

The Show is Over... Now What?

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Tips to Maximize Event Follow-up

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Whether you are attending Convergence or have other events on your marketing calendar this year, one of the key components to the success of an event or trade show is follow-up. Important as it may be, many organizations seem to fail miserably at it and don't take their event investments seriously.

Sound familiar? As we all know, a ton of effort goes into the planning of a trade show: creating the right presentations, designing your booth and theme, and promoting your message. Staff is ready to make contact with hundreds of potential clients passing by your booth. By the time the show ends, they've collected contact information from prospects and have engaged in many meaningful conversations.

Trade shows can be exhausting events, and it is all too easy to delay your response to those that have visited your booth. But the close of the show doesn't mean the work is over. If you're not focused and prepared to follow-up, you will miss out on much potential new business.

These post-event tips will help you maximize the opportunities and get the best return on your trade show investment:

- » **Plan Ahead for Follow-up** – If all goes well, you're going to be extremely busy once the trade show ends, so you should write the bulk of a follow-up letter, e-mail, and/or newsletter prior to the trade show. Once you return from the show, you'll be ready to personalize the message and send it out.
- » **Prioritize Leads and Follow-up Immediately!** Not all leads are created equal. If you've done the trade show or event properly, you should have notes about certain hot prospects. After the show is over, prioritize and contact the most serious prospects first. You should follow-up with these leads within 48 hours of the show. For those leads that are less urgent, send a follow-up e-mail no more than five days later, and then put them into your nurture database.
- » **Personalize Your Follow-up** – Make sure you stand out by personalizing

your communication. I suggest opening any follow-up letter or phone call with a message that ties into the prospect's concerns or issues. You can do this by commenting on what you discussed and how you may be able to help. Be sure to say "thank you" for stopping by your booth/coming to your event, extend the marketing offer from the show, and for those more serious prospects, schedule the next step with them (follow-up demo, webcast, or one-on-one meeting).

- » You can even add leads to your social networking sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter, or Facebook. Connect with them by sending a quick message or friend request.
- » **Outsource the Call Follow-up** – Depending on the size of your sales team and the number of leads you have to follow-up on, you might want to hire an outside firm to help make calls and handle pre-qualification for you. Outsourcing the calling will help ensure that all leads are being contacted in a timely manner.
- » **Evaluate Your Performance** – Finally, analyze the outcome of the event to understand the true value of the show. You'll want to evaluate what went right and not-so-right by holding a debriefing meeting with your staff immediately after the show ends. Ask some basic questions about the show that will help when planning future events, including:
 - Overall, what worked and what didn't work at the show?
 - Was this the right event for your business?
 - Did you meet the right people or prospects?
 - How many leads and what type?
 - Was the booth in the right location?
 - Was your booth functional and did it attract enough traffic?
 - Were your literature and handouts effective?
 - What did you learn about the competition?

- What did your biggest competitors do differently? How did they fare?

Trade shows and events can be one of the most effective marketing and selling tactics, but poor trade show follow-up can make even the most successful plan fail. Making follow-up a priority can greatly increase your customer base and overall ROI. Just remember, those ripe leads can sour quickly if they aren't followed-up on appropriately! 🌐

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Trade Show Stats

Did you know?

- » 80% of leads gathered at a show are not followed-up on. Bottom line, that translates into wasting 80% of your money.
- » 95% of trade show attendees have not seen a salesperson in a year.
- » 80% of trade show attendees are decision makers/influencers.
- » 50% of the leads you follow-up on after a trade-show typically result in a sale.
- » 91% of attendees say they get the most useful buying information from trade shows and events.
- » 1% of attendees will actually buy at the show itself.