Pre- and Post-Trade Show Tactics for Increasing ROI

Trade shows can be one of the most expensive forms of marketing there is. Between the booth, displays, literature, giveaways, travel, hotels, expenses, entertaining, and the staff to run the booth, the cost can add up quickly. Here are some steps you can take to drive prospects to your booth and see a better ROI.

Research

Months prior to the show, research the types of prospects that you want to meet with that might be attending the show. The show may offer an attendee list or you might be able to find a list from the previous show; these lists are very helpful with creating your target list.

Don't forget to tap into your own database. Add current customers to your list that have greater sales potential or that have become dormant.

Communicate

An email campaign is an inexpensive way to reach out to your contacts. Invite customers to visit your booth. However, consider using both direct mail and email. Keep it simple, but at a minimum include a relevant eye-catching headline, the name of the show, the place, the date and times, your booth number, the reason they should visit your booth, and contact information. If you are doing a presentation or poster, you can provide details but keep the summary short.

Consider adding a code for free admission to the show if it is available. Many large trade shows offer marketing materials, such as preformatted emails, but you risk becoming one of many instead of standing out.

Set Up Meetings Prior to the Show

Make sure you have a small meeting area in your booth or a place within the conference hall for meetings. Your communications should include an invitation for a private meeting. For your top prospects, calling them and personally inviting them to meet with you can be effective. You can also send them a personal email. Usually people won't schedule more than a week or two in advance, so keep that in mind.

During the Show

Be sure to get business cards or scan badges of everyone you talk to that has potential to be a customer (even if it is a future interest). Make a note of what you discussed and any other relevant information you might need to refer back to. If they don't have an immediate need, try to get a time frame for when you should check back in.

After the Show

After the show you can categorize your leads into hot leads, need in near future, and interested but no immediate need. Obviously, you will want to be more aggressive with following up with the hot leads, but don't let any of them slip through the cracks.

Send a thank you email to everyone you spoke with at the show and a personalized message to those who scheduled meetings with you.

Follow-up with a call to continue the conversation. Your goal is to set up another meeting, get an RFQ or close the deal if possible.

You should also set up an email campaign to nurture those who had no immediate need at the time of the show. But don't let your touches end there. You will also need to call them periodically. If they gave you a time frame for when they might have a need (remember you asked for one during the show), put it on your calendar so you don't forget. When they do have a need, you want your company name to be first to mind.

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