



Ten Common Mistakes Exhibitors Makes

We all make mistakes, however, if we are aware of the pitfalls that can occur, there is a better chance we can avoid errors that, more often than not, can be fairly costly. The following are ten of the most common mistakes exhibitors make pre-show, at-show and post-show:

Pre-show

1. *Failing to set exhibiting goals.* Goals, or the purpose for exhibiting, are the essence of the whole tradeshow experience. Knowing what you want to accomplish at a show will help plan every other aspect - your theme, the booth layout and display, graphics, product displays, premiums, literature, etc. Exhibiting goals should complement your corporate marketing objectives and help in accomplishing them.

2. *Forgetting to read the exhibitor manual.* The exhibitor manual is your complete reference guide to every aspect of the show and your key to saving money. Admittedly, some show management make these easier to read than others. Albeit, everything you need to know about the show you are participating in, should be contained in the manual - show schedules, contractor information, registration, service order forms, electrical service, floor plans and exhibit specifications, shipping and freight services, housing information, advertising and promotion. Remember that the floor price for show services is normally 10-20% higher so signing up early will always give you a significant savings.

3. *Leaving graphics to the last minute.* Rush, change and overtime charges will add significantly to your bottom line. Planning your graphics in plenty of time - 6-8 weeks before showtime will be less stressful for everyone concerned and avoid many blunders that occur under time pressures.

4. *Neglecting booth staff preparation.* Enormous time, energy and money are put into organizing show participation - display, graphics, literature, premiums, etc. However, the people chosen to represent the entire image of the organization are often left to fend for themselves. They are just told to show up. This team are your ambassadors and should be briefed beforehand - *why you are exhibiting; what you are exhibiting and what you expect from them.* Exhibit staff training is essential for a unified and professional image.

At-Show

5. *Ignoring visitors' needs.* Often staff members feel compelled to give the visitor as much information as possible. They fail to ask about real needs and interest in the product/service. They lack questioning skills and often miss important qualifying information. Pre-show preparation and training is the key.

6. *Handing out literature and premiums.* Staff members who are unsure of what to do in the booth environment or feel uncomfortable talking to strangers, end up handing out literature or giveaway items just to keep occupied. Literature acts as a barrier to conversation and chances are, will be discarded at the first opportunity. It is vital that people chosen to represent the organization enjoy interacting with strangers and know what is expected of them in the booth environment.

7. *Being unfamiliar with demonstrations.* Many times staffers show up for duty only to discover they are totally unfamiliar with booth demonstrations. Communicate with your team members before the show and ensure that demonstrators, know what is being presented, are familiar with the equipment and how to conduct the assigned demonstrations.



8. *Overcrowding the booth with company representatives.* Companies often send several representatives to major industry shows to gather competitive and general/specific industry information. These people feel compelled to gather at the company booth not only outnumbering visitors, but also monopolizing staffer time and restricting visitor interaction. Have strict rules regarding employees visiting the show and insist staffers not scheduled for booth duty stay away until their assigned time. Company executives are often the worst offenders. Assign specific tasks to avoid them fumbling around the booth.

Post-Show

9. *Ignoring lead follow-up.* Show leads often take second place to other management activities that occur after being out of the office for several days. The longer leads are left unattended, the colder and more mediocre they become. Prior to the show, establish how leads will be handled, set timelines for follow-up and make sales representatives accountable for leads given to them.

10. *Overlooking show evaluation.* The more you know and understand about your performance at shows, the more improvement and fine-tuning can take place for future shows. No two shows are alike. Each has its own idiosyncrasies and obstacles. There is always room for improvement. Invest the time with your staff immediately after each show to evaluate your performance. It pays enormous dividends.

Written by Susan A. Friedmann, CSP, The Tradeshow Coach, Lake Placid, NY, working with exhibitors and show organizers to improve their tradeshow success through coaching, consulting and training.

For a free copy of the ExhibitSmart Tip of the Week, email: susan@thetradeshowcoach.com.

Website: www.thetradeshowcoach.com.