

Designed for small businesses who
are exhibiting at the Made in Montana
Trade Show for the first time...

Made in Montana Exhibitor Training



Acknowledgements

This document was created by Angelyn DeYoung, Marketing Officer for the Montana Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing & Business Development Division. The content was taken from published resources; interviews with trade show exhibitors; and guidance from other states and Canadian provinces.

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Planning

This track will take you through the steps for planning for the Made in Montana trade show, including deciding if you are ready for wholesale, if trade shows are right for your business, and how to plan for future wholesale trade shows.



Are Trade Shows Right for My Business?

First off, what is a trade show? A trade show is a large convention where people in a specific industry present their goods to distributors and retailers wanting to buy those goods wholesale. Press and other members of the industry attend as well. It is usually a trade only event, not open to the public, which means that you'll likely only write orders at the show, instead of making immediate, "cash and carry" sales.



Some trade shows, such as the Made in Montana Tradeshaw for Food & Gifts, are small, with only 100 – 500 booths, and they attract mostly local and regional buyers. Other trade shows are large, with up to 5,000 exhibitors, attracting buyers from all over the country and often even some buyers from other countries – sometimes in excess of 50,000 buyers!

What Trade Shows Provide

When determining whether or not trade shows are right for your business, it helps to know what trade shows provide.

1. **Personal relationships.** Face-to-face marketing gives you an edge. When you can look into a prospect's or customer's eyes and create a personal relationship, you are halfway to reaching key objectives for your brand. In fact, spending for trade shows and exhibitions is still on the rise, surpassing other marketing spending, such as print advertising, according to the Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR). The reason may be that exhibitors and attendees see strong value in exhibitions; according to a Benchmark Research report, 91 percent of all decision-makers find exhibitions an "extremely useful" source of purchasing information.



2. **Cost-effective leads.** For contacting a prospect and closing a sale, trade Shows are typically more cost-effective than personal sales visits or "field calls." According to one study, you can save more than \$500 per buyer by first connecting with a them at a trade show (see *How Much Does It Cost to Make Contact with a Prospect?* and *How Much Does It Cost to Close a Sale?*).
3. **Forum to obtain customer feedback.** Trade shows offer the perfect opportunity to query attendees on taste tests, packaging options, etc. via in-exhibit surveys, informal polls, in-booth focus groups, and product comparisons.
4. **Opportunity to gather competitive intelligence.** By walking the show floor, attending seminars, and simply networking with customers and industry peers, you can assemble valuable data about everything from new competitive threats and industry trends to clever marketing strategies and up-and-coming leaders.
5. **Chance to educate yourself about the industry.** Exhibits, educational sessions, and after-hours events offer endless opportunities to meet key individuals within your industry, to build relationships with existing customers and prospects, and to soak up valuable information.
6. **Find partners and form strategic alliances.** Make time during the show to talk to other exhibitors, either at networking events or by simply stopping by their booths, and you could come away with invaluable business opportunities that might have otherwise gone undiscovered.



<http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=1198&catID=31#.UdNAHnhiA0>



How Much Does It Cost to Close a Sale?

Data & S strategies Group

How Much Does It Cost to Close a Sale?

\$1,140 vs. \$705

Total Cost:

No Exhibition Lead
Field Sales Call Follow-Up

Cost Includes:

\$308 (cost of contacting a prospect in the field)
x 3.7 (average number of sales calls to close a sale)

Total Cost:

Exhibition Lead
Field Sales Call Follow-Up

Cost Includes:

\$308 (cost of contacting a prospect in the field)
x 1.6 (average number of sales calls to close a sale)
+\$212 (cost per contact at an exhibi-

The Made in Montana Show is a little different

The Made in Montana Tradeshow is a little different than most wholesale trade shows across the nation: we offer a Wholesale Day, Friday, which is only open to wholesale buyers (i.e. retailers) for writing orders, and a Public Day, Saturday, which is open to the public for immediate product purchases. Why do we do this? We want you to learn how trade shows work (Friday), while also providing the public (Saturday) with an

opportunity to learn about the Made in Montana products that will soon be in their local stores.

As mentioned before, most other wholesale trade shows do not allow "cash and carry" sales, which is immediate sales to the people who visit your booth (like Public Day). That is not to be confused, however, with writing orders at your booth, which all wholesale tradeshow, including the Made in Montana Tradeshow, encourage.

How Much Does It Cost to Make Contact With a Prospect?

Exhibitions are less expensive than field sales calls for meeting with prospects. Prospects you are not aware of find you at an exhibition. Improve your return-on-investment and develop qualified leads at exhibitions and use field sales calls for follow-up.

\$308 vs. \$212

Cost of Contacting a Prospect in the Field

Cost Includes:
 Compensation, Travel & Entertainment and Sales Materials.

Cost does not include:
 Cost of identifying prospect prior to sales call!

Cost per Visitor Contacted at an Exhibition

Cost Includes:
 Exhibition Construction, Storage and Transportation, Exhibit Space, Exhibit Staff Compensation, Travel & Entertainment.

http://www.ceir.org/store_products.view.php?id=1249

Additional Information

Need more data as to why trade shows can help grow your wholesale business? View the study, *The Power Of Industry-Specific Events:*

http://The Power Of Industry-Specific Events/pdf/resources/ABM_Power_of_Industry-Specific_Trade_Shows_and_Conferences_v11.pdf

Am I Ready for Trade Shows?

While there are many complex nuances to selling wholesale, below are some basic considerations to make sure you have the proper foundation.

Product Considerations

To sell wholesale at trade shows, make sure that you can produce your product quickly and in large quantities. This means that you must buy your supplies/ ingredients in bulk quantities and build up your finished-product inventory.



Pricing Considerations

To sell wholesale at trade shows, you must be able to sell your product at wholesale price. Wholesale price is the price you, the manufacturer/grower, get for selling your goods in bulk to a retailer, who then re-sells your product to the consumer for a marked-up price. Think: after a retailer (your buyer) marks up from your wholesale price enough to make a profit, will the consumer be willing to pay that price?

If not, then you need to look at your costs and pricing strategy to decide if it's feasible to continue seeking wholesale accounts.

You must mark your products with wholesale price on Friday, Wholesale Day, and change the price to retail price for Saturday, Public Day. If you were to sell for wholesale price on Saturday, too, why would a buyer buy from you for their local store, knowing that locals could buy it cheaper from you on Saturday?

For help with determining your wholesale price, use the Pricing Workbook on the next page, or use an interactive Pricing Worksheet, available at:

http://agr.mt.gov/_downloadGallery/Selling_to_Grocery_Stores_Manual_Attachments/Pricing_Workbook.xlsx

Packaging Considerations

To sell wholesale at trade shows, make sure that you can package your product in a professional way that is cost effective. Additionally, your packaging should help the retailer sell your product by drawing attention to the product, communicating the product's features and benefits, and fitting on their shelves.



Distribution Considerations

To sell wholesale at trade shows, you must be able to get your product to the retailer for a reasonable price. Consider that if your product is perishable or fragile, can it be cost-effectively shipped to retailers more than a few miles away? Have you already saturated your local market and need to sell to a wider area for more profit?



Budget Considerations

It may take 6 months to 3 years to realize the sales from exhibiting at a trade show. Can your business afford that lag between the significant expense of exhibiting at a trade show and actually getting sales?

Note that it may take 3 years of exhibiting before you are really taken seriously by the buyers. And that makes sense.

They want to make sure you are a business that is here to stay before they invest in your products and share them with their customers. So, Trade Shows can be a really long-term commitment. Are you prepared to stay with it for the long haul?



Did you say no to any of the above?

If you are not able to meet these criteria, you are not ready for wholesale or for trade shows. This doesn't mean that you can't grow your business; it's just that the trade show tool will not work for you at this time. Talk to your local Small Business Development Center or Food & Agriculture Development Center for help with your business plan, which will help you to identify other tools to help your business grow.

However, if you said "yes," then you're ready to sell wholesale!

Pricing Worksheet

Retail Selling Price	\$ _____
Less Retailer's Margin (RM) of 40% [I-RM]	x 60%
Equals Retailer's Cost	= \$ _____
Less Distributor's Margin (DM) of 25% [I-DM]	x 75%
Equals Distributor's Cost	= \$ _____
Subtract shipping costs paid by manufacturer	- \$ _____
Equals Price manufacturer receives	= \$ _____
Less Processor's margin (PM) of 40% [1-PM]	x 60%
Processor's Cost	\$ _____

EXAMPLE

If the retail selling price is \$5.00, total manufacturing costs per unit are \$1.40 and the manufacturer pays shipping costs of 5 cents per unit, you would sell your product to the distributor for \$2.20:

Retail Selling Price	\$5.00
Less Retailer's Margin (RM) of 40% [I-RM]	x 60%
Equals Retailer's Cost/Unit	= \$3.00
Less Distributor's Margin (DM) of 25% [I-DM]	x 75%
Equals Distributor's Cost	= \$2.25
Subtract shipping costs paid by manufacturer	- .05
Equals Price manufacturer receives	= \$2.20
Less Processor's Margin (PM) of 40% [I-PM]	x 60%
Processor's Cost	= \$1.32

A production cost (C) of \$1.32 is necessary to have a 40% margin for the manufacturer. Since actual costs are \$1.40, the true profit margin this scenario is 36% [$M=1-(1.40/2.20)$].

Is the margin you found acceptable? If not, the price to the consumer will need to be changed or your costs need to be reduced. Keep in mind that there are limits to the price you can charge for a product without encountering stiff consumer price resistance.

There are price-points where small changes in price can have a significant effect on sales. These price points are just below the even dollar amount. If your retail price is \$5.07, you may want to consider lowering it to \$4.99 or \$4.95 to create a more favorable consumer perception of the price.

Most likely you sell through a variety of distribution channels - direct to consumers, direct to some retailers or "house accounts" and through brokers. If you sell direct to consumers, you must charge them the full retail price to prevent undermining your retailers. All retailers must pay the same price as well, regardless of whether they order through a broker or not. Therefore, your volume may be lower on house accounts but your profit margin will be higher.

Furthermore, if you have a line of products, consider charging the same price across the board. Such a strategy will make it more convenient for retailers to order products and price them on their own shelves.

Trade Show Progression

Want to be successful with tradeshow? This is how it is done. As with almost anything, learning to walk before you run will increase your chances of success. Just by starting out at the Made in Montana Tradeshow, you have already laid a foundation for wholesale tradeshow success.



Progression Explained:

1. **Saturate your local wholesale market.** Before you jump into the regional or national market, make sure that you've gotten your feet wet by selling to as many local wholesale accounts that you can. Selling to local accounts make it easier for your business to conduct sales visits and deliver product, giving you experience for selling outside your local market.
2. **Start small.** Once you have saturated your local wholesale market, we recommend that you exhibit at small, regional trade shows first. These shows typically showcase 100-500 booths and attract 500-1000 local and regional buyers, mostly from within a few hundred miles of the show location. Starting here provides you with the opportunity to:
 - Grow your market at a steady, manageable pace. With fewer buyers, there is less of a chance that you'll sign on to a too-large account for which you cannot manage the production and sales.
 - Increase sales at a lower cost. Because this show draws fewer buyers than large, national shows, the booth cost is proportionately less.
 - Work out your distribution kinks. Gain accounts within a few hundred miles of you and work on your distribution options with them. Is direct shipment reasonable or can the buyers help get you into a distribution system? Then when you're ready to launch nationally, you have distribution experience.

- Perfect your booth design. A cheaper booth means your mistakes cost less, too. Find out what works in your 10' x 10' space. Maybe spend a few years at a regional show trying out different booth designs, in order to make sure that when you spend \$5,000 on booth space, you have it right.
 - Hone your boothmanship skills. Pulling buyers into your booth when there are only 100-500 booths is not as tough of a job as when there are thousands of exhibitors to pick from. Work on your buyer enticements, sales presentation, buyer qualifying, and lead follow-up when there are fewer buyers to deal with.
 - Evaluate. Are you ready or do you need to move on, or does selling to these regional markets fulfill your growth and profitability goals? Selling nationally does not necessarily need to be your goal – shouldn't it be your goal to sell to the most profitable market?
3. **Consider "Walking the Show".** Why not first go to the large, national show as a visitor and see what you think before committing (i.e. "walking the show"). Most shows will allow you to register as a guest with the intent of vetting the show for future participation, or some shows will allow you to register as a manufacturer (i.e. as a potential buyer of show vendors' products or services).
 4. **Consider co-exhibiting.** At large, national shows, there are two options for sharing a booth with other exhibitors, in order to reduce your booth cost.
 - **Broker/Distributor pavilion.** Many brokers and distributors offer a pavilion of small (usually 2-4') table top booth spaces for you to showcase and sample out your products to prospective buyers along with the other companies whose products they carry.
 - Pros:** Lower booth cost and association with a broker/distributor
 - Cons:** Less space to meet with buyers and showcase your product
 - **Booth sharing.** Find a complementary (or at least non-competing) company and share booth space. You'll need to get show management's approval for any partner arrangements, but it's worth investigating, especially if you're unable to afford exhibiting on your own.
 - Pros:** Lower booth cost and possibly complementary products/services to offer buyers
 - Cons:** Coordinating shared space can be difficult and confusing. Make sure that the company you share with is a company you know and can trust. Make sure to determine in advance of reserving the spot that you know who will coordinate the space: furniture, signage, etc., and how they will be paid.
 5. **Go big.** Once you have all of this experience, and your profitability goals necessitate expanded markets, you're ready for the large, national trade shows.
 6. **Consider international trade shows.** Exhibiting at international shows provide a whole new level of complexity. Keep international shows in the back of your mind as you continue a successful tradeshow progression.

Booth Design & Setup

Now that you have selected your show and planned for the pre-show activities, it's time to prepare for the show. This section covers packing, shipping, and booth design and setup.



What to pack

The following outlines what you should pack to ship or bring to the show. Remember that everything you bring to the show must fit within your booth, and some must be kept out of sight, so pack wisely.

Product



There are three types of product you'll need to bring to the show:

1. **Product for display.** Pack at least two of each of the products you want to display at the show. The packaging should be flawless and the best representation of your product possible. Clearly, but professionally, label them as "display only" in order to prevent a buyer (or looter) from taking home or sampling from your display. If you plan to display product on a table in the front of your booth, consider securing them to your table or within your display, otherwise the product will likely "walk away" from your booth.
 - Note: if you have additional display space outside the show floor (e.g. a New Products Showcase, etc.), be sure to pack enough product for that display, too.
2. **Product for sampling.** Take enough product to provide samples to your goal number of buyers, while also allowing some leeway just in case you have more buyers than planned and also for other booth visitors. There is no magic formula for calculating this amount; however, be mindful that the more you pack, the more you pay in shipping and drayage fees.
3. **Product for buyers to take home.** Most shows have a strict sample policy, allowing buyers only to take home one or two bags of samples, and those samples can only be a few ounces. It can be appropriate for you to send buyers home with product samples, but be careful to qualify the buyer before giving away your product; some show attendees are merely there for looting. Make sure that the sample you send

with them follows show regulations and properly promotes your company and product. The take home sample should at least display a label with your company's name and contact information, as well as the product's common name and ingredients. You can also qualify the buyer and offer to ship them a sample after the show, as part of your follow-up.

4. ****Product for consumers to buy.** Unlike most other wholesale trade shows, the Made in Montana Tradeshow offers a public day, during which consumers can purchase directly from you for cash during the show. Therefore, you need to bring additional product to the show for direct-to-consumer sales. Typically, about 2,000 consumers visit the show on Saturday, the public day, so plan accordingly.

Display & signs



Below are the display items you'll need to bring to the show. More information on display and signage design is provided in the Booth Design & Setup section.

- Booth signs
- Tabletop signs
- Table drape
- Literature holders for each size of literature you plan to bring (e.g. brochure, 5x7, 8x10, etc.) – replace those that are broken or scratched

Literature & Giveaways



Below lists the literature that you need to ship to the show. More information on literature and giveaways is provided in the At the Show section.

- Promotional materials: brochures, fliers, business cards, etc.
- Order forms (Note: at most shows, it's not common to take orders during the show. Most buyers want to make their decisions after the show. However, it doesn't hurt to be prepared!)
- Wholesale pricing sheets
- Giveaways: pens, water bottles, etc.

Supplies



It's better to have it on the show floor and not need it than to need it and not have it, and it's no fun paying too much for supplies sold on the show floor. Below is an arsenal of packing materials, tools, cleaners, and miscellaneous items useful for every show. Before you pack them, however, consider the cost of shipping them vs. buying them in the show's city instead.

Sampling supplies

- Napkins
- Sampling utensils (spoons, toothpicks, forks, etc.)
- Serving dishes and utensils
- Hand sanitizer
- Garbage can and extra bags

Cleaning Supplies

- Instant Carpet Spot Remover
- Glass cleaner
- Paper towels
- Visqueen heavy plastic sheeting: for covering your carpet during load-in and setup
- WD-40: In addition to fixing squeaking hinges, this lubricant can also be used to dissolve the sticky stuff that gets left on exhibit surfaces

Packing Materials and Adhesives

- Bubble Wrap: for packing fragile items
- Stretch Wrap: for securing the boxes on your pallet
- Tear-by-Hand Tape
- Hook and Loop (e.g. Velcro)
- Gaffer Tape: for bundling wires in your booth and taping down cords to carpet
- Double-Sided Adhesive Tape
- transparent adhesive tape (e.g. Scotch tape)

Office Supplies

- Scissors
- Box cutters
- Highlighters
- Pens
- Stapler and staples
- Thumb tacks and push pins
- Binder clips: binds paper but is also handy for hanging signs on table skirts
- Extension cords
- Power strips
- Spare light bulbs (if your exhibit has light fixtures)

Miscellaneous Supplies

- Display repair kit: screwdriver, hammer, wrench
- First aid kit: pain relievers and antacids
- Breath mints

<http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=835&catID=91#.UdM3OthinA0>

<http://www.trade-show-advisor.com/trade-show-supply.html>

Types of exhibits

Whether you decide to have a custom exhibit produced, or adapt a used or rental unit, the type of trade show display you need will be based on the nature of shows you attend and what you want to accomplish at each one.

Here are some standard types of exhibition booths and displays.

- Pop-up Displays: Feature a light-weight folding frame covered with magnetic-backed fabric, vinyl, or plastic panels. Pop-up displays create curved or angled walls for your exhibit area.



- Panel Displays: Consist of fabric-covered rectangular sections that are connected to make a wall. They can be readily adapted to different booth sizes and configurations.



- Table-Top Displays: Offer a less-expensive exhibiting option for smaller events and feature a lightweight display that sits on top of a table. These displays usually have three panels with velcro-attached graphics and headlines that can be easily changed and updated.



- Pull-up Stands or retractable banner stands: Provides a lightweight, easy method to accent your booth. These banner stands function like a window shade in reverse and can be placed together or in different booth locations based on your design needs.



<http://www.trade-show-advisor.com/trade-show-exhibit-display.html>

Video: Retractable Banner Stand

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsg2JjzsHBo>



Elements of a Trade Show Booth

Your booth execution is so important for a number of reasons. There will be a lot of people that have never heard of you before that will be wandering by. If your booth is nice and inviting, you have a greater chance of getting more of those passersby to walk into your booth and experience your product for the first time. You need the booth to be an expression of your brand so that people can get an idea of you and your product just by glancing at it. You also want to present yourself as a viable, serious company that another company wants to work with. You need to convey that you are serious about your company and its growth and that you can deliver.

Even the most willing buyers won't step foot inside your space unless: a) they can see enough to determine what you're offering and that it's of value to them, and/or b) your exhibit contains a hint of something exciting inside that they simply can't resist. So before you fiddle with your overall exhibit design, make sure your exhibit communicates who your company is and what it's offering.

Tone & Colors

When you are thinking about your booth before you even start designing, you need to consider the tone you will be setting. This mostly depends on your product and its tone. A booth for a company that sells lifejackets should be very different than the booth for a company that sells gummy bears. You need to know the tone of your product and company and figure out a way to have your booth reflect that image.

Have you selected colors that are attractive to the eye? Choose colors that are pleasing and memorable, and limit your color selection to 3 or less.

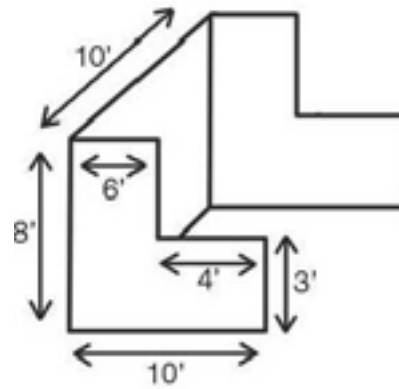


Black is powerful and sophisticated, but can be stubborn. Grey sparks creativity, particularly when paired with a cool blue, green or purple. Browns are informal and usually reserved for the blue-collar industry. White is pure, honest and traditional. Use reds with caution; although they are energizing, reds can also increase blood flow and anxiety in passersby. Orange is eye-catching, but if too bright can look cheap (think fast food). Use blue sparingly, as it can be calm but boring if used in abundance. Yellows can capture attention, but too much can be irritating for visitors and limit their ability to focus. Green is good, since it traditionally symbolizes nature, money, tranquility and freshness.

http://www.smarttradeshows.com/articles/design_checklist.htm

Walls

For the Made in Montana show, the pipe and drape backdrop walls are designed as follows:



The pipe and drape booth is 10' x 10' with an 8' back wall and stair stepped side walls, and the drape is black.

For your reference, an example of "pipe and drape" is provided below:



**Most wholesale tradeshows provide pipe and drape backgrounds. In addition to the walls, at most wholesale trade shows you must also provide flooring for your booth, either by renting from the show or bringing your own.

Tables & Chairs

When you're considering tables and chairs for your booth, think first about how they will be used: product display, literature display, demonstration, product sampling, place for buyer to sit down and make an order, etc. You can use a mix of all types of tables to meet your exhibiting needs.

Common Table Options

Common table options include:

- Skirted table (regular height, pick complimentary colors to your booth and carpet)
- Unskirted table (only get this if you have a graphic table cloth)
- Skirted counter (counter height, offers extra storage underneath)
- Specialty tables (not typical for first-timers)



Common Chair Options

There are several chair options to consider for your booth. First, however, consider – are you going to use chairs? What is their purpose? Be wary of chairs; they can lead to fiddling with your phone or generally looking unapproachable.



If the buyer won't see your chair, go with the cheapest option, making sure your chair matches the height of your table (i.e. stool for counter height tables, etc.). Some opt for chairs and a café table in the booth, in order to encourage buyers to come in and sit down. For first timers, however, it's not as likely that you'll write orders at the show, so it's probably best to go with a chair for resting your feet in between customers.



Signage

The signs in your booth are your silent communicators to the buyers: why they should stop, why they should listen, why they should buy. Here are some tips for effective booth signage.



Eye-Level Signage

1. **Use a maximum of six to 10 words.** "If your text takes more than three seconds to read, you've got too much text," says Chuck Michel, manager of business development at St. Louis graphics firm Group 360 Communications. That means your graphics can feature maximum of roughly six to 10 words and maybe an eye-catching company name or logo. Paired with an interesting image that also communicates your message or offerings, the text should complement the accompanying image to create a powerful, cohesive, can't-miss message that stops people in their tracks and draws them into a conversation with booth staff.

Video: People Won't Read Your Booth



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_qODK8lGaU

2. **If you talk benefits, attendees will listen.** With only a handful of words in your arsenal, message selection is critical - and benefit statements are key.

"Attendees only want to know what's in it for them," says Susan Shuttleworth, marketing manager at Hummelstown, PA-based TransCore. "For example, tell attendees your product 'Cuts transportation costs by 20 percent!' or that it can 'Double your ROI.' But don't waste your word allotment to tell them how cool your company is or to list product numbers and specs. Attendees just don't care."



3. **Use light over dark or dark over light text combinations.** "When it comes to color selection, text color must provide a sharp contrast with the background in order to have full effect," says

Gwen Parsons, senior vice president of Nomadic Display, a portable- and modular-exhibit provider in Springfield, VA. "One must place text on a case-by-case basis, simplify the overall amount of text, and avoid using busy backgrounds." Effective color combinations typically include dark colors (e.g. black, navy, forest green) on light backgrounds.



4. **Use serif or sans-serif styles and no more than two fonts per graphic.** "Graphics text should be clear and easy to read, not artsy," Michel says. "Your images, not your text, are your art, which means artsy fonts are unnecessary."

Artsy fonts are difficult to read, as they fight for the readers' attention by competing with the image and distracting the reader by pulling the eye back and forth.



Out of the three primary font styles - serif, sans serif, and decorative - serif and sans serif styles are the easiest to distinguish and read.

5. **Text must be a minimum of 4-inches tall.** Type should be a minimum of 1-inch tall for every 3 feet you step away from it, Michel says. Since most attendees are at least 12 feet from your exhibit as they pass it in the aisle, text should be at least 4-inches tall, i.e. roughly the size of a standard envelope. If you want attendees to read your text from 20 feet away, for example, it should be a minimum of approximately 6.5-inches tall.



6. **Position text in the 2-foot zone.** The 2-foot zone across the top of the exhibit is the ideal location for text, says Adam Brodsley, principal of San Francisco exhibit-design firm Volume Inc. "It's really the only unobstructed area on your exhibit's back wall that people can see clearly in an aisle full of people." If you absolutely can't position all of your text within the 2-foot zone across the top of the back wall of your exhibit, make sure it doesn't go lower than eye level, which is roughly 5 feet up from the floor.



7. **Use one large, well-cropped image.** Less is more. Rather than a smattering of small images, use one large main image to fill the majority of your graphic display, says Randy Harju, principal at exhibit house 3DL Design Inc. in Mundelein, IL. Parsons also suggests cropping the image to concentrate its effectiveness.

"For example, let's say you want to use a shot of a person sitting in front of a computer in an office," she says. "All of the other information in the image - the window in the background, the files on the corner of the desk, the wastebasket overflowing at the bottom right - distract from the person at the desk. However, if you crop the image so you only see the person's face bathed in the glow of the computer monitor, you dramatically increase the impact of the message - and you create an eye-catching image attendees can't help but notice."



8. **Use high-resolution images, and consult your graphics designer.** "Garbage in, garbage out," Michel says. "Never use a low-quality image, such as one with a resolution too low for your final graphic's size, to try to make a high-quality impression. Make sure you and/or your graphics designers have a good understanding of the resolution of the image and its enlargement limitations before you purchase it."

Not all images can be "rez'd up," or enlarged, and still retain their quality or appearance. Often, low-res images can become blurry or grainy when enlarged. Pay special attention to low-cost stock photography and company logos, which often have image-enlargement issues. Since situations, photos, and uses vary, consult your graphics designer before making a purchase.



Table-top Signage

Here are the signs you should consider for your table top.

- Show specials – gives buyers an incentive to purchase immediately



- Seeking brokers or distributors – may catch the eye of prospectives
- Offer private label or co-packing – may be a benefit for some buyers



- Certifications – tells buyers what's important to you (e.g. organic, gluten free, etc.)



- Trade organization memberships – if they are pertinent to your industry or important to your customers (e.g. Organic Trade Association, etc.)



Storage

Have you set aside sufficient storage space to avoid a cluttered exhibit area? Consider well-hidden storage totes to hold your extras. Too much clutter means you will be perceived as disorganized, and you will lose prospects. Do you have adequate storage for literature, electronics, promotional incentives, briefcases, and portable shipping cases? Do you require secure storage for valuables during and throughout the show? Can you safely store your shipping materials (pallet, boxes, etc.) out of sight for a speedy pack up?

Product display

Plan for how you will display your product. You need to consider how your customer will interact with the product, how they want to see the product and what information they will want about the product. If you have a complicated product that needs explaining, you need to go above and beyond to explain both visually and verbally how it works. Never assume that people will understand just by looking at it. Customers will want to know or see how the product is packaged as well as being able to hold and feel it. Make sure that your display allows for both.



Finish

Is your exhibit worn or dated from one too many shows? Plan ahead before you purchase your next exhibit. Light colors show seams and damage more easily than dark colors or patterns. Glosses scratch easier than matte laminates.



At the Show

Exhibiting for the first time can be a scary and daunting task. The following will help you with what will happen at the show.



Talking to Buyers

For first-timers, the thought of talking to buyers at a trade show can be overwhelming and scary. Below are some tips to help.



Note that at no time in this section do we encourage you to start your product presentation. That's because when talking to buyers at a trade show, we suggest you work your product into a conversation about the buyers' needs. It's better that your product is part of a solution for the buyer, rather than making your buyer listen to a canned presentation.

Greeting Buyers

First impressions, even at trade shows, are critical and lasting. You don't want a visitor's first impression of an exhibit staff to be one of indifference or rudeness.

Pulling Buyers Into Your Booth

So should visitors be greeted in the public aisles around your booth? If so, how should it be done? And how soon should a visitor be greeted when they enter a booth? Every visitor to your booth should have a positive experience and it starts with the greeting.

Remember that the aisles are public domain, so don't chase buyers down in the aisles or holler at them from your booth. If they slow down or stop as they're looking at your booth, make eye contact, offer a welcoming gesture, introduce yourself, shake hands, and be ready with an opening question. Don't look at their badge yet. You're spending a minute with them to make a good first impression, then you can start qualifying them. Ask them: what do they know about your company and products, or ask what about your booth or product made them slow down or stop. Get a conversation going.

<http://www.hillgroup.com/podcasts/Greeting.mp3>

Reading Body Language

An important aspect of sales and boothmanship is body language.

Yours

Your body language can make the difference whether or not a buyer stops at your booth.

Video: How to Look Unapproachable at a Trade Show:



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jK658HBZAi8>

Video: Importance of Non-Verbal Communication



facetofacemarketing.com

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhCIMx71f-4>

Theirs

When someone approaches your trade show booth, can you tell what they are thinking? As a trade show exhibitor, your observation skills are critical to determining high-quality sales prospects. Knowing how to read and interpret body language will help you identify prospective visitors, and avoid the time-wasters.

Body, head and facial gestures all send signals, and are powerful indicators of how you may approach and engage prospective clients. Consider the following telltale gestures:

Body posture:

- Leaning back with closed arms means not interested
- Leaning back with open arms signals contemplation and careful interest
- Leaning forward with closed arms is potentially aggressive
- Leaning forward with open arms displays interest and concurrence

Head position:

- Neutral position is an open attitude
- Tilted down can be disapproving and judgmental
- Tilted back is a sign of a superior attitude
- Tilted to one side signals interest

Facial gestures:

- Rubbing eyes is deceitful and secretive
- Rolling eyes denotes a dismissive and superior attitude
- Peering over glasses suggests scrutiny and a critical manner
- Hands or fingers blocking mouth can signal deceit
- Stroking the chin means contemplation and assessment
- Rubbing the nose suggests a dislike of the subject
- Direct eye contact is a sign of real interest. Visitors who avoid eye contact are disinterested, uncomfortable or distracted. Waylaying these visitors will likely only upset them. Watch for visitors who are fidgeting with their hands or objects – restlessness is a sign of boredom and your booth staff will benefit from pausing to see what the visitor is really thinking. Ask some open-ended questions to help engage these prospects. Palm rubbing, on the other hand, is definitely a positive sign of eagerness and anticipation, and it is incumbent upon your staff to maintain the momentum. Perhaps this visitor was the recipient of your pre-show marketing efforts, and is already keenly interested in your company.

Look for other body language clues, and act accordingly. Shy visitors need time to approach you, and will venture forward on their own terms. Show them patience. A visitor who touches their face or rubs their chin is mentally evaluating your company. Avoid engaging in further conversation, and wait for the prospect to take the next step. It is also important to watch for rapid shifts in body language, and respond accordingly. Sudden gestures are usually an indication of increasing or declining interest levels. You may simply need to slow down, confirm that you are addressing that prospect's needs, and then take the conversation to the next level.

Your booth staff can create harmony by imitating the body language of visitors. This psychological principle of "matching and mirroring" operates under the belief that people wish to conduct business with salespeople they feel are similar to them. Matching and mirroring your prospect's body language is a subconscious way to tell the visitor you like them and agree with them. After you think you've developed trust and rapport with a visitor, try verifying this by crossing/uncrossing your arms and see if your prospect mimics your gesture. If they shift and match your posture, you have likely developed a rapport with that visitor. If there is a mismatch, you need to continue building a relationship.

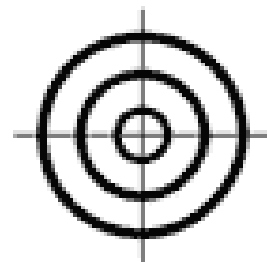
http://www.smarttradeshows.com/articles/body_language.htm

Qualifying & Organizing

In order to make the most of your time at a trade show, it's important that you know how to qualify your buyers, turn them into leads, and organize those leads for follow-up after the show.

Know your target

Know in advance of the show the type of buyer for which you're looking: e.g. small chain in the Northwest, serviced by XYZ Distributing, etc. This will help you to target the appropriate buyers and turn away those who are not a good fit for your company. Ask yourself, if Giant Superstore buyer wanted to order 10,000 units per month for 6 of their distribution centers, would you be ready? Would that be a good account for you?



Start qualifying

After you've gotten the buyer in your booth and developed a rapport, start qualifying them. Within the first 5 minutes of talking to the buyer, ask questions of them to determine if they are ready and willing to buy from you. Be sure this doesn't come off as an interrogation; weave these questions in the normal course of the conversation.



1. **Do they have a need for your product?**
This might sound obvious, but there are some people at trade shows who are just nice people looking for conversation.
2. **Do they have some role in the decision-making process in their company?** Sometimes spouses or friends of buyers walk the show, grazing, and they're not likely worth spending time on.
3. **Do they have budget or funding to buy from you?** If there is no money, they can't buy!
4. **Do they have a reasonable buying time-frame (typically less than 1 year)?** Don't spend time with buyers who won't be ready to buy in a short time after the show.
5. **Will they allow you to follow-up with them?** If the buyer has a "don't call me; I'll call you" attitude, they're not likely interested.

http://www.hillgroup.com/podcasts/Key_Qualifiers.mp3 and http://www.hillgroup.com/podcasts/Qualifying_Questions.mp3

Dismissing

At this point, you should know whether or not to continue the conversation with this buyer, moving towards a buying decision. For those buyers who aren't right for your product, or for those booth visitors who are not buyers and just taking up your time, you must learn how to dismiss them. Dismissing should always be done politely and professionally.

You should be able to dismiss visitors when:

- Your conversation, with even the biggest sales prospect of the entire show, is at an end;
- When you've been talking with an old friend, another exhibitor or some other lower-value visitor and now you need to engage, greet and qualify a potentially higher-value visitor; and
- If the visitor is a pure time-waster – they're keeping you from working with qualified visitors.

It's as simple as shaking their hand and saying, "Thanks for coming by. Enjoy the rest of the show."

<http://www.hillgroup.com/podcasts/Dismissing.mp3>

Categorize your buyers

In order to know how to follow up with your buyers after the show, you must categorize them as you gather the leads.

Determine your criteria

There are countless criteria you might consider to rank your leads as A, B, and C leads (or whatever names, or number of categories, you choose). However, one successful strategy is to use explicit data that you gather as part of your qualification process along with anecdotal key words. The combo typically provides you with the data you need to prioritize your calls and have something relevant to say during the interaction.



Explicit data includes hard-core facts you can discover via attendees' badges and/or conversations with them. This can include everything from their geographic location and purchasing authority to their budget and timeframe.

You can also note key words used by attendees during their conversations. For example, you could qualify A leads as those that express an immediate or critical need for the current year or quarter, along with those that are in the RFP or procurement process. Your B leads might use terms such as analysis, competitive review, updating, and transitioning to describe their purchasing plans for the next year or the next quarter. And C leads may indicate they're in the information-gathering stage and they're looking to see what's new.

Determine your system

Once you've established criteria to qualify leads, you need a system flexible enough to capture both the anecdotal and explicit data, and one that will assist you in lead follow-up and tracking. There are an infinite variety of systems available to manage this information. Some are low tech and require only a piece of paper, a pen, and people to manage the data.

Sample Lead Card	
Show: _____	Date: _____
Prospect name: _____	
Title: _____	
Company: _____	
Address: _____	
City: _____	State: _____ Zip: _____
Problems to solve/Needs that exist: _____	
Product and/or service presently using: _____	
Products and/or services of interest: <input type="checkbox"/> Product A <input type="checkbox"/> Product B <input type="checkbox"/> Product C	
Quantity considering: _____	
Level of interest: <input type="checkbox"/> excellent <input type="checkbox"/> good <input type="checkbox"/> fair <input type="checkbox"/> poor <input type="checkbox"/> hard to assess	
Decision-making influence/process: <input type="checkbox"/> sole decision-maker <input type="checkbox"/> group decision	
<input type="checkbox"/> committee influence <input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
Purchasing time-frame: <input type="checkbox"/> immediate <input type="checkbox"/> 1 month <input type="checkbox"/> 3 months <input type="checkbox"/> 6 months	
<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____	
Extra observations/comments: _____	
Booth representative: _____	

Most show organizers make high-tech lead management systems available to their exhibitors. At registration, attendees receive a card embedded with their data collected during the registration process (including name, company, address, telephone, fax, e-mail and some demographic data). Exhibitors then rent a device that reads the cards and collects the information.

(e.g. CompuLead: <http://www.compusystems.com/lead-management.php>)



The key is to determine the type of lead-management system that's compatible with your company, both technologically and culturally. For example, if you don't typically work with tablets, don't force yourself to use them for lead gathering. Opt instead for more low-tech methods, such as a paper lead form or a simple badge scanner. However, if your company offers high-tech products with a cutting-edge brand aesthetic, a pad of lead forms and a No. 2 pencil isn't likely the best option.

B and C Nurturing

With sound criteria and a lead-management system in place, you can easily follow up with them immediately following the show. The question then becomes: What do you do with the B and C leads collected in your booth?

Simply put, you don't discard them. You establish ongoing communication and provide information that's relevant to their needs. And at the very least, you invite them back to the booth again the next year so you can requalify them and hopefully move them from the B and C stacks to the A team, assuming their needs, budgets, or purchasing timeframes have changed.

At the Show



Check in

Arrive at the show on setup day at the beginning of setup hours. This gives you plenty of time to deal with any potential issues that may arise during setup.



Upon arrival at the show, check in:

1. **At Exhibitor Registration.** You should have pre-registered your booth staff for badges. Bring that paperwork to the Exhibitor Registration area to collect your badge to gain access to the show floor. Make sure to have business identification with you, such

as your business card, just in case it is required for picking up your badge. **NOTE:** Keep this badge with you at all times. You will not be granted access to the show floor without it, and you could get removed from the show floor if you walk around without it (e.g. during a quick trip to the bathroom).



Temperatures

The temperature inside the exhibit hall during move-in could be very cold or hot depending on outside weather conditions. As much as we try to control the temperature, with the freight area open, it becomes a difficult task. Please check the weather conditions prior to your arrival and pack appropriately. During show days and hours, the temperature will be kept at a comfortable level.



Security

Is there security provided for my booth? From the first day of move-in through the last day of move-out, there is 24-hour perimeter badge-checkers for the exhibit floor. This level of security is intended to control the access of people and material to and from the exhibit halls in a safe and organized manner. It is not intended as individual security for your booth and materials. Please remember that the Convention Center is a public building to which hundreds of individuals have access – let alone the number of individuals involved in the shipping of your materials to and from the exhibition, setting up and tearing down displays.



Therefore, it is critical that exhibitors work closely with Exhibition Management in making every effort to safeguard their investment in the exhibition. Be security conscious at all times during your stay. Do not leave items of value in your booth overnight during the installation period or exhibition days without taking security precautions. Exhibitors can order overnight booth security from the security vendor. Remember that the security of your product is your responsibility – don't take chances!

To discourage looting after show hours, consider covering your table with a sheet. This is only a deterrent, so please do not leave items of value in your booth overnight.



Keep your valuables (laptops, briefcases, purses) with you at all times during the show, including tear-down. Do not leave personal items unattended in your booth.

Literature & Giveaways

The tendency for first time trade show exhibitors is to err on the side of more is better. Offering buyers expensive catalogs, wordy brochures, and fancy giveaways is the way the big guys do it, right? Maybe so, but their marketing budgets probably are not as tight as yours. Truth be told, genuine, qualified buyers do not need loads of materials to take home, nor do they need fancy tokens by which to remember your company. Here are some tips for literature and giveaways that should help minimize your show marketing budget.



Guidelines for Sales Literature

- Realize that literature doesn't sell — people do!
- Limit literature to qualified prospects.
- Use literature to enhance a conversation.
- Appreciate that just handing out literature is a barrier to conversation with the prospect.
- Avoid handing out expensive literature. Integrate your company's entire message in one low-cost, targeted brochure or a one-page flyer. Then hand deliver or ship out the more expensive, targeted materials/samples, CDs, etc. no later than seven days after the show.
- Know that 64% of literature handed out at shows is thrown away.

Show Specials

A good way to get buyers to close the deal at the show, rather than waiting for follow-up weeks or months later, is to offer show specials with time limits. Here are some examples of show specials:



1. **Free shipping for the first order [1 case minimum] made at or within 30 days of the show.**
2. **10% off your first order [1 case minimum] made at or within 30 days of the show.**
3. **Free display or merchandising case with first order [1 case minimum] made at or within 30 days of the show.**

Buyers Term Sheet

Be sure to have your Buyers Term Sheet ready to clarify a buyers terms of doing business with your company (see next page for example).

XYZ CO. WHOLESALE BUYERS TERM SHEET

CONTACT US:

Monday-Friday, 8am to 5pm (MST)
Toll Free XXX-XXX-XXXX
Office XXX-XXX-XXXX
Fax XXX-XXX-XXXX
Email: email@website.com
Website: website.com

MINIMUM ORDER:

\$75.00 - When placing wholesale orders, please provide your TAX ID #/Business Resale Number. Orders cannot be filled until we receive this information. Thank you for your cooperation.

PAYMENT:

We accept Checks, Visa, Mastercard, and Discover. Payment must be received in full prior to shipping.

SHIPPING:

Most orders are shipped within two days of receipt. For custom and bulk orders, please allow up to two weeks for production and shipping. We ship via USPS and UPS depending on the order size. Ground service will be used unless specified otherwise with additional charges being the responsibility of the customer.

Shipping is free for Montana customers with a minimum order of a \$100.00.

PRICES:

Wholesalers are eligible for pricing from our wholesale pricing rate sheet.

EXCHANGES & RETURNS:

We hope you are satisfied with every XYZ Co. purchase you make. We believe strongly in our products and their quality. If you are not pleased with your purchase, you may seek a return or a replacement.

Return Address: XYZ Co., 1234 Address, City, MT 12345

For your protection and to ensure prompt delivery, we recommend that you send your return via USPS Priority Mail. We're sorry, return shipping fees are not reimbursable.

Please include the following information with your return - indicate whether you want a refund (only if original receipt is included and the product was purchased within the last 60 days) or replacement, the reason for the return, a description of the item you are returning, and its price. No returns for items three months before expiration date.

Your return will be processed promptly upon its arrival and all exchanges will be shipped via USPS Priority Mail or UPS ground shipping. Processing and transit time for exchange packages is usually 7-10 business days from the time your exchange request is received at our location. Business days are Monday-Friday, excluding federal holidays within the United States.

Damaged Items or Our Error - When your order arrives, please inspect the package for any damage that may have occurred during shipment. It is normal for the box to show some wear, however, if damage occurred to the item(s) in your shipment or the order is incorrect, please contact us immediately at our Consumer Care hotline. Our Consumer Care hotline and email is available Monday - Friday 9 AM - 5 pm MST, Toll Free XXX-XXX-XXXX, or email us any time at email@website.com.

Please provide the order number along with your email address and phone number for fastest service. To assure prompt resolution, please retain the shipping box, packing materials and the damaged items for inspection by the carrier. Regardless, we'll promptly schedule return arrangements with you.

Sampling

If you are sampling food products at the show, or if you are providing food items as giveaways, here are some common requirements:

License

The Lewis & Clark County Sanitarian requires for any company who plans to provide samples to the public to fill out and pay \$85 for a Plan Review and Temporary License. The purpose of this plan review is to ensure that samples provided to the public are handled and served following food safety requirements, in order to prevent foodborne illnesses. We have worked with the Sanitarian to comply with their required process for the Made in Montana trade show; however, we will absorb the cost for the Plan Review and collect the applications from the exhibitors for them, making this a free application for you.

Upon receipt of your application, if necessary, staff will contact you with the application.

Cooking

If you're cooking samples for customers, most trade shows require that your cooking surface be kept out of reach of the public, in order to prevent burns and contamination. This means you might have to make room for a prep table at the back of your booth.

Most shows won't allow open flame, so you must figure out another way to cook your product. Whatever method you choose, it is still a good idea to have a fire extinguisher within reach.



You'll also need a system for holding the food at the safe temperature for consumption. If your product needs to stay hot, rent a warmer system; if your product needs to stay cold, plan to keep it on ice or in a refrigerator, etc. Cold foods must be kept at or below 41° F refrigerated [or on ice]. Hot foods must be maintained above 135° F.

Serving

Food may not be served from a "common bowl" unless tongs are used to distribute the food. We suggest single-serve cups, toothpicks and single napkins.

You must provide protection of open food sampling [i.e. unpackaged crackers, chips, dips, drinks, etc.]. All unpackaged foods on display must be protected with a sneeze guard shield or plastic covering that is rigid, semi-permanent, and provides adequate protection.



All food samples should display a label with its common name and ingredients.

Sanitation

Even if gloves are used, a hand-washing kit is still required. The sole use of a waterless hand sanitizer may not comply with health department regulations.

The Health Department may ask you to cease sampling operation at your booth if you do not meet their requirements.



To clean utensils, use the provided clean-up area, not the bathroom.

Booth Etiquette

Often, in their zeal to entice customers, or out of ignorance, first timers breach booth etiquette. Most of the time, exhibitor rules outlined in the exhibitor services manual will help you follow proper etiquette. Additionally, if you follow the Golden Rule, you should be fine.



However, just in case, here are some tips for you to consider.

- During setup. Make sure that your booth materials are not impeding walking and delivery traffic, your booth items are secure and not falling into adjacent booths, and you are limiting your working space to your own booth. Additionally, make sure you show up on time to setup; if you're still setting up when the show starts, it can make your neighbor's booths less attractive to buyers (not to mention yours!).

- During the show. Show up during show days on time. Do not stand in the aisles trying to attract or pull in customers. Keep your person and exhibit within your booth space. You should wait until a buyer crosses into the plane of your booth and shows interest in your booth. Do not engage and distract buyers from neighboring exhibitors. Don't go out on the show floor during slow times and "go shopping" for free stuff or lunch. Other exhibitors will not appreciate it when they see on your badge that you're not a buyer while you're standing there eating their samples meant for buyers.
- After the show. Do not begin dismantling your display or packing your product until the show officially ends. This is unfair to your neighbors and the buyers who are still at the show; sales are still made the last hour of a show. Also, as you're leaving the show floor, don't give in to the temptation to loot from other exhibitors who have left product unsecured as they are packing up.

After the Show

What you do after the show is just as important as all of the careful planning and execution you did before and at the show.



Video: The Importance of a Trade Show Lead Follow-up Plan



Susan Friedmann, CSP
The Tradeshow Coach

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kblbwf8w9qk>

Follow-Up — Turning Leads Into Sales!

Plan for your post-show follow-up and put all the pieces of your plan in place before you leave for the show. Studies reveal that 80% of exhibitors do not follow up, so take your competitors' customers and increase your show's ROI!



Sort your leads according to their business potential (A, B, or C leads) or type of information requested. Hold your staff accountable by requiring a written record of each lead's status. Contact your show's registration contractor or ARI for time- and cost-effective ways to sort and follow up on your show leads.

Research also shows that 50% of attendees who passed your booth without stopping nonetheless took away an impression of your exhibit. Keep show information on your Internet site for three months after the event.

http://www.exhibitoradvantage.com/ft_handbook.asp

Methods

Here are the methods for following up with trade show leads.

- Phone calls – One of the first steps to ensuring successful follow-up is re-qualifying leads over the phone. Studies have shown that Thursdays and 8-9 a.m. are the best timeslot and day of the week for qualifying leads. In second place time-wise is 4-5 p.m., while Fridays and 1-2 p.m. show the worst results.



- Lead-nurturing email campaigns – Depending on their qualifications, some of your leads might be good candidates for an email campaign. Cooler leads who might not be immediately ready to make a purchase usually fit in this category.



- Social suggestions – Include a request to like your business on Facebook or follow you on Twitter as part of your follow-up message. It is a simple way to engage and keep up with prospects who prefer this medium to traditional channels.



Follow-up Suggestions

The following are some suggestions to help your lead follow up be as effective as possible.

- Do Personalize the Follow Up – With the growth of marketing automation, it's easy to fall back on just creating workflow and automatic responses for prospects who click an email link or download a document. Email has become so pervasive that generic responses are almost worse than no response at all, as they provide no value, incentive, or compelling reason to respond. Here, for example is what to avoid: "I hope you received my previous email. Let me know if you have any questions or require any further information. If you feel I should talk to someone else in your organization in regards to this, I would appreciate it if you forward this email to the right person."
- Do Connect with Your Lead – Social media is a great way to connect with a lead. See if the person is on Twitter, Google+, or LinkedIn. If they are on LinkedIn, look to see what groups they belong to and see if they've commented on any specific issues or blogs.
- Do Research Your Lead – In addition to social media sites, do a Web search on your lead. Then tie the information you find back to the follow up. This extra step shows you're taking the time to connect, and that you're no auto-responder.
- Do a Multi-Channel Follow-up Communication Plan – If you can, use various spoken and written approaches. I suggest email, phone, and voicemail for sure, but it's also worth mixing in connecting or linking on social media sites, as previously mentioned. One word of warning: make your online presence known; don't be a stalker.
- Do Test, Test, Test and Track – Each target market and potential buyer is different, and they will respond differently in a given market or territory. Test different ways to respond for each segment. Just make sure you track the effectiveness of the responses to see which ones work best in which circumstance.
- Don't Over Follow Up – This point bucks the conventional wisdom. "They" say it can take up to seven to 12 contacts to close out a lead. In my humble opinion, if someone hasn't replied after four or five touches, move on. Just do the math. Let's say a C-level executive has 20 people calling on her/him, and each follows up 10 times, on average. That is 200 pieces of communication. Even if you're personalizing the communication down to the name of her dog, and providing great



insight and data along the way, if she's not ready to buy what you're selling, you're spinning your wheels – and potentially wearing out your welcome. I had someone call five times and send five emails over just eight business days; that is a lot of time spent on a non-qualified lead. Ideally, according to your multi-channel communication plan, you would send a follow-up email, call and leave a message, and connect on LinkedIn. Then try one or more follow-up emails and, if you must, one more call. If there's no response, it's time to move on. But even when you stop contacting them, there should be a longer-term nurturing plan in place, so send a goodbye message before walking away. In many cases, I was able to get a response from my goodbye.

- Don't Pounce on Responses – Try not to pounce on leads immediately (key word: immediately). Give them some time to breathe. Think about how many times you have gone into a retail store and within 30 seconds someone asks if they can help you, before you have had any time to look around. But don't wait too long to respond. According to the Harvard Business Review, companies that contact potential customers within an hour of receiving queries are nearly seven times as likely to have meaningful conversations with key decision makers as firms that contact prospects even an hour later. You definitely want to be speedy in your response; just don't pounce.
- Don't Deviate from Your Lead Criteria – It's easy to stretch your lead criteria occasionally, especially when a lead looks OK at first glance, the pipeline is a little low, or the quarter is light. However, try to maintain discipline regarding lead criteria. Good follow up takes a lot of time, and you want to try to alleviate wild-goose chases.
- Don't Product Pitch – This relates to the "Do" suggestion on personalizing the follow up. Too often I get emails that don't acknowledge or relate to my interests; they just jump right into a company or product overview. Follow-up communications have to have some sort of hook in them that reference why you are following up.
- Don't Send Out the Same Follow-up Email as the Initial Campaign – You would be surprised how many follow-up emails are exactly the same as the initial campaign, with just a few changed words. That's plain lazy.
- Don't Just Leave a Phone Message to Call You Back – Two things sales people do consistently is leave me messages without explaining who they are or why it's important for me to call them back.

- Don't Send out Duplicate Responses – Many marketing automation tools have de-duping capabilities to knock out duplicate responses. Make sure your marketing automation tool has de-duping capability.

<http://blogs.richardson.com/2013/07/19/some-dos-and-donts-for-better-lead-nurturing-and-follow-up/>

Timing of Lead Follow-up

It seems like more exhibitors today place a high value on immediacy. They're sending follow-up emails and product-related communications immediately after the trade show closes or even the minute the attendee leaves the booth. While some attendees appreciate the instant attention and are eager to get their hands on the product information you're sending, others will completely ignore all noncritical emails while they're away from the office attending a show. And once they return to the office, they may simply disregard your communication altogether, now that it has likely made its way to the bottom of their inbox queue.



The point is, immediacy isn't always the best fit for your audience. In fact, a double whammy of at-show and post-show communication is probably best to ensure that you're reaching both types of attendees, i.e., those that demand immediate attention, and those that prefer more delayed gratification.

So send customers and prospects an email during or immediately following the show. But then wait until the week after the show, when attendees have sufficiently settled back into their offices and cleaned out their email inboxes, to send (or resend) your communication. While the double-whammy system will likely take a bit more time and effort on your part than a single follow-up missive, you'll likely get double the results.

<http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=1347&catID=31#.UdMn6dhinA0>

Lead Persistence

For too many exhibitors, tradeshow lead follow-up means sending out literature, making a phone calls and an email, then, if the prospect doesn't respond quickly, giving up. This is in sharp contrast to what the highly successful exhibitor does. The real purpose of a good lead management process is to be there when they buyer is ready to buy, not just when you are ready

to sell. This means having time perspective when it comes to lead follow-up. Just because a buyer isn't ready today, does not mean that they won't be ready next month, next quarter or even next year. Companies who design their lead follow-up programs with a longer time perspective, not only build the best sales relationships, but also end converting a lot more leads to sales.



Here are 4 tips to help your company be there when the buyer is ready to buy.

1. **Continue qualifying throughout the lead follow-up process.** Don't assume the person you are contacting is the right person. Often a booth visitor may exaggerate their buying influence. As you continue your follow up be sure to continually attempt to identify the entire decision team.
2. **Clarify what stage of the buying process the project or opportunity is in.** Buying processes goes through several stages from recognition of a need, to identification of various methods to address the need, to identification of the best method to address the need, to identifying vendors with solutions, to identifying the vendor with the best solution. By determining what stage of the buying process the opportunity is your follow-up efforts can focus on providing the right information for the stage of the buying process they buyer is in.
3. **Don't just sell, inform, educate and lead.** Sometimes we need to help buyers recognize the need. They may know that they have a problem, but the ramifications of the problem aren't compelling enough to cause them to take action. By education buyers about the implications of a problem we can increase the desire to address the problem.
4. **Never give up!** If you have determined that this customer has a problem you can solve, decide to keep in touch until they either tell they are going to do business with you or they tell they will never do business with you. Whether it takes a month, a quarter, a year or even longer, the rewards will be well worth the effort.

<http://goo.gl/L7CnE1>

Helpful Resources



You have a great head start now! As you run into new opportunities or issues, reference the following helpful resources:

- Exhibitor Magazine: <http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/>
- Trade Show Advisor: <http://www.trade-show-advisor.com/>
- The Trade Show Coach: <http://thetradeshowcoach.com/>
- The Hill Group podcasts: <http://www.hillgroup.com/podcast.html>
- The Trade Show Teacher: <http://www.exhibitcitynews.com/category/columns/the-tradeshow-teacher/>

Additional Training

After the show, if you're interested in exhibiting at other wholesale trade shows, we recommend that you complete the training, the Journey of the First Time Trade Show Exhibitor:

http://agr.mt.gov/Programs/Marketing/Domestic_Trade/Trade_Shows/Trade_Show_Training/

Congratulations!

You made it! Good luck on your next trade show.

