

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Bolster your booth—and your business—with **this trade show survival guide.**



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FOCUS ON SALES

Trade shows should be about moving merchandise and selling your service. But you can't make the sale if you're not pitching to the right person. Sales coach and consultant Marty Clarke, author of *Leadership Land Mines: 8 Management Catastrophes and How to Avoid Them*, explains, "To find out the critical need, a good question to ask is, 'What brings you to our booth today?' If they have a specific answer, start paying very close attention to find the critical need your company may be able to satisfy."

Then, find out if that person is the decision-maker. To do that, Clarke says, "Ask how they made a similar purchase. You're listening for a logical flow—and for anyone else's name. If someone else's name comes up, as in, 'I did the research and collected the quotes, and then I took that all up to Mary Lou,' that means Mary Lou makes the decision."

If the lead isn't a good one, move on. "A polite exit can be something as simple as, 'I really appreciate your time today. Let me give you my card in case you have any more questions,'" says Mark Amtower, founding partner of Highland, MD-based Amtower & Company marketing and a veteran of many tradeshow. "Role-playing these scenarios before the show helps you escape gracefully."

LEVERAGE THE MEDIA

Trade events can also be PR opportunities. Show management usually provides a list of media covering the event, making it easy to contact them for a meeting. "It's a good idea to tailor your offering to an individual reporter's beat and area of interest," says David Chatham, senior vice president at Capstrat, a strategic communications firm in Raleigh, NC. "This takes more time than a mass email inviting reporters to the booth, but it is much more strategic and effective."

Offering more than a product or service overview will improve your chances. "Reporters want to cover something more than they can get from your website," he says. "They want unique insights, compelling observations, and, if possible, a little controversy and personality."

DRESS THE PART

Don't underestimate the power of your appearance, says Beverly Hills hairstylist Billy Lowe. "For the gentlemen, it's everything from a nice manicure and shave to being sure those nose hairs are clipped," he says. "For the ladies, it's having nicely coiffed hair, the right shoes and not too much makeup."



Billy Lowe on stage

You're out to represent your best at the trade show booth. Showing up unkempt or with bad breath doesn't represent the best for the company you're working for."

Lowe has attended hundreds of shows. He says, "The booth experts who are well groomed, have their heads high and shoulders back, and are ready to meet clients with a smile and a handshake are the booths that do well, that win big, and create excitement at the shows."

STAY FRESH

Long days of show duty can wear you down. "Doing a trade show is like being on stage," says John A. Hill, author of *Tips & Tales from the Booth: Avoiding Trade Show Mistakes*. "No matter if the actor is in good spirits or bad, the old adage 'the show must go on' prevails."

To stay fresh, he advises bringing an extra pair of comfortable shoes, as well as foot powder; drinking plenty of water; and using moisturizer often.

Trade show veteran Jennifer Kushell, co-founder and chairwoman of YS Interactive Corp. in Marina Del Rey, CA, also suggests taking vitamins, an energy booster and a memory/alertness supplement; limiting alcohol; and napping every chance you get.

Surviving—and thriving—at a trade show can be easy and beneficial to your business, as long as you look the part and are ready to perform. ✂



SUPER SWAG

Short for "Stuff We All Get," SWAG is a major player in trade shows. But according to Meredith Linden, marketing coordinator for Brand Fuel, a Morrisville, NC, promotional products agency, you should give attendees stuff they want and need, such as:

- **Recycled-paper journal with an eco-friendly pen and tips on being green**
- **A USB flash memory device with a custom-designed graphical interface that includes your logo, schemes and colors**
- **Custom energy drinks and energy gum**
- **Chillmate drink coaster with neoprene can cooler**
- **Stain eraser pen**