasons people are reluctant to use Twitter is that Twitter has its own seemingly secret code. One of the most important codes is the hashtag. That's when a person on Twitter includes a pound sign or hash symbol “#” directly in front of a word. That turns that word into a hyperlink that lets a viewer click and see all the recent messages with that same hashtag. So by including the hashtag of the event you are exhibiting at (for us it was #exhibitor2012) you are more likely to be seen by potential attendees. Find the hashtag by going to your shows' website, or by asking them directly.



Facebook

4. **Not Just Personal, Also for Business:** For many people, Facebook is their personal place for social media. They want to use it to keep in touch with high school and college friends, not to interact with businesses. However, Facebook is now so big that businesses – even B2B businesses — can no longer resist using it. Facebook has over 1 billion users, which would make it the 3rd largest country by population. Facebook daily traffic and activity today is equivalent to all the volume of the entire internet in 2004. So businesses are setting up pages for their businesses. For example, General Electric has nearly a quarter of a million friends for their Facebook page! You don't have to promote your company from your personal account. Just set up a business page and start engaging with your clients on a more personal level – no writing like a press release!
5. **Post Photos and Videos from Your Trade Shows:** And what can you post on your business Facebook page? As a trade show exhibitor, you can post photos and videos from your booth. Show what new things you introduced. Share with your company's friends who couldn't go to the show the action they missed out on. It's really easy to do with a smart phone! Just test it out before the show – take a picture of your company's building to try it out. Even better: give your attendees a reason to have their picture taken in your booth, with a fun banner stand

backdrop or a celebrity, and make it easy for them to share that picture on their own Facebook account.

6. **Announce News from the Show for Friends that Couldn't Come:** Did you announce a new strategic alliance with a partner? Introduce a new product? Whatever news you shared at the show in your booth, you can also post to your friends on Facebook.



YouTube

7. **Include Company & Show Name In Video Title:** Guess what – YouTube is actually the second-most popular search engine in the world! And people don't just search on Justin Bieber and Lady Gaga, they also search on just about anything, including the name of the show they will exhibit at. So include in video title the show name, plus your company name – and maybe even your booth number.
8. **Great for Pre-Show and Post-Show Promotions:** YouTube is a great place to get your story across with all the power of video and without the cost of running an ad on a network. For pre-show promotions, load up the video with all the great reasons to visit your trade show booth (see point #1 about Twitter). You can also record and produce a video showing all the action you had in your booth – new products, demonstrations, happy client interviews – and post that to YouTube soon after the show. Then email links to people, or embed the video on your website or blog, or get found by searchers by including the show name and great keywords in the video title.

9. **YouTube Videos Less Formal:** In days gone by, almost all corporate videos required a high-end production crew and a very button-down presentation format. Now, because of the changing expectations of social media, it's much more about a human connection than a big production. So you don't need to break the bank to make a video, and you don't need everyone wearing suits, either. Just relax and speak from the heart on why attendees will benefit by visiting your booth.



Blogs

10. **Blog About Your Trade Show Program – Find Out Who Manages Your Blog or Start One:** If you think you are not interacting with social media, you may be surprised to find out that you have been without knowing it – via blogs. About half the websites on the Internet are created with blogging software. Blogs are so much easier to set up than traditional websites, and virtually free. Find who blogs for your company, and give them info about your events – they will want to publish great content like your event news. Or start your own blog about what your company is doing at events. Your blog can serve as a home base for each show's promotional activity. It can also boost your SEO results by how you set up its blog, which keywords you use, and

the links you build.

11. **Industry Bloggers = New Press, Public Relations:** If you could find a copy of your main industry trade magazine from 15 years ago, you'd be surprised by how much thicker it was back then. Magazine ads were the main way to reach your industry audience, until the Internet and Google made online marketing more effective and took revenue away from magazines. That also reduced the number of journalists magazines could afford to employ. But the Internet revolution made blogs possible at a low, low cost, so bloggers have stepped in to replace magazine writers. You can find these bloggers by going to <http://www.google.com/blogsearch> and searching on the names of the trade shows you exhibit at. These are the people you want to build relationships, much like your (remaining) industry press.
12. **Blog Post Show: Recap Trends, New Products:** Reach out to your new-found blogger friends before the show, and give them the information they need so they write about you after the show. Get them an interview with your company CEO or top leaders, to share your views about industry trends. Set up an appointment to demonstrate your new products introduced at the show, so they may include it in their recap about new products on their blog.

So there you have it – 12 tips you can use today to leverage the amazing reach of social media to drive more people to your trade show booth.

The New Era of Trade Shows: From Brand Voice to Social Voice!

Sarmistha Tarafder

Let's face it. When it comes to trade show exhibiting, most companies use the same tactics that they used years ago and the sad part is all the companies start to look and feel the same. Strategy seems to be an alien concept. Most exhibitors are peddling the same stuff with perhaps a bit different flavors. This scenario is specially true in a vertical market.

So, what do you do as an Exhibitor who wants to create a memorable splash at an event to gain the high ground?

“Inbound” Your Trade Show Presence: Do something phenomenal in your booth. It could be a unique architecture that represents your brand or featuring an activity in your space that attracts people naturally towards your space. At the Exhibitor 2012 we held seminars for trade show marketers in our space through out the day. It created phenomenal buzz and people were organically drawn towards our exhibiting space.

Harness Social Media to Promote Your Presence: Start telling your tribe about the event far in advance about the trade show. Create a hashtag for the event and a compelling reason as to why they should visit your booth. It may include a special giveaway, a new product announcement or even the opportunity to be one of first few alpha users of a certain product that is still in development.

Create a Foursquare location for your booth at the trade show: Surprisingly enough, people are checking in to specific booths on Foursquare when they attend a trade show. Offer a special

promo to people who check in to your booth. The promo may be a 15-minute, one-on-one-consultation or an extra prize. This will provide incentive to people to check in to your booth and will promote your presence to other Foursquare users.

Excite Your Internal Brand Ambassadors to

Promote the Event: Encourage them to talk about your trade show presence to their networks. For your sales team this is an ideal opportunity to broadcast to their leads the benefits that they will reap in attending this show. And of course, your marketing warriors should be in the forefront in promoting this event.

Create a Targeted Offer for the Trade Show: A

unique landing page on your website that promotes your trade show presence and addresses the question “What is there for me?” Compound this unique attribution with a downloadable e-book or whitepaper that relates to the theme of the trade show. If people are interested in what you are saying, they will have another reason to attend the trade show.

Generate a QR code that you can imprint on your trade show graphics:

Encourage people to scan the code. Configure the code to send people who scan it, to a dedicated landing page with the same value proposition that highlights the trade show connection. Invite them to download a targeted offer. This will help you to generate leads from your trade show presence and will give you a way to track results from the event.

Promote Aggressively with Social Sharing:

Compelling content is bound to go viral. Include social media share buttons in your landing page to encourage others to promote the event through their own social networks. Take advantage of the industry journals that you subscribe to. Go ahead, follow them, like them, whatever you have to do to get your content noticed. Start a two-way conversation. Generate third-party recommendations from people not

directly associated with your business. You are bound to increase your reach!

Think of your trade show booth as a destination site. Partner with local restaurants, entertainments and other flavors to provide compelling offers for your visitors that will strike a chord of memorability in their minds.

3 Social Media Don'ts While At Your Trade Show

Nicole Huston

Social media does a lot for businesses: It acts as a point of contact with customers, allowing for real-time interaction, and is a wonderful tool for keeping them abreast of what your company is doing. By its very nature, social media is a prime tool for promoting your trade shows. It gets visitors raring to visit your trade show booth...but only if it's used correctly.

So here are three social media don'ts while on the trade show floor, to help ensure you do use social media correctly:

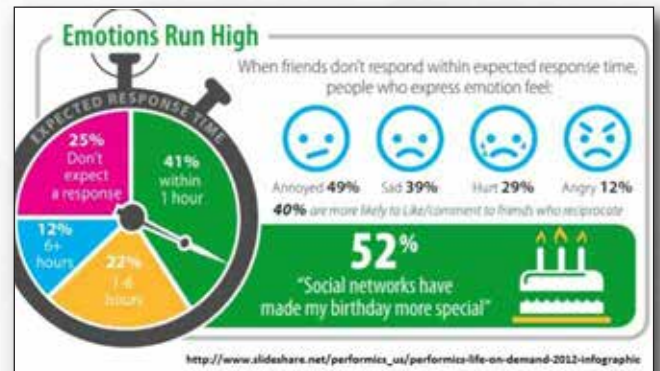
#1. Check yourself before you wreck yourself.

Always double check. We've all been there. Sometimes we misspell a word or link to a different page. The importance of double checking and triple checking has increased tenfold.

Now this even goes for QR codes. When using QR codes to place on your banner stand, backwall or literature of any kind, you want to make sure to scan before actually printing and making sure that goes to the correct page.

#2. Don't be "that guy" and always follow up.

Many booth staffers are busy and don't remember to follow up with leads found at a show. Well, this is a missed opportunity. 69% of B2B companies have no process for responding to customer feedback via social media. Ouch. An infographic created by Performics illustrated that consumers may feel annoyed, sad, hurt, or even angry--or all four when someone doesn't respond to them.



#3. Don't hate, don't procrastinate, and always plan ahead.

When you begin planning your trade shows, logistics, and show services, start to promote your booth with updates and tweets about your booth number and upcoming plans. It is ok to start promoting this information as soon as you are guaranteed a booth space. If you are new at a show or to trade show planning, trade show websites have gotten better at providing "new at exhibiting" checklists or a general exhibitor checklist that points out important deadlines with marketing and trade show planning.

I've found that HootSuite, SproutSocial, even WordPress are great tools that help in scheduling posts. These tools also help with implementing a process for responding to customers, and never missing a follow-up opportunity.

This trade show season, make social media work for you and enjoy the boost in visits to your trade show display and sales you'll see as a result!

Using Social Media For Trade Show Promotions

Nicole Huston

Social media is a communication channel, and a great tool for you to use in executing your marketing plan; especially at your next trade show.

Trade shows are used for face-to-face marketing, networking, and selling and ultimately aim to build and/or solidify relationships. What about before and after the show? Along with traditional marketing techniques, begin thinking of how to incorporate social media tools to augment your tried and true pre-show promotion and post-show follow-up strategies. These can work regardless if your company is B2C or B2B. Trade show booth staffers may be using these tools everyday to network with customers, so let's tap into social media to continue that conversation.

The wisdom of the 4 B's

The 4 B's is a practice that can be used by anyone and applies to all types of social media. Mike Yoder, a dear friend and founder of the method, swears by it – and I humbly agree! Here are some ideas to link the “Be's” with the tools:

Be Interesting (before the show)

What sets your company apart from the competition? What's your show theme or the critical brand message you're trying to introduce? How can you engage clients to get the message and want to connect with you?

Try participating in BoothTag at your next trade show and/or provide a QR code that links to a landing page of a contest instead of your website. Take this idea, and spread your message before the show, using both traditional methods (email and snail mail) and non-traditional (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube,

etc). Keep it simple, interesting, and have a little fun with it, but...

Be Relevant (at the show)

Not everyone buys into gamification and contests in a trade show exhibit, because it doesn't always bring qualified leads. However, when done correctly, you can create a contest that is relevant to your brand, theme and other trade show initiatives, which will result in attendee sign-ups that become qualified leads.

For example, say you're a software integration firm at a trade show offering attendees a free assessment of their systems software, but since this is a common industry practice many people may not be enticed by this offer. However, create a compelling message and offer a free assessment via a fun contest, coupled with a favorable chance to win an iPad, and voila!! ... you've now lowered engagement barriers, spawned brand/message recognition and paved the way to more qualified leads.

Keep in mind that a perfect “give-away” promotion is tied to a business need and a personal interest, and done through a positive, memorable experience.

Be Helpful (during and after the show)

This point reminds me of a TEDx presentation by Angela Maiers called, “You Matter.” The message here is that there is a power and a genius in the act of caring for others. Demonstrate that you get this and you aren't just processing people through your booth. Use your social media tools to thank them for spending time with you and to keep the spark you started at the show going long after it.

A person overlooked, a need unacknowledged, or a promise simply forgotten are all missed opportunities that could potentially create a negative impression on your brand and on you as a person. The Internet through social media has

created a networked mobile society, a culture of immediacy, and an expectation of expedited follow up. Fortunately, social media tools also provide the opportunity for you to respond accordingly and to continue the dialog with your new contacts over networks such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube.

Be Yourself (always)

Self-explanatory, but let's go over a couple main points. The beauty of social media is that it is a more informal communications medium where you can be yourself, just as you might at a cocktail party. It is not a promotional platform or dynamic infomercial. It is about listening, sharing and caring. Channel your inner-self and empathize with your clients and followers and you may be surprised how influential and powerful you really are.

Again, social media is a communication channel and a tool for marketing. However, as with all communication channels, your success is wholly dependent on the quality of the dialog and the skillful use of the tools available.



3 Ways To Use Social Media For Trade Shows

Ken Buckman

Social media is everywhere and your company is probably using it, but are you using it right? The next time you exhibit with your trade show booths, consider using your Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts and even your blog in these unique ways to increase visibility and promote your business.

Increase Anticipation By Posting Photos Of Your Trade Show Labor Staff

If you have trade show labor staff provided by the venue, ask if you can take some photos during the installation process and post them on your accounts. If the trade show labor staff has their own Twitter, Instagram, Facebook or other social media accounts, tag them and compliment them on their hard work and dedication. This very simple act can increase anticipation and excitement for visitors, but it's also excellent advertising for your trade show labor company. Chances are good that they'll jump at the opportunity. If you don't have a provided team putting your trade show display together, take photos of your own employees.

Entice People To Visit Your Display By Announcing Special Contests

Giveaways are an expected part of a trade show display, but that doesn't mean you need to stick with boring old pens, notepads or other common giveaways. Instead, use social media to make a big splash and give away something big to your followers. Invite guests to stop by your booth and give your employees a special code word to be entered to win a larger, more exciting prize. Common ones can be tablet computers, MP3 players and other electronic gadgets, but if you're

short on funds, consider giving away a product or service from your own company. You won't have to worry about laying out a lot of cash for the prize and you might just gain a few new customers in the process!

Blog About The Event Before, During And After

If you're truly dedicated to social media, make sure you have a blog. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are all excellent resources, but a blog is where your company can really shine. Give customers a sneak peek of any new products or services that you'll be debuting at your trade show display and designate one employee to take a break from meeting with customers during the event so they can write a quick blog post. Once you do get back to the office, take some time to write about the event's highlights. Include stories about some of the customers you met. It's a given that some of your customers will be unable to attend the event and this gives them an excellent opportunity to feel like they were there too.

Many companies are worried that they need to be perfect in their social media accounts but customers want to see your real side. Don't be afraid to interact with customers on your social media accounts and show a little personality! Developing relationships with customers can be easier than ever with social media, as long as you do it correctly!



Using Technology In Your Trade Show Booth

Michael Flavin

Success at a trade show requires finding a way to capture the attention of the largest number of attendees. Nothing can catch the eye like light, sound and motion. If you want to make the most of your trade show opportunity you need to tap into the technology available. Here are some effective options that clients often consider:

1. Pre-Show Technology. Before you even set up your trade show booth you will encounter technology options offered by the trade show organization. Investigate what's available and take full advantage of those items that can maximize your effectiveness. Shows typically offer exhibitors with sponsorship opportunities on their web site, email lists & addresses of attendees, and contact / meeting technology that allows the attendees to look at all the business profiles and contact exhibitors in advance for appointments.

2. Interactive Activities. It's a lot more fun to touch and feel something than to passively observe a product in action. If you want your trade show exhibit to be the show stopper you can use interactive technology to give your prospects an opportunity to be entertained and informed. The type of device you use will vary according to your product line. Touch screens allow companies to gain attendees interaction and help them to qualify or disqualify them as a potential customer. Games can be incorporated in a number of ways, such as a prize game like slot machines, Plinko boards, Toss-N-Win games among others, but make sure the game is tied to your product offering.

3. Video Loops. An attention-getting video will use vivid imagery, music, color and movement. The video should eye-catching while being concise and to the point. Make sure the material is up-to-date — don't use one from last year that has out-of-date products featured. Many trade show exhibits can hold monitors of all sizes, even portable displays, like the Skyline Mirage with Monitor Mount or Stratus Table Workstation.

4. DVDs and Flash drives. After you draw the viewers into your trade show exhibit you need to have something more than a key chain to offer qualified prospects. Be prepared to follow-up your conversation with promise to mail or FedEx a DVDs or flash drives that contain relevant product presentations to give to anyone who shows more than a passing interest. The combination of video or an interactive digital piece is a complimentary marketing tool to printed materials such as brochures.

5. Social Media. A newer addition to the trade show technology toolbox, social media, can be a cost-effective marketing medium. Many people use smart phones — sites like Facebook, Twitter and Foursquare allow exhibitors and attendees connect before, during and after trade shows. Post updates about your trade show exhibit & show experience on your Facebook Fan Page. Follow Twitter hash tags for the show to find & interact with attendees. Create a check-in for your booth space for attendees to create an interactive experience.

6. iPads & Tablets. While these items are also new trade show technology additions, they can be added to your booth experience as more than just a giveaway. Create an app for attendees to download on their tablets. Use iPads to demo your web site or share product photos. Create a testimonial video with a satisfied customer, which you can share during a conversation. Take notes and develop a digital lead card for booth staffers.

Get More Trade Show Leads With Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook

Mike Thimmesch



Want to use Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook to get more leads in your trade show booth? Here's the long and short of it.

There are two key strategies exhibitors can leverage with Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter for pre-show promotions: Either they reach out to **their own network** they've already built up over the long-term on those social networks, or rapidly **tap into groups** that already exist for their trade show on these 3 huge social media sites.

Long Term: Build Your Own Social Media Following

The first strategy is a more long-term plan, because it takes time and effort to build up your own following, whether they are called fans and friends on Facebook, connections and followers on LinkedIn, or followers on Twitter. (A nuclear bomb's worth of electrons has already been consumed on how to best grow your army of social media followers, so I won't go into that here.) If you've already built up a following, then voila! It's a short-term plan for you.

When you have gained a group of followers, communicate to them before the show with a potent reason to meet you in your trade show booth, much like you would with other media. Overall, if your clients, prospects, and influencers are into social media, then building your own following is the way to go anyhow, and using your home-grown network for pre-show promotion is a bonus.

Short Term: Leverage the Trade Show's Followers on Social Media Sites

The second strategy can be achieved in a relatively short time. It's to tie into the people who have connected to your trade show's presence on these big three social networks.

So for Facebook, it would be getting your comments, in-booth contests, or new product news seen on the show's Facebook fan or group page. For example, you can make a post asking people to come see you at your trade show exhibit, load up your product photos to the fan page, link to a YouTube video, or make comments to the news the show posts themselves.

For LinkedIn, within the trade show's LinkedIn group, you can post news items about your new products, or join discussions about what will be happening at the trade show. As an exhibitor, you will almost certainly be accepted to the show's group. If the show doesn't have a LinkedIn group yet, then ask the show to start one, or search using your industry keywords and find the best groups for your industry, and start a discussion asking who is going to the show you are exhibiting at.



For Twitter, leveraging the show's Twitter followers is achieved by sending tweets filled with great reasons to visit you at the trade show, and including in your message the hashtag for the show (like #CES for the CES show) and hoping you get read by attendees who are reading that hashtag Twitter stream. If the show doesn't retweet your message, you can direct message the show's Twitter account, let them know you are an exhibitor, and ask them to retweet your message to share it with their followers.

Just remember that if you would consider a message to be spammy in email, it's even more so via social media, so tread lightly in these arenas.

Get More Visitors to Your Trade Show Exhibit

My intuition says you will have greater interest from people in your own network (strategy 1), but fewer of them will be going to the show. You will have greater opportunity for new connections leaning on the show's network (strategy 2), but won't always have the power of an existing relationship, and will have to have an even more potent message to stand out — just like all pre-show marketing.

And while I've focused on the pre-show promotion aspect of leveraging these social media sites, because so many attendees will carry and view their smart phones right on the show floor, it applies to at-show promotions, too. In the short term, you can leverage the group of followers already congregating online for the show you will be exhibiting at. In the long term, it's best to build your own tribe on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, and include your invitations to meet you at the trade show as just part of an ongoing conversation with them.

Overcoming The 3 Biggest Hurdles To Using Twitter

Mike Thimmesch

Do you like Twitter? I sure do, along with over 500 million people. And while I like Twitter, I love the Event Profs group on Twitter. I am writing this post in the hope that it will ease the learning curve for newcomers to Twitter, and especially new members to the Event Profs community.

There are great reasons to engage with Twitter. In conversations with trade show exhibitors and my company's Exhibiting Consultants, I extol Twitter's benefits:

- **Relationships:** Twitter may have started as a way to follow people you know, but it's blossomed into a great way to start and deepen true relationships with some of the most interesting people you've never met before.
- **News:** Twitter is a non-stop headline machine. It's an endless flow from news sources you didn't know existed. News that is specific to your industry, expertise, and hobbies.
- **Learning:** People on Twitter share links to many how-to articles and blogs that sharpen your skills and widen your knowledge.
- **Business:** As you deepen relationships on Twitter and publish content that brings visitors to your website, the sales will come.
- **Fun:** On Twitter you can find interesting people, new ideas, and even a great community. It's great fun to participate in all three at once.

Yet even when people hear these advantages to being on Twitter, they still resist. These are the 3 objections I hear the most:

1. "I don't understand Twitter."
2. "I don't know how to get started on Twitter."
3. "I don't have the time for Twitter."

Let's look at these three reasons for not getting on Twitter, and how to overcome them.

1. "I don't understand Twitter."

Unlike other social media sites, when people first visit Twitter they are bewildered. I believe that's because, in order to keep messages within 140 characters, there is so much shorthand going on that newbies don't understand. And I'm not talking about texting abbreviations, like "How R U?" or "LMAO!" Twitter has shortcuts users have developed to get more said in fewer characters:

@name: The @ sign has been very elegantly used for email. In Twitter, it's called the Twitter handle, and is similar to an email address. My Twitter handle is @SkylineExhibits as that's the company I work for. Many Twitter handles are odd looking because users have shortened their name to fit in the 20-character limit, or because their name was already taken they had to invent a new one.

Also, Twitter is like email, except everyone can read it. For some that's a big shift, that they would actually hold conversations in public. It's hard to grasp that people can operate that way.

Also, the @name confuses new Twitter visitors because not only do you have to know that it's someone's handle, but that the @name gets used in several different contexts. Here are some examples:

Replies to an unseen earlier message: Rather than type out a longer reply, people just give a short reply, much like they would in email. But when you don't see the previous message, you see something like this that makes no sense:



Multiple people referenced: Like email, you can send messages to more than one person at a time. If you don't know what's going on, it can

look like just nonsense:



Mention someone without writing directly to them:

Here @3deventplanning mentioned Skyline in their tweet by including @SkylineExhibits. But they weren't sending me a message; they were just referring to the company Skyline.



Retweets or RTs: When people want to forward a tweet they like from someone they follow, they either type RT and the @name of the person whose tweet they are forwarding somewhere in their message, or use the RT function of whatever interface they are using. So instead of writing "I am forwarding this tweet from @tracibrowne to you my Twitter followers" you see the much shorter "RT @tracibrowne."

Shortened URLs: As you probably know, a URL is the "address" of a web page. An average URL length leaves little room for a message, and some URLs are so long they wouldn't even fit in within the 140-character Twitter limit. So most Twitter users shorten the length of the URLs they share by using free websites like <http://bit.ly> or <http://ow.ly>. For example, bit.ly shrinks this URL from 133 characters: <http://www.skylinetradeshowtips.com/6-things-to-say-when-your-boss-asks-%e2%80%9cwhy-are-we-spending-so-much-on-trade-shows%e2%80%9d/> down to only 20: <http://bit.ly/a6ZLdo>.

However, when a person first views Twitter, it's highly unlikely they know about URL shorteners. So they see something like this: <http://bit.ly/cE5E3w> and have no idea it's a link to a webpage (no .com ending) and plus it's in blue text while the message is in black. That's highly confusing at first.

#Hashtags: Hashtags let Twitter users include in their tweets a shortcut that tells readers their tweet is about that subject. For example, if I want people to know that I am directing my tweets at people who are attending or interested in a trade show, such as Blogworld, I can include that show's hashtag, which was #bwe10. When online, the hashtag then becomes a live link (again, with blue text). Users can click on the hashtag and get updated to a continuously-updating Twitter page with all the recent tweets about that subject.

And it does shorten the tweet. Instead of including "this message is for attendees or exhibitors going to Blogworld 2010" I just say #bwe10. So 67 characters becomes only 6. But to a newcomer to Twitter, it's just gibberish.

Also, some Twitter users include hashtags to make a tongue-in-cheek joke or statement, ending their tweet with phrases such as #thatisall or #imjustsaying. Once you've seen enough of these, it's no big deal. But to a newbie, it's another incomprehensible aspect to be deciphered.

So based on the points above, let's look at a single tweet and "translate it" to the longer text it represents:

The text is written in these 135 characters:

RT @moonlightbasin: Booths at the 2011 @siasnowsports show are already sold out. Highest attendance in 6 years <http://ow.ly/3brkK> #snow

But it really means, and what a more experienced Twitter reader understands, can be translated as these 364 characters:

I am sharing this previously tweeted message from Moonlight Basin (of Big Sky, Montana): Booths at the 2011 SIA Snow Sports Show (whose Twitter handle is @siasnowsports) are already sold out. Highest attendance in 6 years? Click on the hyperlink to read the story at <http://www.tsnn.com/blog/?p=4525> and click on

the blue #snow to see all recent tweets about snow.

That's the first big hurdle; just understanding what is being tweeted. Once people understand the lingo, they get caught up on the next big hurdle, how to get started.

2. "I don't know how to get started on Twitter."

When people say they don't know how to get started on Twitter, they actually have two problems: They don't know who to follow, and they don't know what to say. So let's tackle both of them:

"I don't know who to follow on Twitter."

Twitter makes it easy to follow celebrities on Twitter, yet that's not going to help you find people you can truly network with or drive future business. (But it will be fun, and funny, especially if you follow Conan O'Brien, whose Twitter handle is @ConanOBrien.)

What Twitter has (but made hard to find) is an advanced search that lets you sift through the 500 million+ Twitter users like a database to more precisely find people who care about what you care about.

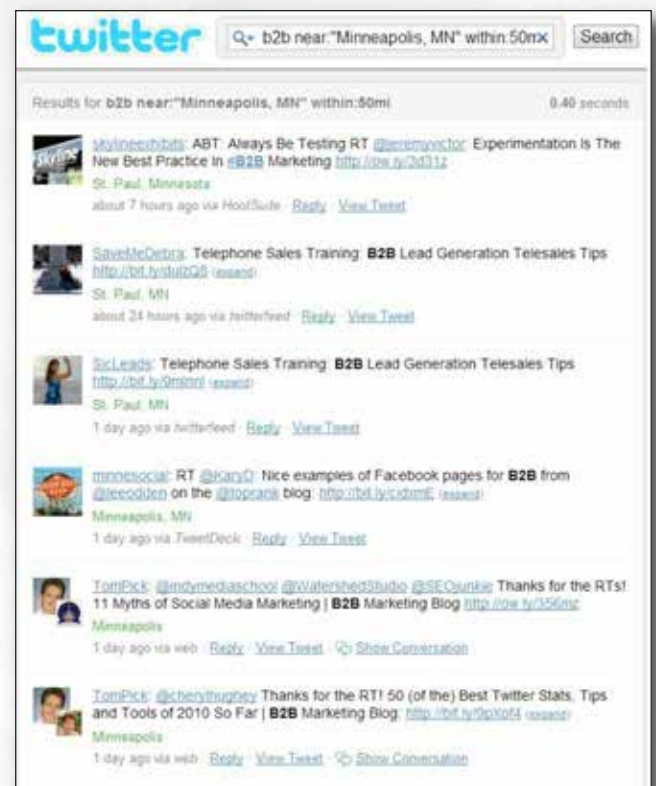
To find it, go to <http://twitter.com/search-advanced>. There you can search on words people put in their tweets, or the hashtags they use, and even where they are located.



So for me, a business-to-business marketer in Minneapolis / St. Paul, I can search like this:

A screenshot of the Twitter Advanced Search interface. It includes sections for 'Words' (All of these words, This exact phrase, Any of these words, None of these words, This hashtag, Written in), 'People' (From this person, To this person, Referencing this person), 'Places' (Near this place, Within this distance), and 'Dates' (Since this date, Until this date). A 'Search' button is located at the top right.

And then Twitter shows me these recent tweets:



The picture above shows just a few of the pages of tweets that came from the search. Many of these messages – and thus the people tweeting them – are relevant to me. If I want to follow one of them, I just hover my cursor over their Twitter

name, and when the window pops up (like in the picture below), then I click on the “Follow” button.



Before I follow someone, I click through to their Twitter page. I read their most recent tweets (interesting content, good conversations?) and their biography. I also check the ratio of their followers to people they follow, looking to avoid people who follow 10 but have 10,000 followers. If they pass the smell test, then I click on the “follow” button. And then I will see all their future tweets in my Twitter stream.

You can duplicate this process for yourself, searching on words that matter most to you, such as your job title, your industry, your product, your clients’ titles, the hashtag or name of your biggest trade show, your hobby, and more. You’ll find great people to follow that, after “listening” to for a while, you can send messages to. And if they follow you back and then you write about similar things yourself, they may reach out to you first. You will have Twitter stream that is much more interesting to you.

“I don’t know what to say on Twitter.”

At first you don’t have to say anything at all. Just listen. Listen to what people are talking about, and how they are talking about it. Get comfortable with the lingo. But when you read something you like, go ahead and retweet it. Better yet, add a few words on why you like it. That will help get a dialog between you and the tweet’s author started.

Retweeting is the easiest of the three-step E.I.R. formula invented by Jenise Fryatt, one of the most well-loved (and followed) members of the Event Profs community on Twitter. EIR stands for Engage, Inform, Retweet.

ENGAGE

This just boils down to talking to people. If you’re shy, remember; people are on Twitter to connect. If they post something, it’s an invitation to respond. They want to hear from you.

It’s not too fun to spend your time and energy posting things that never get responses. If they post a link that you enjoyed, reply to them, thank them and tell them why you enjoyed it. If they make a comment you find funny, reply and tell them. If they post a picture you liked, reply and tell them why.

You can also just post a comment yourself about what you are doing or what you thinking, but please try to make it interesting. Nobody wants to know that you’re rushing off to take little Johnny to soccer practice. But if you just got back from the U2 concert and Bono crowd surfed right over you, by all means tweet! Inquiring minds want to know!

INFORM

Twitterers tend to be information junkies. We can’t get enough! So, if you want people to take notice of you on Twitter, there’s no better way than to tweet links to information that is useful to them. It’s very likely that anything you find useful, your followers will find useful too.

But if you want to be more specific about the type of followers you attract, make sure you are tweeting information that’s useful to them. For instance, I’m particularly interested in connecting with people in the events industry, so most of the information that I tweet is about that. I subscribe to the RSS feeds of events industry related blogs, and follow Twitter searches and Google news alerts on events industry keywords, so that I can find the most up to date information that my followers (and I) will find useful. I tweet between 10 and 20 links (on events news, social media, self improvement and things I just find interesting) per day.

RETWEET

This might be the easiest yet the most important thing you can do on Twitter. One click, and you've forwarded useful information to your followers while at the same time supporting and publicizing a fellow tweeter. Remember when you retweet, you are saying that you think what this person tweeted has value, thus implying that the person himself may be good to follow.

Retweeting allows you to promote someone AND inform in one click! So don't be stingy. If you see ANYTHING that you think your followers would appreciate, retweet it. The good turn you do someone today, will likely come back to you tomorrow.

Thanks for letting me share your excellent advice, Jenise!

After learning the lingo, then figuring out how to do it, people still toss back the final objection: Time.

3. "I don't have the time for Twitter."

This is the toughest objection of all. I can offer a few ideas on how to make it easier than you think to use Twitter. But most of all, I can offer the perspective of the converted.

At first I signed up and did little with my Twitter account, and much like I've written above, I didn't really understand Twitter, nor did I know what to do. But I kept after it for a while, getting more comfortable with the hashtags, the shortened links, the @name handles. Eventually I reached a tipping point, where the unknowns were gone, and all that was left was the value. The biggest help was finding the Event Profs community of energetic, supportive, informative, innovative and fun people. And so Twitter is no longer something I have no time for, it's something I make time for.

So that's what I suggest to you: keep at it for a while, and when you get frustrated, keep at it some more. I hope you have that same "a-ha!" moment, but even sooner.

While you are persevering through the learning curve, consider these tips to save you time:

Easier access: Don't try to use only your phone to access Twitter. Use www.twitter.com, or even better, use a free website like www.hootsuite.com or www.tweetdeck.com to make it easier for you to read your Twitter stream and track tweets using keywords that matter to you (such as what helped you find good people to follow in the advanced search above).

Pre-Schedule Tweets: Sites like Hootsuite or Tweetdeck also save time because they let you pre-schedule your outgoing Tweets. For example, if I want to tell people about a blog post I put out on Monday, I may pre-schedule tweets about that post to go out on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. So I only have to think about it that one time.

Take it easy on yourself: You don't have to keep up with every message on your Twitter stream. It's like a river next door that you can wade in every once in a while, not a river you have to drink in its entirety. Don't worry about missing something important. If someone sends a message directly to you (called a Direct Message) then Twitter will email you the message. But you will find that you want to return to Twitter more often to see if someone mentioned you or retweets your tweets.

Twitter will save you time outside of Twitter: Because of the great new ideas and up-to-date news you can funnel your way once you've followed the right people on Twitter, you will end up saving time by acting on the latest information and knowing where the trends are.

Remember, with almost 6% of the U.S. population on Twitter every day, your clients are likely already on Twitter. So it's worth your time to get there, too, and engage in the dialog they are might be having about your industry, your products, and your company.

I hope this (lengthy!) article has helped you better crack the Twitter code, showed you how to get started, and given you more motivation to do so. And if you are a new member of the Event Profs community, I hope to “hear” from you on Twitter in the near future!

If you are now ready to jump into Twitter, start by going to www.twitter.com and following our tweets at @SkylineExhibits. If you have a friend who has been reluctant to join Twitter, send them this article!



Using LinkedIn To Connect With B2B Buyers At Trade Shows

Ann Shea

LinkedIn, especially when combined with Twitter and Google+, offers show presenters and attendees a way to connect with others before, during and after trade shows.

When you plan to attend or exhibit at a trade show, one of the first things you can do is determine whether there is a Twitter hashtag (denoted by a one-word keyword + the pound or # sign prior to the word) for the event. Hopefully event organizers have had the foresight to designate a short and unique hashtag. As an example, one of the largest trade shows every year is the Consumer Electronics Show or CES. The hashtag for recurring annual events is usually some abbreviated version of the event name, plus the year, like this one: #CES2014. Sometimes there will be multiple hashtags circulating around a single event. You can use Twitter Search to find these hashtags. Hashtags have now gone beyond just Twitter. People are using hashtags to label posts in Pinterest, Instagram, Facebook and Google+.

When you discover the hashtag for a show, you can start monitoring tweets and other social mentions which include the tag. Then you can also start engaging with people who are using the hashtag. It's often surprising how many companies are engaged in social media but do not bother to reciprocate interest by following an individual who is following the brand's Twitter stream. There are several free Twitter tools that will allow you to set up your Twitter account to auto-follow people who follow your Twitter account.

Your Company Profile and LinkedIn

To maximize their return on investing in a trade show, most companies communicate a few particulars about their presence at the show through press releases, email campaigns, etc. These digital communiqués are a great place for the company to reference not only the show hashtag, which can get the content discovered, but also to include a link to your company's LinkedIn page. And on that topic, be sure someone is maintaining your company's LinkedIn page with frequent updates which add value and include the particulars about event. Check whether your company website's home page has a link to their LinkedIn company page, as well whether your website features LinkedIn sharing icons. LinkedIn sharing icons can be especially helpful if the company spends time doing content marketing and has a blog. Look for more information on LinkedIn about these icons on LinkedIn's own information for developers under the topic "Share Plugin" and "Build a Company Profile plugin."

Another Way to Find People on LinkedIn Who Know about A Particular Trade Show

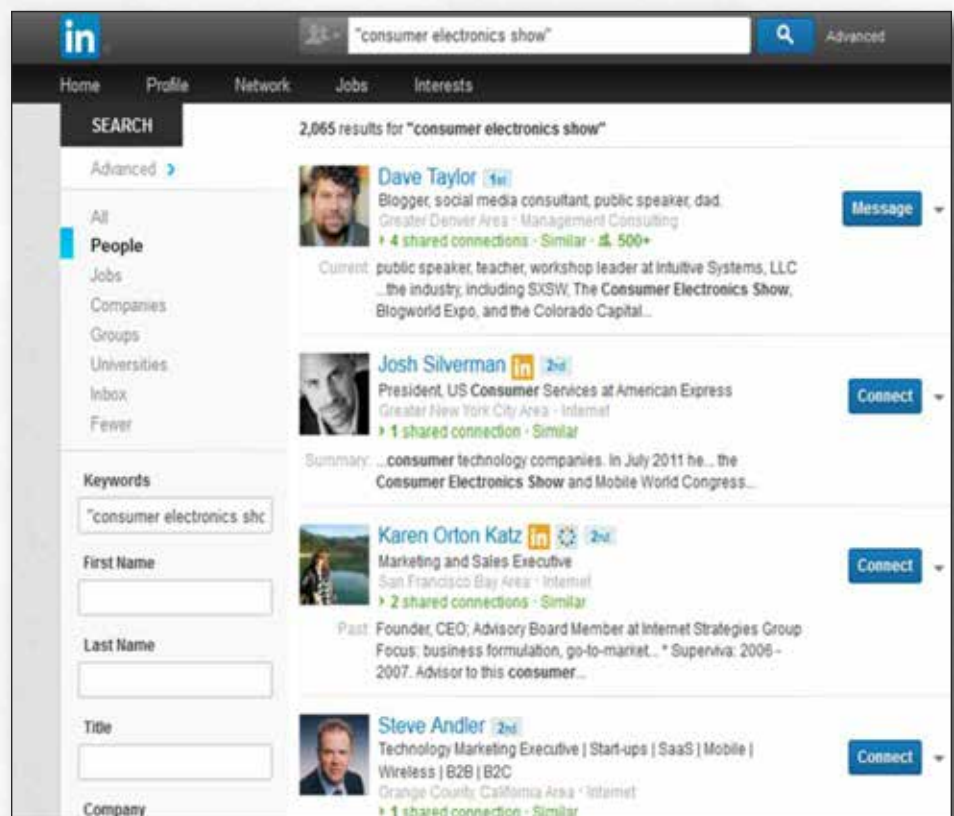
Back in 2011, LinkedIn had a feature called LinkedIn Events which was very helpful to find trade show prospects and people to meet with prior to a show as people could indicate they were attending, presenting, or interested in the event, and you could easily find out more about them right there on LinkedIn. You can still use LinkedIn to cultivate relationships in advance of a show, to plan 1-on-1 meetings with potential

clients, partners, vendors and existing accounts, and connect with people from the show after the event. To find influential people involved in larger under keywords, as in the example at the bottom of the page.

Building Relationships, One LinkedIn Member at a Time

You can begin to build a relationship with LinkedIn members who will be attending a show as you follow them on Twitter (most LinkedIn members who actively tweet include a link to their Twitter account on their LinkedIn profile). Ideally you will take the time to click through on any URL included in their LinkedIn or Twitter bio and see if the user has a blog you can connect with. You can also invite them through Twitter to come to your booth by sending a Tweet using the "@twittername" message feature in Twitter. Of course, you should have an inviting offer or it's just spamming.

Don't forget to check out the trade show sponsors. Many trade shows or expo halls have



professional LinkedIn pages, where they may post about upcoming events and talk about key exhibitors that will be in attendance. For example, Skyline's LinkedIn page has a slew of helpful tips that you can view prior to attending any trade show that can help you optimize your time and your company's investment. If a trade show staff member has gone out of their way to help you with your booth and logistics, why not endorse them or even better write a custom recommendation for their profile?

Use LinkedIn Groups To Reach More of the Right People

LinkedIn's Groups pose opportunities to post valuable, relationship-building updates such as learning sessions that your company may be sponsoring at the event or links to blog entries containing content that is meaningful and relevant to event attendees. Sometimes an event will have an entire LinkedIn Group dedicated to the show. LinkedIn has recently been changing their interface with some frequency. There are two ways to find Groups you may be interested in. One way is to go to the bottom of your own LinkedIn account and find the Help Center link and type in "Groups" which will bring to you detail on Finding and Joining a Group. Another way is to type a conference name or topic into the general Search bar and then refine the search by selecting the word Groups on the advanced search options on the left.

When you join a Group, you can specify whether or not you'd like to receive email updates or digests of the Group activity. You can change the settings for emailed updates for any groups you belong to, so as you get closer to the show dates, you may want to consider changing the settings for a group related to an event to more frequent prior to the show, like from no updates, to either weekly or daily.

If you're interested in meeting with influential decision-makers at a show or thought leaders at

a conference, you can ask to connect with specific individuals through LinkedIn. As a member of a shared Group on LinkedIn, go to Members, and search by title or proximity to a geographic location of interest, such as your company's home region or nearby the trade show city. Through your shared membership in a Group, you can request to connect with them directly. When requesting to connect with someone, make it short and sweet. Honest and mutually beneficial connections can be forged this way, founded on shared interests and a business development perspective. People are much more likely to connect with those who've taken the time to complete their profile with an up to date personal photo and have fully complete profiles. There are many tips on how to create a solid personal profile, as well as maintain company pages on LinkedIn. A great way to learn more about how to use LinkedIn is through Grovo.com, which has excellent free, step-by-step tutorials on this platform, as well valuable training on Google+ and other internet topics (see www.grovo.com/linkedin).

Get A Process

Depending on the size of the show, you may want to break your pre-show activity into several sessions over several days. You can also enlist a few team members, like an administrative assistant, or a sales rep, who can help discover event attendees, follow event hashtags and post to Groups and your company LinkedIn page.

After a conference or trade show, when you proactively and promptly follow up with solid leads or future partners by sending invitations to connect on LinkedIn, you'll set yourself apart from other show attendees, which can lead to ongoing business relationships. Take the time to write a personal note in the LinkedIn invitation copy, for example referencing particulars of a conversation you had at the show and indicating how your linking together can be beneficial.

Investing in B2B Relationships

Is this time consuming? Yes, but after all, even in B2B, it's the people who make decisions about who they want to do business with. For example, if you're selling a product under \$20, it probably doesn't make sense to put all this effort into each LinkedIn connection, but if your product has anything to do with relationship building, it's worth the effort.

If you'd like to connect, you can find me on LinkedIn, www.linkedin.com/in/annshea/, or follow me on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/AnnieintheSun> sharing more marketing ideas, sites, and tips.



Video Made Simple For Trade Show Displays

Michael Flavin

Trade show attendees today expect more from the trade show experience these days. It is not enough to display a few banners and promotional items; advances in technology, design and light-weight materials have turned trade show displays into a very powerful marketing tool.

Incorporating strong video elements into your trade show exhibit is a good way of connecting with your customers – an eye catching video is more accessible than a marketing brochure, and transmits your message more effectively.

In an increasingly competitive marketplace, trade show exhibitors can no longer afford to ignore the powerful benefits of video presentations.

What type of video should you use in your trade show display?

Trade show display videos offer a unique opportunity to show off products and services to potential customers. For maximum impact, use a variety of testimonials, interviews, product displays and adverts.

You can use video to promote newly launched services, and can field video product demos without the cost of employing a demonstrator for the show. Celebrate your product by getting someone else to say how wonderful you are! Contact your customers and ask them to give you a video testimonial to use in your display. They will probably thank you for the free publicity.

Shooting your video

Remember that your display is a gateway to your business. It is worthwhile preparing a good quality presentation, as a poorly prepared video can give customers the wrong impression of your business.

There are many video shooting options available. Of course, there are many professionals you can hire to manage your videos for you, but this can turn out expensive. If you wanted to do it yourself many cell phones have good video facilities, in addition to flip cameras, monitors and camcorders.

Sharing your video

Using a smart phone to capture video gives a powerful immediacy to your display. Imagine the impact of recording customer testimonials at the trade show and immediately streaming it through your monitors, or being able to present a live product display.

Your video display does not need to be restricted to people at the trade show. Make sure you share your videos with your customers via your website and with your social media networks on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. The viral effect of social media shares means you will reach far more people.

Many cell phones allow video uploads directly to YouTube. From there you can embed the video link onto your website, Facebook page, Twitter account and blog. This makes your videos available to millions of social network users, and means you do not have to use your bandwidth to host the video directly.

If you master these 3 simple steps, you'll have video, and attendees, in your booth and engaged with your business. Once your trade show exhibit is compatible with video and technology, the possibilities for awareness and exposure are endless.



10 Trade Show Promotional YouTube Videos

Mike Thimmesch

If a picture tells a thousand words, then with 30 frames a second, a 1-minute YouTube video can tell 108,000 words!



No wonder marketers have harnessed the power of video to entice people to visit their trade show booths.

Let's look at 10 examples of good pre-show, at-show, and post-show promotions posted on YouTube. We'll see what they include in their videos to drive more booth traffic, and finish with some suggestions on other ways you can drive more viewers to your trade show promotional videos.

Pre-Show Promo Videos

The next 5 videos were posted before the show date to show people why they should visit the exhibitor's booth.

Ingersoll Rand Pre-Show Promo for PowerGen Show 2010



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7iCNYbrXj8>

WHAT I LIKE:

- The video looks extremely high-end to match their brand. Ingersoll Rand may have created it just for this show, but more likely (and inexpensively) they repurposed an existing video and just tacked on a few seconds at the end about visiting them at the show.
- Ingersoll Rand didn't even put their name in the video title ("Visit Booth 2231 at Power-Gen International Show"); they instead started with their booth number and included the name of the show. The goal was to show up in the search results when attendees search on the show name.

Martin Racing Performance Pre-Show Promo for SEMA Show 2010



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6S_oQr4HrK0

WHAT I LIKE:

- Martin Racing Performance takes advantage of the super-low entry-level cost of video to quickly create a personable invitation: this was done right after set up in the booth.
- They show you what their booth looks like and where it is in the show hall so you will recognize it – and show you the cool bike that will be in their booth.
- They tell you what new and popular products they are launching at the show.
- The title repeats SEMA twice for better search engine results.

Flomo USA Pre-Show Promo for ASD Merchandise Show 2010



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCXMkzUpnqk&feature=related>

WHAT I LIKE:

- To play off their company name FLOMO, they have two characters, Flo and Mo, who speak to the camera. They are probably employees of the company. They have a friendly, playful manner that is genuine and welcoming.
- Flo and Mo decorate their outfits with the kind of stuff you'll be able to buy from them at the show, for the Mother's Day, Graduation, and Back to School retail events.
- Flo and Mo tell you all the great things you can only get by visiting them in their booth: See lots of new products, get free pizza, free gifts, price drops, free iPod Touch giveaways, secret deals and promotions...they pile on reason after reason to visit their trade show exhibit.
- They include their company name and the show name in the video title, and end the video with the booth number and show date and location.
- This video has been seen over 1,300 times. You know that helped get more booth traffic!
- Flomo has done other, similar pre-show promotions.

Aerielle Technologies Pre-Show Promo for CES 2011



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VsZdBCgv6pw>

WHAT I LIKE:

- Very visual, creative, and to the point to tell the story of their product.
- Began the name of the video "CES 2011" which probably helped in search results, as the video has been viewed over 20,000 times!
- Finished video with "come visit us at booth 15116."

Working Girls Design Pre-Show Promo for International Licensing Show 2011



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39dQF_Uqbq4

WHAT I LIKE:

- Very inexpensive way to create a video. Uses a program that takes still images and creates a video by panning out or to the side. Music added to give more of a video feel.
- Shows their greeting card products that can be licensed for other uses.
- Name of show, booth number, company, and their artists in the title for better search results

At-Show Promo Videos

The next 2 videos were posted during the show to give attendees more incentive to visit the exhibitor's booth. You can click on the video pictures to launch the videos. Some may have been posted after the event; in any case they are also valuable after the show because they capture the energy, excitement, and products shown at the show.

HP At-Show Promo at IPEX 2010



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-E4GkHI_kq0

WHAT I LIKE:

- IPEX is a 7 day show, once every 3 years. HP had 17 at-show videos, some posted by Day 1.
- Several videos look like a news show as one HP employee interviews another HP employee, who is a VP, about what is going on at the show.
- Large HP exhibit is their backdrop. The exhibit is filled with people and bustling energy.
- Company name, show name, and main industry keywords in the video title good for search results.
- These videos work well both as at-show promos (come see us, we are worth it) and post-show promos (contact us, we have great new stuff we introduced at the show).

Océ At-Show Promo at IPEX 2010



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmX13RYR7gM>

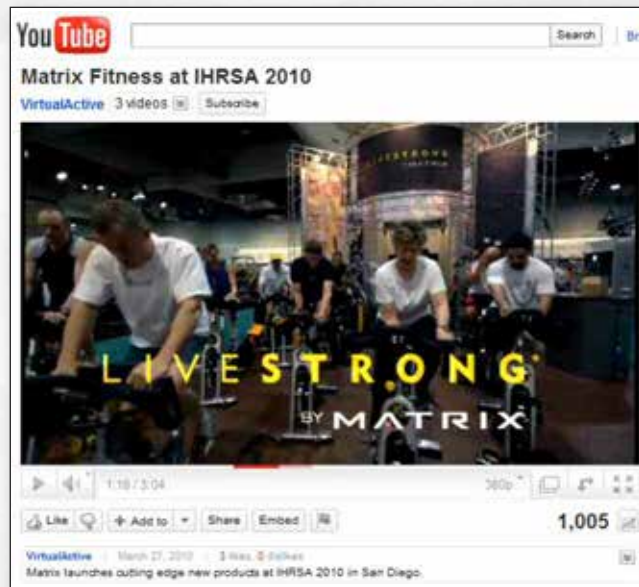
WHAT I LIKE:

- Not to be outdone by HP, Océ had 47 videos associated with IPEX 2010. They had interviews with key execs, overviews of their booth, even of their booth's "chill and chat" area.
- This video is an interview with a client who just signed a deal with Océ about why he bought, and the client gives three good reasons – essentially selling for the exhibitor!
- This also becomes a great post-show video testimonial.

Post-Show Promo Videos

The next 3 post-show promotional videos take video shot in the booth during the show to help capture the excitement and news shared, and then package it as a powerful marketing tool after the show.

Matrix Fitness Post-Show Promotion at IHRSA 2010



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_7ajYE358cw

WHAT I LIKE:

- Very professionally done video that captures the energy and excitement of their booth on the show floor.
- Several new products launched at the show are profiled in the video, by showing the product in action, talking with people from Matrix, and with users who are giddy about the new exercise machines.
- Matrix uses Skyline exhibits in their booth (see the picture)!

Electric Violin Shop Post-Show Promotion at 2009 North Carolina Music Educators Association Conference



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAybCo3sdDY>

WHAT I LIKE:

- Show people having fun with their product, letting their booth attendees do the demo.
- Tagged the products on the video so you know what products visitors were playing.
- Three violinists jamming on Led Zeppelin's "Kashmir."

Ashbury Precision Ordnance (APO) Post-Show Promotion for the SHOT Show 2010



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5HUZmHwCsc>

WHAT I LIKE:

- Show and name lots and lots of their products, both pictured in the booth and still photos.
- "Shot Show Recap 2010" good for search rankings...they've had over 2,500 views

After reviewing these and other videos, here are 8 best practices for video trade show promotions:

1. Match the video's level of professionalism to the brand – from casual to corporate
2. For pre-show promotions, upload the video ahead of the show so you can promote it in several ways
3. Quickly create and upload an at-show video for energetic at-show promotions
4. Post-show videos portray the new products, news, and excitement that was in your booth
5. Include the show's name, your company name, and booth number in the title for SEO purposes
6. Show your new products you will introduce at the show
7. Show the benefits of partnering with you
8. Entice visitors with at-show gifts, giveaways, contests, discounts, and prizes

Getting More Viewers...and thus Booth Visitors

Many who post a video on YouTube hope that it will go viral: viewers like it so much they tell their friends, who tell their friends, who tell their friends, until a firestorm of viewers bring down the computer servers. Yet that outcome is extremely unlikely.

So if your video is not going viral on its own, how can you drive more traffic to it, and thus more traffic to your trade show booth? By:

- Emailing video links to pre-registered attendees to your shows
- Embedding the video into pages on your website, facebook page, or blogs
- Make video keyword-rich for Google or YouTube searches
- Printing shortened video links or QR codes for the video in ads or letters aimed at potential show attendees



Using Video To Leverage Your Trade Show Booth After The Show

Judy Fairbanks

According to the Content Marketing Institute (CMI), 56% of companies hold some kind of education-based customer or prospect event during the year. We all know that trade show exhibits are a treasure trove of content marketing opportunities, but some event marketers forget or fail to capture content during the event. Follow these strategies, and you'll be in the enviable position of being able to create great trade show marketing materials — all through the year.

Shoot Photo & Video Footage While On-Site

Cover your booth as though it were a news story, electronic news gathering style. You can hire a professional or assign the task to someone on your staff. Getting great footage is an achievable goal, even if you're not a professional camera operator. Perform some Internet research on how to shoot great photos and video. Develop your shot list before you leave for the airport so you're prepared to execute on-site.

Here are some suggested shots. Be sure your company logo, branding and signage is visible in every shot possible.

- "Establishing shot" of the venue from the outside
- The buzz, the crowds, the show floor from above
- Customer testimonials or interviews
- Product demonstrations
- People interacting and conversing inside your booth
- Beauty shots of your trade show booth

Next, Edit Your Video Clips

If you're a do-it-yourself-er, the magic of Apple is all you need. With photos and HD video footage shot with an iPhone and edited in iMovie, you can be an independent filmmaker in no time. You can add titles, incorporate photos or images, and seamlessly edit footage from your event to create a great looking promotional or educational video.

Upload to the Internet

Once your video is produced, you'll want to upload the file to your favorite social media sites (and of course, your website.) Don't be stingy, upload everywhere — like Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo, Veoh and Blip.tv to name a few.

Share, Promote, Extend, Leverage

Your video is online. Let the games begin!

- Publish a press release....*link to your video*
- Write a blog post....*link to your video*
- Post status updates on LinkedIn and Facebook....*link to your video*
- Send an email or newsletter to your database....*link to your video*
- Apply a QR code to business cards and trade show graphics....*link to your video*
- Distribute the link to your sales team to share with prospects & customers

The Bottom Line

The name of the game is to keep your audience engaged. Creating fast-moving, interesting content is a great way to extend your event, post after post after post.

Notes:

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