

# MARKETING TEMPLATES

MarketingProfss.com



## Trade Show Marketing

# TRADE SHOW MARKETING

Trade shows are a valuable resource for your marketing toolkit. This Marketing Template outlines the elements of a successful plan.

## The eight key elements are:

1. Select the Right Trade Show
2. Develop Your Objectives
3. Promote the Event
4. Optimize Booth Traffic
5. Capture Leads
6. Follow-Up Post Event
7. Qualify Leads
8. Evaluate the Event with Metrics



Before you start developing your eight-step plan, you must consider the strengths and weaknesses of trade show marketing, as well as the best applications.

## STRENGTHS

- Concentrate many face-to-face contacts into a short time
- Combines sales results with marketing impact
- Provides access to hard-to-reach decision-makers
- Cuts through the marketing communications clutter

## TRADE SHOW MARKETING - continued

### WEAKNESSES

- Expensive relative to other marketing communications media
- Dependent on sales lead management systems to demonstrate ROI
- High-risk investment – little ability to test variables

### BEST APPLICATIONS

- Prospecting among highly qualified audiences
- Moving prospects along the sales cycles
- Retaining and cross-selling current customers
- Industry/competitive positioning and research
- Introducing new products or entering new markets



## SELECTING THE RIGHT TRADE SHOW

Your goal in exhibiting at a trade show is to get the right audience to stop by your booth and speak to your staff. This does not happen accidentally; it requires forward planning and strategic thinking.

**THE FIRST STEP IS TO FIND OUT  
WHICH TRADE SHOWS ARE OUT THERE.**

### **CHECK ONLINE DIRECTORIES INCLUDING:**

- ExhibitorNet.com
- ExpoCentral.com
- ExpoWorld.net
- TradeShowWeek.com
- TSNN.com

Once you know what trade shows exist, you can work out which have the highest potential of providing good prospects. You can gather this information in several ways.

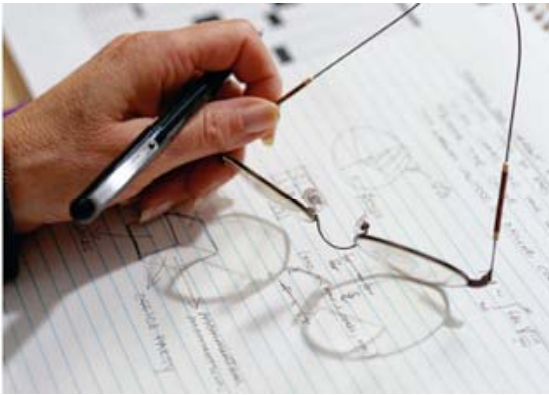
### **SHOW SELECTION CRITERIA:**

- Audience quality
- Qualified audience quantity
- Cost per qualified attendee

You'll probably end up with a long list of shows that you'll want to refine. To produce your short list, you will need to consider variables such as those listed on the next page.

## SELECTING THE RIGHT TRADE SHOW - continued

### TO DEVELOP A TRADE SHOW SHORT-LIST, CONSIDER:



- Customers, prospects
- Sales people
- Business partners
- Vendors
- Competitors
- Industry associations

Before committing to a show, talk to the show management. They are the best source of information concerning their show.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK SHOW MANAGEMENT:

- Total net attendance in past 3 years and projected next year
- Audience demographics (titles, industries, company size, buying authority, product interest)
- Top-10 exhibitors and square footage of exhibit space
- Competitive presence
- Times and dates of exhibit hall opening versus program sessions
- Promotional budget and plans for the event

## DEVELOP YOUR OBJECTIVES



Having clear objectives of what you expect to accomplish at a trade show will help you spend your trade show money wisely and effectively.

There are no “right” objectives. They should be personalized to the needs of your organization.

Every organization will have slightly different objectives, even those in the same industry.

Before exhibiting at a trade show, select the objectives (what you want to achieve) and determine the metrics you will use to measure success. This step is crucial. Without clearly defined measurement criteria, you will never know how effective you have been in meeting your objectives.

Don't take on more than you can handle. A trade show cannot do everything. Select 1 or 2 strategic objectives for each show and measure them well.

## DEVELOP YOUR OBJECTIVES - continued

### CHOOSE FROM AMONG THESE MOST COMMON OBJECTIVES

- Generate qualified sales leads
- Introduce a new product or service
- Enter a new market
- Build awareness
- Recruit channel partners
- Sell, sign contracts, or generate RFPs
- Recruit new employees
- Achieve an ROI
- Support your industry
- Gather new prospects for the database for later cultivation
- Recruit strategic partners
- Conduct market research for competitive intelligence, industry trends, and customer needs
- Influence the press or financial community
- Retain current customers, penetrate current accounts



## DEVELOP YOUR OBJECTIVES - continued

### Example Objectives and Measurement Tools

Plan Objectives	Associated Metrics	Measurement Tools
INTRODUCE A NEW PRODUCT	# of demos given # of visitors to the booth # of press mentions # of samples ordered # RFPs requested	Daily self-reporting by staff  Lead volume by product
GATHER NEW PROSPECTS	# of prospects gathered Cost per new prospect # new accounts added to database	Gross badges swiped at booth





## PROMOTE THE EVENT



The goal of exhibiting at a trade show is to meet as many qualified prospects as possible. This requires being proactive.

Research indicates that pre-show promotions are an under-leveraged opportunity in trade show marketing.

Don't wait for people to stop at your booth, reach out to them before they arrive. Make them eager to come see you. Doing this step well can markedly increase your success.

### **PRE-SHOW PROMOTION STRATEGIES:**

- Targeted communications to registered attendees
  - a. Set appointments to bring them to your booth
  - b. Qualify recipients with your copy
  - c. Cull the list for the right companies and titles
- Communications to current customers, inquirers, and lapsed customers.

## PROMOTE THE EVENT - continued

### CHECKLIST OF PROVEN PRE-SHOW PROMOTIONS:

- Stickers or electronic taglines added to all business communications such as letters, invoices, and press releases.
- Create a mini-site from your home page that contains press releases, product announcements, speaking engagement schedule, etc.
- Mailings:
  - Exhibit hall passes
  - Half of a premium
  - Dimensional mail
  - Personal letter from a senior executive
- Call or email to set up appointments
- Targets:
  - Pre-registered attendees
  - Your house file



## OPTIMIZE BOOTH TRAFFIC



Once they're at the trade show, there are still things you can do to increase the possibility of getting qualified prospects to stop at your booth.

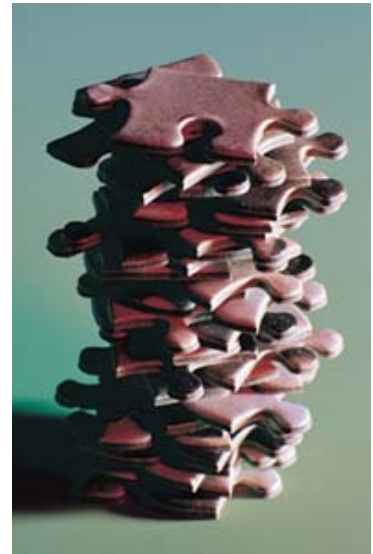
The layout of your booth should change depending upon how diverse or qualified the attendees are. You don't want to waste time and money speaking with or giving demonstrations to people who have little or no interest in buying your product or services.

### **SELECT THE CORRECT BOOTH LAYOUT:**

- If the audience is highly qualified, design the booth to be open and attractive, and create on-site reasons for people to stop by, including:
  - Premiums, informational items
  - Contests, giveaways
  - Advertising
- If the audience is more diverse, design the booth as a closed environment and make appointments in advance

## OPTIMIZE BOOTH TRAFFIC - continued

The signage of your booth is more important than you may realize. Think of your signage as the first impression you make on the audience. Your goal is to have signage that attracts the type of people you want to meet.



### CRITERIA FOR GREAT BOOTH SIGNAGE

- The objective of signage is to:
  - Attract qualified prospects
  - Repel the unqualified
- Typeface should be legible at 30 feet
- Message should be short, clear, and easy to grasp
- Eliminate buzzwords
- Stress benefits with words such as New/Proven/Easy
- Try headlines that work well in your direct mail or email as subject lines or outer envelope teaser copy

## OPTIMIZE BOOTH TRAFFIC - continued

Select your booth staff with care. Like your signage, this is the image you are presenting to your audience. The following are some suggestions. Give everyone who works at your booth training in how to communicate your organization's message.



### STAFFING YOUR BOOTH:

- The ideal booth staffer is:
  - Outgoing, personable, and polite
  - Well informed about the product
  - Professionally matched to the interests and level of the audience
- Mix people with product knowledge and technical skills
- Best sources can often be found in your call center or in customer support
- Whomever you choose, train them in booth communication techniques

## CAPTURE LEADS

Once people are at your booth, you will want to capture information about them for follow-up and nurturing. You have about 30 seconds to engage the visitor and begin to capture information about them. Therefore, it is best to go for quality rather than quantity of information.

Consider the information you are gathering now as introductory data. This is not the time to get every possible detail. Your time would be better served to gather overall information and follow-up after the trade show.

There are several ways to capture information. Which works best is a personal decision. Sometimes, the simplest ways are the best. What you want to avoid is the goldfish bowl of business cards.

### THE MINIMUM ELEMENTS TO CAPTURE ARE:

- Contact information
- Needs assessment or qualification assessment
- Follow-up plan
- Notes on the discussion with the rep
- Name of the rep
- Show name, location, date

### SELECT A SYSTEM THAT IS:

- Convenient
- Clear
- Accurate
- Speedy



## FOLLOW-UP WITH PROSPECTS

Following-up with your show contacts is crucial. Post-event is where the real revenue-driving activity happens. If you have gathered sufficient information in your lead capture process, you are in a position to follow-up with those people who visited your booth.

Do this quickly. Responding within 24 hours of the end of the trade show will make you stand out from the competition. People's expectations are high. Meeting them is important and gives a good impression of your organization.

There are a myriad of possibilities on how you might follow-up. Select the option that works best for your organization. The communication can come from the booth person, a functional manager, or whomever makes the most sense for your organization.

### **GREAT WAYS TO FOLLOW UP POST TRADE SHOW:**

- Personal email thank-you note from the staffer who met with the contact at the show.
- Personalized letter with the information requested at the show
- Invitation to subscribe to the corporate e-newsletter
- Personal thank you letter from a senior executive on letterhead stationery
- Reprint of your press coverage or another article
- Reminder of the final expiration date for the trade show special offer
- Promote to the attendees who did not make it to your booth, using the list from the show management
- Put an update to your website thanking visitors who came to your booth
- Add a contact form to your website visitors who did not attend the trade show

## FOLLOW-UP WITH PROSPECTS - continued



If you promised to provide additional information, do it quickly. As above, doing so within 24 hours will make you stand out vis-à-vis other vendors the participant visited.

If you send paper-based materials, there are several proven techniques to provide this material. The important point is to respond immediately, make the communication personal, and ask for a response.

### FULFILLMENT MATERIALS CHECKLIST:

- An outer envelope proclaiming the arrival of the requested materials
- A short, personalized cover letter that:
  - Acknowledges the prospect's interest
  - Describes the package contents
  - Tells the prospect what to do next
- Sales materials with information on where to buy
- An involvement device, like a survey or a checklist of product features and benefits
- Packaging that encourages the customer to hold on to the materials – for example, a file folder
- A response device and instructions for what to do next



## QUALIFY LEADS



You need to apply the classic techniques of lead qualification, nurturing, and on-going communication. You may include the qualification questions in your lead capture

process. However, if the questions are complicated, you will be better served to do this after the show. It is important to find out if the prospect is ready for follow-up by a sales person using pre-determined qualification criteria.

### **METHODS TO QUALIFY LEADS:**

- Ask the qualification questions on your show contact form
- Use follow-up communications to qualify. Especially important if your questions are comprehensive
  - Email is ideal
  - Phone is traditional

How you decide on the qualification criteria should be done in conjunction with sales. There are 4 general categories (listed on page 18), although your organization may have different ones.

## QUALIFY LEADS - continued

### TYPICAL CATEGORIES OF QUALIFICATION CRITERIA

- Budget
  - Is the purchase budgeted?
  - What size budget does the prospect have available?
- Authority
  - Does the respondent have the authority to make the purchase decision?
- Need
  - How important is the product or solution to the company?
  - How deep is their pain?
- Timeframe
  - What is their readiness to buy?
  - When is the purchase likely to be?

Not all leads are ready to see a sales person, so it is important to sort through them to determine the readiness of the lead.

### EXAMPLE OF A SIMPLE LEAD SCORING SYSTEM

- A - The prospect is ready to see a sales rep
- B - The prospect still needs nurturing, but the contact is to be done by the sales team
- C - The inquiry still needs nurturing, to be done by marketing
- D - An inquiry that is not worth nurturing. Put the inquiry into the marketing database for ongoing communications or throw it away.

## QUALIFY LEADS - continued



If the lead is not ready for sales, you will need a nurturing process, which is a series of on-going communication until they are ready to buy. Outgoing communication can improve your lead qualification by up to 500%, so there is a ROI to the process.

### **SIMPLE NURTURING TACTICS**

- Email newsletters
- Outbound telephone
- Event invitations
- New product announcements

## EVALUATE THE EVENT WITH METRICS



There are 5 key metrics that have stood the test of time. Some are results-based and others are activity-based metrics.

### 5 KEY EVENT METRICS

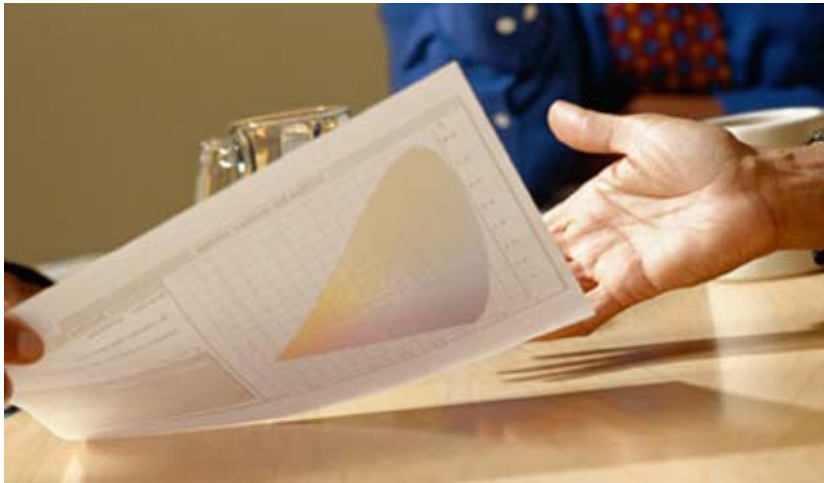
- Cost per lead – the fundamental unit
  - Divide the total program cost by the number of qualified leads generated
  - Caveats:
    - Use the fully loaded investment number as the numerator. This includes all the costs of the trade show including travel, hotels, entertainment, booth construction and refurbishment.
    - Eliminate unqualified contacts from the denominator
    - Put in the denominator the contacts that are still in the qualification and nurturing process, but are expected to convert to qualified leads
  - Benefits:
    - Analyze costs on a consistent basis over time
    - Compare the value of competing marketing investments
      - Rank the annual trade show calendar by cost-per-lead results
      - Benchmark for making future event-selection decisions

## EVALUATE THE EVENT WITH METRICS - continued

- Cost per contact
  - Divide the entire program investment by the gross number of contacts generated
  - Caveats:
    - Only a percentage of these contacts will convert to sales revenue, but the others can be qualified and nurtured
    - Dangerous if used on its own to evaluate the relative value of a business event
  - Benefits:
    - Benchmark for evaluating competing marketing investments, especially within the business event category
- Expense to Revenue Ratio (E:R)
  - Divide the total revenue associated with the business event to the total expense incurred
  - Benefits:
    - Easy comparison with other tactics
    - Managerial simplicity: Impose a maximum E:R threshold to establish control of marketing
    - Frequently used in situations where revenues tend to be very high compared to a single marketing tactic, where ROI calculations can be ridiculous
    - Useful in multi-touch situations, where claiming an ROI on any one "touch" is risky and inaccurate

## EVALUATE THE EVENT WITH METRICS - continued

- ROI
  - Event marketers must demonstrate a return on their marketing investments. This means a financial return, either in sales revenue or cost savings.
  - ROI is calculated by subtracting the incremental expense from the incremental variable revenue that was driven by the marketing program. That number is then divided by the expense itself. The result is expressed as a percentage.
  - A zero indicates that a program broke even, and a negative percentage means there was a loss on the investment.



## EVALUATE THE EVENT WITH METRICS - continued

- Activity Based Metrics
  - Number of visitors to the booth, year on year
  - Booth visitors by target (penetration of certain accounts, industry breakdown, etc.)
  - Number of qualified leads
  - Number of sales appointments confirmed
  - Number of credit applications or RFPs received
  - Lead quality mix (percent of A, B, C, etc.)
  - Lead mix by geography, or by product interest
  - Lead mix by day or hour of the show
  - Cost per qualified lead
  - Cost per contact added to the database
  - Cost per demo given or live presentation viewed
  - Cost per visitor reached (people who passed the booth)
  - Cost per current customer met
  - Qualification rate
  - Actual costs versus budget
  - Exhibit arrived and was set up on time



# TRADE SHOW MARKETING

## RESOURCES ON TRADE SHOW MARKETING

- CEIR.org: Center for Exhibition Industry Research
- TSEA.org: Trade Show Exhibitors Association
- EventMarketerMag.com: *Event Marketer*
- ExhibitorNet.com: *Exhibitor* magazine
- ExpoWorld.net
- *Trade Show and Event Marketing*, by Ruth Stevens

---

### Principal Author: Ruth Stevens

**Ruth Stevens** is author of *Trade Show and Event Marketing: Plan, Promote and Profit*, published in 2004 and *The DMA Lead Generation Handbook*, with a second edition published in 2005. Ruth consults on customer acquisition and retention for both consumer and business-to-business clients. She began her direct marketing career in 1986 at Time Warner, where she spent seven years in marketing, new business development, and general management at Book-of-the-Month Club and Time-Life Books. She then went to Ziff-Davis as Vice President of Marketing for Computer Library, the electronic publishing division. From 1996, she spent three years in direct marketing management at IBM, and then worked in senior marketing positions at two Internet startup companies in New York City before starting her consulting company in 2000. Crain's BtoB magazine named Ruth one of the 100 Most Influential People in Business Marketing in 2002. She teaches marketing to graduate students at Columbia Business School. She has studied marketing management at Harvard Business School and holds an MBA from Columbia University.