



## A Novice's Guide to Working a Tradeshow Floor

Attending a tradeshow can be a daunting experience, especially for a newbie. Time is money and no more so than now when many companies have reduced the time they allot for their employees to spend at a tradeshow. Here are ten tips for maximizing that time and effort.

**1. Plan ahead.** Tradeshows are an assault on your senses and can be a brain drain for the novice attendee. Before you go to the show, look up the event website and review the list of exhibitors. Make a list of the companies that offer the products, services and information you are after. Go to each company's website for more information. Make a list of the company names, booth numbers and aisle numbers. Compile a list of questions you want to ask them at each booth.

### **2. Check out the activities taking place at the expo and affiliated convention.**

Are there educational sessions, demonstrations of products, celebrities in the industry appearing at the show? Are there any social mixers or first-timer events where you could mix and mingle with other attendees who might be new to the tradeshow experience? By researching in advance, you are better prepared to get the most out of the show and you won't miss out on any once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to meet and learn from the industry pros.

**3. Print out the show floor plan, take your list of must see exhibitors and map out your game plan.** Design your route to each booth that maximizes your time and schedule. More importantly, bring along information to give to the company representative that will help them help you. Your needs in writing with a description of your budget, delivery deadlines, quantity or other requirements and your contact information with a date by which to reply to you. This will be very helpful to the company and expedite the follow up process.

**4. Arrive the moment the doors open.** Use your map to visit each of the exhibiting companies on your list in the order you planned. Ask your pressing questions, capture the information you need and leave them with your request sheet.

**5. Keep track of the timeline** for the extra activities, seminars, appearances and demonstrations so you don't miss a thing.

**6. If you can attend two days, go back the second day and walk the entire show floor.** If not, do this after your first round. Look at all the exhibits and take literature on any programs, products or services that interest you. If the exhibitors are using an electronic lead capturing machine, let them send you their information instead of carting it around all day. Take advantage of some of the super giveaways, games and contests



that make tradeshow so much fun.

**7. Wear comfortable shoes.** Bring a camera because you never know who you might get your picture next to or what fascinating things you will see. Be sure to check if there are any restrictions on photography from show management. Carry plenty of business cards for the drawings and for networking. Bring more than you think you will need. Carry a pen so you can write notes on the business cards you pick up and a notepad for extra details.

**8. By the end of your visit you will have bags of stuff.** Much of it you won't need. Dump it out on your hotel bed, review what you have, then toss what you don't want. Consider packing an extra fold up tote in case you really want to bring it all home. Some events or venues offer shipping services so you can package it all up and mail it to yourself.

**9. Plan to have some fun.** Be pro-active, smile a lot, ask questions, soak it all up. Make a note of what you liked and didn't like about the show and if you would return next year.

**10. Follow up on hot leads within three days of your return.** Make a folder for the event with your notes and the event program. You can refer to it next year to determine whether to attend again and what changes you would make or additions you would include.