EXHIBITING TRADE TIPS

The 10 Best Questions to Ask Potential Customers

Asking good questions is about building relationships. It's about helping prospects become clients by helping them make more informed decisions. And it's about doing your homework before selling at an INDUSTRIAL FIRE, SAFETY AND SECURITY event.

Your own variations of the following 10 questions may provide you with the best results.

1. ***Tell me about your business*.** This broad question brings to the surface facts that are of the greatest importance to your potential customer.

2. ***What are your responsibilities?*** Most people never ask the question because they make assumptions – which may be incorrect – based on what they know about certain jobs.

3. ***What are the biggest challenges you face in expanding your business?*** As a professional salesperson, your job is to identify specific needs and challenges.

4. ***What are your priorities?*** This question will reveal whether your potential client has established priorities and will help you tailor your presentation to match their goals.

5. ***Ask a relationship question.*** Ask any question that advances the relationship to a higher level – family, hobbies, etc.

6. ***What do you like most about the interaction with vendors at shows in which you currently participate?*** It doesn't matter whether you can deliver the same attributes, but you must know what they are before you begin your sales presentation.

7. ***If you could change anything about the vendors you currently work with, what would you change?*** What you're searching for is just that one piece of dissatisfaction. Once identified, you have a starting point on which to build your presentation.

8. ***What are your criteria for making a decision?*** How can you make an intelligent sales presentation without knowing what the decision is going to be based on?

9. ***Describe your decision-making process*.** What steps do you go through? Is the decision made informally or through a very involved committee process?

10. ***What are your expectations for working with a new vendor?*** If you want to build a long-term relationship, ask this question.

Some commonly misunderstood definitions follow:

What is MATERIAL HANDLING?

Material Handling, also known as "drayage", is the process which occurs when union labor (usually Teamster), under the supervision of the General Services Contractor (GSC), takes possession of your shipment as it unloads at the advance warehouse or unloads it at show site at the loading dock during exhibitor freight move-in; delivers and stages it around your booth space (usually with a forklift); removes the crates, pallets, and cartons marked with "EMPTY" labels after your set-up is complete before the show; returns the empties at show close; and delivers your show freight to your transportation carrier when they arrive at the dock for outbound loading.

How am I charged for Material Handling?
Material handling service is charged by the hundredweight (or hundred pounds of weight), abbreviated as CWT (C = the Roman numeral for 100) based on weight of your freight per the certified weight slip presented by the transportation carrier or weighed by the General Services Contractor on-site. Actual shipping weights are rounded up to the next hundred pounds, so 415 pounds becomes 5 CWT. Most GSC's charge a 200-300 pound minimum for inbound shipments so consolidate your shipments for cost savings to meet the minimum weight. Occasionally a special small package rate may be offered for packages weighing less than 30 pounds, such as small-package carriers' envelopes, pouches and small boxes.

Is the handling of all types of freight charged the same per CWT?
No, there are different rates if you:
• ship to the advance warehouse vs. direct to show site;
• ship via common carrier vs. specialized carrier (van line, airfreight, company truck or privately-operated vehicle, known as POV); or
• if your shipment is crated, mixed (some crated, some pad-wrapped) or uncrated (pad-wrapped or loose pieces).
Rates for material handling are quoted in the Exhibitor Services Manual.

The rationale for different material handling rates is based on the number of times the freight is handled, difficulty of handling the freight (such as unloading stacked, pad-wrapped or loose items), having to move one exhibitor's freight to access another's freight further to the front of the trailer, the equipment and labor time it takes to unload, the type of truck or trailer they will be unloading and the fragility of freight requiring special handling.

You may also be charged additional surcharges if your freight reaches the advance warehouse after their published deadline date and time for accepting show freight, unloading after 4:30 p.m. but before 7:30 a.m. (in most cities), or missing your on-site targeted inbound freight deadline as specified in the Exhibitor Services Manual.

What is the Bill of Lading?
The Bill of Lading (B/L) is the document that establishes the terms of a contract between a shipper and a transportation company under which freight is to be moved between specified points for a specified charge. It serves as a document of title, a contract of carriage, and a receipt of goods. A B/L for an airfreight company is known as an airbill.

The inbound B/L is usually prepared by the shipper (an exhibit manager, exhibit house or transportation agent) on forms issued by the carrier. An outbound Bill of Lading also be provided by the carrier to attach to the General Service Contractor's Uniform Material Handling Agreement for each separate shipment you need to ship out of your exhibit, after you settle your on-site show invoice.

Failure by the exhibitor to turn in a completed, signed Bill of Lading and the matching Uniform Material Handling Agreement at the end of teardown to the GSC's service or freight desk or failure of your chosen carrier to pick up your freight in the GSC's published timeframe will result in your freight being "forced" (also known as "freight recovery") onto the GSC's preferred carrier. Depending on which option you selected when completing your Uniform Material Handling Form, your freight will either be moved off the show floor and held in the GSC's local warehouse until you have the freight picked up and pay their local moving and storage charges, or shipped via the GSC's preferred carrier at whatever rate that carrier wishes to charge.

Never leave your Bill of Lading and Uniform Material Handling Agreement in your exhibit with your freight. These two pieces of paperwork must be turned in to the freight desk in the GSC's service desk area, checked by their personnel for completeness and signed off with the time and date of receipt noted on their Material Handling Agreement, and you should receive and retain a copy of each for your records before you or your staff leave the show floor.

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TRADE SHOW *Consulting*

Top Ten Tips for Successful Exhibiting

Plan Your Exhibit Program to Maximize Your Show Results

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1. Know your audience and focus your message on their needs.

• Who is the "perfect prospect" at this show for your product or service, and what are their current problems? Your participation as an exhibitor at a trade show should focus on defining which of the show attendees' are in your target market and determining their current needs to offer solutions.
Make sure your graphics and message answer your target audiences' needs and wants.
• Show Management can provide statistics regarding number of anticipated attendees, and historical data on job titles, purchasing influence, company size or sales volume, and budgets.

2. Identify and prioritize the top three reasons why you are going to each trade show.

- To gather sales leads or sell your products or services to attendees and other exhibitors
- Promote new products/product launch; "new" is the most powerful word on the show floor to attendees.
- Enhance your corporate image or corporate message as an industry leader (branding/awareness)
- Educate your audience regarding your products and/or services
- Cement existing client relationships to garner repeat sales
- Conduct business meetings before or after show hours with attendees you can't otherwise reach
- Obtain press/media coverage
- Identify and recruit new distributors/dealers/representatives/employees
- Perform competitive and market research
- Attend educational sessions

3. Set strategic, measurable show goals and objectives.

• Your goals and objectives should be in keeping with your corporate mission and integrated with your overall marketing plan, keeping your prioritized objectives in mind.
• Set realistic goals based on show attendance, number of exhibiting hours, exhibit size and staffing, and budget.
• Plan your logistical exhibit timeline based on the tactics needed to support your predetermined goals.
• Allocate your budget to meet your prioritized show goals.

4. Identify the products or services you will showcase and determine how you will display or demonstrate them.

• If the show is supporting a new product launch, time is of the essence in having marketing collaterals, training for your exhibit staff and the actual product ready for display or demonstration.
• If you have a large product line, display only a sample, pertinent to your audience's identified needs.
• Trade show attendees want to experience your product or service in your exhibit, not just walk through or past it. Make it as interactive as possible.

5. Produce an attractive, uncluttered exhibit consistent with your corporate marketing campaign.
Exhibit tips:

• Use color, light and movement to attract attendees to your exhibit.
• Retain attendees in your booth using presentations, demos, or "info-tainment", and a well-trained exhibit staff to convey your corporate message and answer attendee questions using active listening skills. .
• Keep your exhibit open and inviting; don't block more than 20% of your aisle space with counters, walls, or excess exhibit staff. The rule-of-thumb for staffing your exhibit is one staff person for every 50 square feet of open space in your booth.

6. Use high-impact graphics focusing on your prospects' needs and wants.

• The "look" of your graphics should impart your overall marketing strategy (integrated marketing) and specific show message.
• Leverage your best ideas from other media (advertising, print media, promotions, giveaways, etc.) into a consistent presentation to gain brand recognition.
• Plan your exhibit graphics as large, colorful "visual speed bumps" to attract attendees' attention and communicate your message. Don't confuse graphics (billboards) with signage (bulletin boards).
• Effective graphics create an interest in your product or service by telling potential prospects what you can do for them in approximately 3.5 seconds, the time it takes to walk past a 10' x 10' booth space.
  - Use graphics to state your unique selling position (what differentiates you from competitors).
  - Use graphics to qualify who you want to meet ("Dealers Wanted") and discourage those timewasters you don't!

7. Promotion – Pre-Show, At-Show, Post Show

Be proactive in inviting the qualified attendees you'd like to visit your exhibit. Focus your efforts on getting your list of "most wanted prospects" to visit your exhibit. Industry studies have shown that an exhibitor can double the number of qualified leads at a show with an effective pre-show and at-show promotional campaign.
• Plan an integrated promotion strategy for all three timeframes of a trade show: pre-show, at-show, and post-show.
• Work with Show Management to obtain a targeted list of pre-registered attendees' names for pre-show promotion: postcards, email, or letter with exhibit floor passes. Contact them multiple times with compelling messages.
• Determine on-site promotional opportunities, such as branded hotel door hangers or room keys, taxi receipts, event sponsorships, show directory advertising, banners, show bags or badge lanyards, etc.
• Pick promotional items that have a high perceived value, will be kept by the attendee and have a tie-in to your message to make it more memorable. Top of desk = top of mind when it's time to order!
• Give promotional items as a positive reinforcement to only those who complete a lead form or attend a demonstration or presentation for higher perceived value. Or use tiered giveaways based on the prospect's business potential.

8. Prepare your exhibit staff for "show business".

Trade shows are a different type of sales venue with specific rules and expectations. Just as you wouldn't send an actor on stage without a script, a rehearsal with other actors and props, don't send your exhibit staff to work on your trade show stage unprepared.
• Recruit friendly, courteous, enthusiastic, knowledgeable booth staff.

• Hold an exhibit staff meeting in the booth to introduce the Booth Captain, PR contacts, VIPs and review exhibit layout, lead gathering systems, promotions, presentations, partners, and work schedules.
• Corporate management should sponsor a mandatory off-site exhibit staff dinner or breakfast to:

- Share corporate show strategy and goals with your exhibit staff.
- Conduct product training on your new products and services.
- Review good booth etiquette and body language.
- Train staff how to effectively greet and engage suspects, quickly qualify using open-ended probing questions, demonstrate to prospects, and disengage unqualified attendees.

The most memorable part of the attendee's exhibit experience is their interaction with your staff!

9. Record all pertinent information on a lead form to facilitate follow-up.

• Plan ahead with your sales department (or whoever will follow up on your show leads) to determine what pertinent information they will need to follow-up after the show, including demographic data (from the attendee's scanned show badge or business card), product interest, role in purchasing process, timeframe to buy, and requested follow-up. Other helpful information to capture from prospects includes their current supplier, reason they want to change suppliers and the name(s) of decision makers in their organization if they don't have this responsibility.
• Determine if you will rent an official lead retrieval system on site (standard or customized), purchase a customizable system, or customize your own pre-printed forms to be completed manually.
• Determine your lead rating system to prioritize your after-show follow up, such as A=Hot, B=Warm, C=Cold. Making good notes on your lead form about conversations with prospects can turn a cold call into a warm one!

10. Provide promised follow-up within 72 hours if emailed; 10 business days by US mail.

Fact: About 80% of all printed materials gathered by attendees at trade shows are thrown away before they make it back to the office. Use expensive collaterals in post-show follow-up of qualified leads.
• Write your follow-up letter before the show; reference the show name, your booth theme, key messages, etc.
• Thank them for visiting your booth; reiterate the features/benefits of your product/service in the letter, and mention your agreed-upon follow-up and timeframe.
• Mail this letter with samples, literature, coupons, article reprints, case studies, etc. to reinforce the sale or, if responding by email, hyperlink to your Web site for easy access.
• Follow-up in the requested manner, whether by phone, fax, email, or with promised materials.

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