Info Sheet – Boothmanship: 7 tips for a successful show

Set your game plan for the show. The first step in getting what you want from any show is to be 100% clear about your goals and strategy. What is your objective and your game plan to achieve it? Selling at the show? Have show offers ready to make sales and people ready to take orders. Getting leads to sell later on? Prepare a good one liner to get people interested, followed by a 3-5 minute spiel that either converts them into another meeting or a follow-up phone call (or strikes them off the list).

Get ready to help… and to have fun. The Boy Scouts were right. It pays to be prepared. Recruit the right people for your show team. Your booth people should be knowledgeable, enthusiastic and prepared to professionally help your prospects to buy. Have enough people scheduled with frequent breaks so they will be refreshed, ready and fully engaged while they’re on the show floor. Finally, consider your team’s attire. Whatever “look” you’re looking for, the outfits should be neat, clean and comfortable.

Huddle with your show team. Your show team should include anyone who can materially impact your results at the show. Huddle with them to communicate your goals, game plan, your booth “rules of the game” (see checklist on reverse of this page) and set your action plan for post show sales and follow up. Two questions to include in your huddle: “On a scale of 1-10 how confident are you in your success at this show?” Then, “And what will it take to make that a 10?”

The first seven seconds. In the fast-paced environment of a show you have just 5-7 seconds to make a good first impression. Stand at the first 2-3 feet in front of a booth. Greet people with a smile and a handshake and get interested in their needs. Ask an open-ended question to help build rapport. Oh yes, then make eye contact and listen. And if you can’t get to a new booth visitor right away, nod or say something to acknowledge their presence.

It’s not just about activity; it’s about interactivity. Don’t try to talk to everyone, but talk to the people in your target audience. If they are looking for solutions and ready to buy, spend time with them. If they are interested but need more information, work on converting them to “ready to buy”. If they’re not qualified or interested, politely thank them for stopping by and move on. Tip: Get quality leads. Don’t just collect the contact details for a lead; write a brief note describing their need… and the best way to contact them.

Be proactive. In any busy show you can expect an ebb and flow of show traffic to your booth. Be proactive and use all your time to your advantage, by visiting the other exhibitors, positioning yourself at the food court, or just taking an impromptu break. Why not have fun with this? How about a team award “for the best sale when there was no one to sell to?” It will boost both your show results and the energy and enthusiasm of your team.

It ain’t over ‘til the cash register rings. Schedule your post show follow up as diligently as you scheduled your time at the show. Don’t neglect to harvest the results of your efforts. Make sure that “magic week” following the show includes time for your “A list” follow-ups, plus your debriefing with the show team.

Your Boothmanship Checklist

Here’s a checklist of boothmanship “Do’s and Don’t Do’s”. Review this list with your show team and add your own ideas to come up with your team’s “rules of the game” for your shows.

* Do be on time for booth duty.
* Do keep your booth tidy, clean and organized.
* Do be friendly, but not overbearing.
* Do have a strong, firm handshake.
* Do bring lots of business cards.
* Do look and act like someone who would be good to do business with.
* Do take breaks and stay alert.
* Don’t leave the booth unattended.
* Don’t sit down unless you are in conference with a prospective customer.
* Don’t eat in your booth.
* Don’t chew gum.
* Don’t use cell phones.
* Don’t cluster and talk with fellow booth workers. (Or look like the “palace guard” with your hands in your pockets. If it helps, carry something in one hand.)
* Don’t say “Can I help you”.
* Don’t lean on the furniture.
* Don’t complain or knock the competition.
* Don’t wear new shoes or high heels.