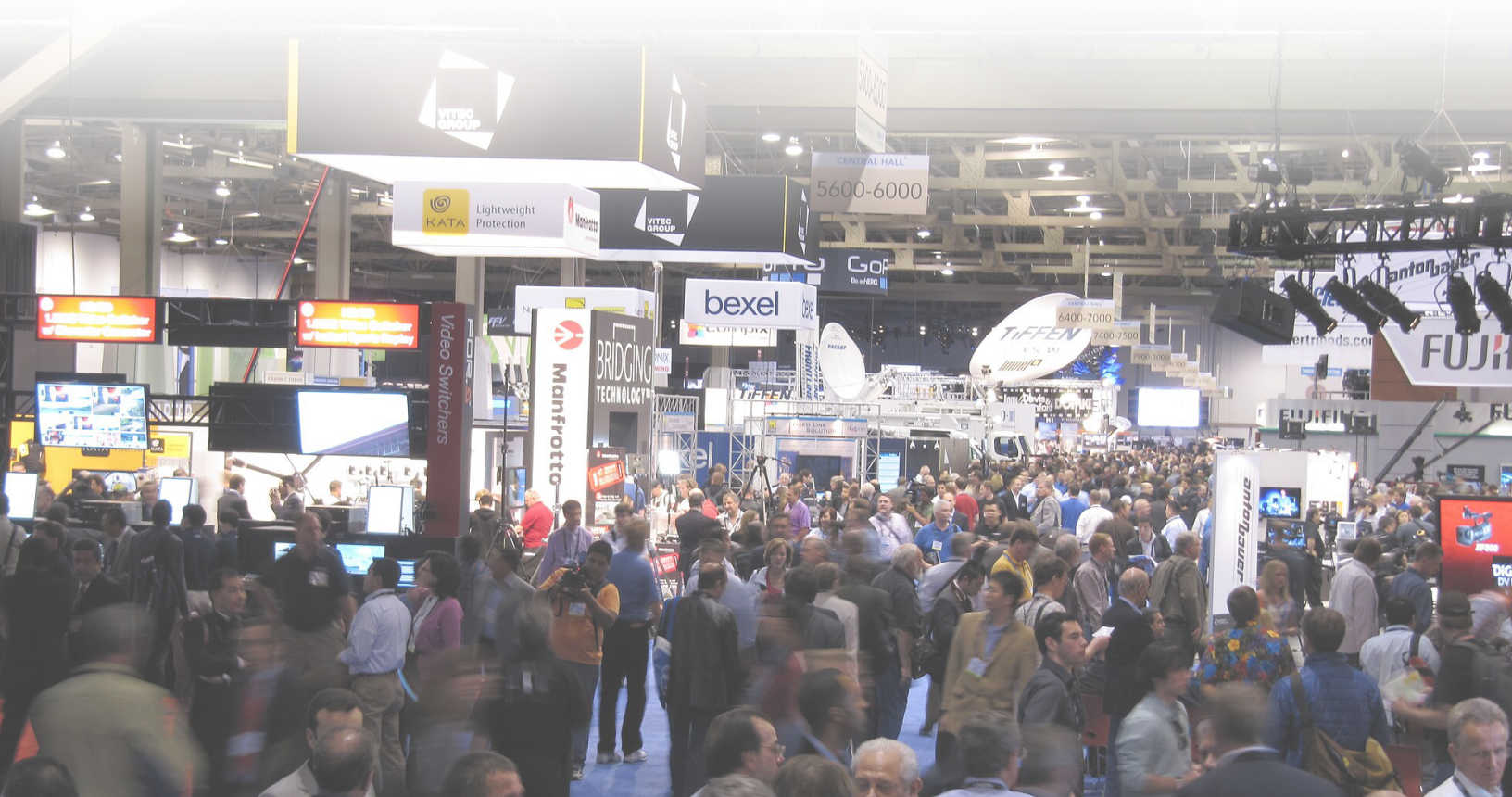


Walking You Through Trade Show Success – A Before, During and After Guide





Whether you're a small business or a thriving corporation, there is a lot for your business to gain by exhibiting at a trade show. Businesses attend trade shows for many different reasons. Businesses attend trade shows for many different reasons: They could be looking for new customers or distributors, and a room filled with hundreds of industry professionals at the same time is a great place to start. They might be looking to scope out the competition by checking out other companies' displays and new products. Or maybe they just want to stay up-to-date in their field. But there's one thing that all of these businesses have in common: they need a plan to make every trade show successful. Their goals might be entirely different, but having a clear plan is necessary to make attending a trade show worthwhile. So what exactly is this plan, and how should companies go about attending a trade show? Let's take you through some key steps.





Before the Show

While you might think that the trade show itself is the most important part of the process, devising a clear, realistic plan beforehand is critical. Your plan should address your goals for the trade show. Would you prefer to generate buzz or generate leads for your business? Do you have a particular target audience you'd like to do business with? A good plan will lay out these goals, and offer concrete steps towards achieving them. Here are some other tips to help you prepare beforehand:

- Promote the trade show well in advance. Email blasts, a website slider, and marketing campaigns with a preview of your booth or contest and what you'll be offering can entice attendees to visit you at the trade show.
- Read through the attendee list for the trade show and contact possible customers or partners you'd like to meet with at the show.
- Contact regular customers, existing leads, or local contacts to let them know that you're attending. Some businesses even buy passes for valued customers or partners.
- Have a discussion with your staff members who are attending the show. It's important that they be aware of your strategy and goals so that they can work best in order to execute your goals. You might even want to walk them through some key points they should emphasize to those who attend your booth.
- Ensure you have handouts, show promotions, and a booth worthy of your brand. Invest in things to help your booth stand out. This doesn't require a \$50,000 budget, but a creatively designed booth can help your business be prominent and attract more people. Add interactive electronics like touch screens into your booth as they can draw people in without having to say a word. Or, try adding a virtual reality game and see your booth get some attention!
- Consider free giveaways like water bottles, pens or useful tools like USB sticks. Make them memorable.

Show Time

It's the big day today, and now that you've got a plan in place, it's time to make things happen. Try to get a good night's sleep so you're well rested for today; you should be ready and energized to talk about your business and meet potential customers and buyers. Here are some other things you should be doing on the show day:

- Engage with your audience through ongoing giveaways at your booth throughout the day. These are great chances to get people talking in your booth, and having them complete a form is a great lead generation opportunity for your business. Know your audience and how you want them to remember your brand. Be as creative and as fun as possible.
- Promote what you're doing on social media. Just because you may have done so already, it doesn't mean that people have necessarily seen or remembered it. This will tell attendees where to find you, and it will engage people who aren't there too. Very often, there is a live social feed or handle used for the trade show so don't be afraid to use it!
- Promote your company's newest product or innovation. It could be something brand new, or it could simply be something that people don't know much about. Of course, product launch dates rarely coincide with trade shows, but it's important to project that your business is innovating and growing. Trade shows also serve as a great place to advertise, so promoting a product that fewer people know about can gain great exposure.
- See how people react to your products and pitches. Trade shows serve as a fantastic market testing opportunity, so if you ask for feedback and advice from buyers you can get insights and concerns that never occurred to you.
- Check out what the competition has to offer. It's a great place to see what's new and popular, and it also gives you the chance to solidify some of the key differentiators between you and the rest of the market.



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Post Show

After the trade show, it's important that you measure your results and learn what you can improve upon. You went in with a detailed strategy and plan, and now is the time to judge whether or not you can call this trade show a success. But no matter what, you'll have more insight and knowledge of what to expect for the next trade show. After this one, there are a few more steps that you might want to take:

- Announce your grand prize winner(s)
- Make sure you update your social media and website with the winner and end-of-contest announcement
- Review all of the forms that were completed online and in the booth
- Reach out to any new leads. Time is of the essence, so don't wait - call them the next day. Try to have materials or a pitch ready to go so that the new lead is able to quickly take the next step. You might want to offer them a special trade show offer as a follow-up technique.
- Speak to your booth staff and ask for feedback in terms of common questions or concerns that came up at the trade show. Look at always making improvements to your booth and your plan.



Ultimately, trade shows don't have to be stressful or nerve-wracking. They're a great place to meet new customers, reach potential business partners, and see where you stack up against the competition. All that's needed is preparation and a proper plan. As long as you recognize them for the opportunity they are, going to a trade show is bound to help your business.



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