



Don't Waste the Free Attendee List

Most exhibitors believe that it is the show organizers responsibility to attract attendees to the venue with marketing and advertising to assure the event is packed with potential customers. Any successful producer will have a game plan for doing so. There is also an obligation on the part of every exhibitor to share in that responsibility.

Exhibitors can contribute to their own successful show results by taking an active part in driving target customers to their company's booth. One of the easiest ways to do that is by taking advantage of the complimentary list of attendees that show producers often provide exhibitors. Funny thing is, many producers complain that exhibitors don't use the lists they so generously offer free of charge.

If you are given permission to use the contact information of thousands of prospects that are already familiar with the event, know where it is located and have experienced its offerings, you have a potential gold mine at your fingertips. Lists like that can sell for hundreds of dollars, so don't squander this valuable marketing opportunity. Make a plan with your sales team and tradeshow departments to use the list for pre-show marketing.

There are many ways you can invite or entice customers to visit your booth at the show and having a list of people who already love to attend is a great place to start. The most time-consuming option is also the quickest and most effective – making a personal connection through a phone call. If you have the staff available to make the calls, you will establish rapport and familiarity with the prospect before they even get to the show.

The most economical way to reach everyone on the list is by email. You can also make a good impression and put something physical in their hand by actually mailing something out.

Before you do anything, you have to create the offer. Encouraging attendees to stop by your booth is the goal, but what you ask them to do when they get there will determine the success of the program. Have a clear plan with objectives that are understood by your entire booth staff. If you are going to spend the time and money to develop a pre-show marketing campaign, you want to make sure you get the best results.

Start by determining what you want the visitors to do when they get to your booth. Rewarding their participation with a gift or a chance to win a prize will increase the possibility they will stop by. Here are a few ways to use that attendee list. Don't forget to add your own personal client list to the effort to generate even more traffic to your booth.

1. **A PERSONAL INVITATION:** Send a personal letter inviting them to stop by your booth. A formal hand-addressed letter in the mail gives a recipient a tactile reminder of the event. You can create your own custom invitation through any one of a variety of email marketing programs like Constant Contact, Vertical Response or ACT. Write an enticing email. Let prospects know that you know they have attended before and that you recognize they are loyal fans of the show. The invitation can be clever and fun or more formal. The design should be congruent with the theme, merchandising, and messaging used at your booth. With either option, be sure to include a call to action. Ask them to do something. Direct them to bring the letter to the booth to view a demonstration, meet a celebrity or attend a seminar your company is presenting.
2. **POSTCARDS:** Postcards are a great way to get bodies in the booth. You have less space for a message than with a letter, but the post card is attention-grabbing and easy for attendees to save and bring to the show. Post cards are most effective when they include a game or contest offering. Include the instructions to bring the card to the booth to enter a contest or to register to win a great prize.
3. **COMPANION GIFT:** If you have a generous budget, then the companion gift campaign is proven to provide a high rate of return. This involves sending out one item in advance, with the promise of receiving a companion item when they visit the booth. For example, you send out a coaster with your logo and website on one side and the call to action along with your booth number on the other side. They bring the coaster to the booth and receive a wine glass or coffee mug as a reward. Both items have your contact information on it. Send out a USB drive with a message and instructions, they get a wireless mouse. Send a CD with a recorded message, bring it back for ear buds; glass cleaning cloths get sunglasses; a recipe card gets a cook book; and so on.
4. **CREATE A CONTEST:** Any ad specialty company can help you put together an effective contest. Two very effective ideas involve a key or a puzzle piece. Send a postcard with a key attached that could open a box of surprises at your booth. Mail a puzzle piece they bring to see if it fits the puzzle at your booth. Yes wins a big prize, no gets a small token of appreciation. Either way they are there for you to engage.
5. **COMPARE THE COMPETITION:** This is one of the least expensive, most effective promotions I have encountered. You already know your prospects will be comparing you to your competition at the show. Why not encourage them to visit you last so you can discuss their findings and bolster your benefits? Create a simple comparison matrix and print it on an 8.5" x 11" paper with your company information and instructions on the reverse side. The matrix will include a list of all the services and value you both offer down the left side with you and your



competitors across the top. Ask the prospect to check out all the competitors first, then return to your booth with the form to get a gift. Of course you will make sure you stack up as the best option and make your company shine. Don't forget to add a few competitors that won't be at the show (shame on them).

Take your pick from any one of these easy to execute ideas or think of a few of your own. Craft a clever program to engage and entice traffic to your booth. The most important thing to remember is not to waste a great opportunity to make a connection with attendees before the show starts or after it is over.