

Stand Staffing:

Training your employees doesn't have to be difficult. It's just like school. You have to concentrate on the Three R's. There is one small difference. Instead of concentrating on reading, writing, and arithmetic, you'll be talking to your booth staff about **Reasons, Responses, and Routes.**

Reasons:

Ask your booth staff why your company exhibits at any particular show, and their answers may surprise you. Tradition and because the competition is exhibiting at the show are among the most often cited reasons booth staff give when asked this question, yet these seldom appear in the company's list of motivations. Explain to your staff the role trade show participation plays in the company's marketing strategy, including items like timed product launches or establishing a competitive presence.

Once the staff understand the role of the trade show, outline the goals you have for show participation in general, and specific benchmarks for each particular show. This will allow your staff time to think about how they can contribute to the team's success.

Responses:

Small talk is easy. Gathering valuable customer information in a casual manner is difficult. Train your booth staff to elicit the desired responses by asking engaging, open ended questions. Using how, what, when, and why questions encourages attendees to share their business concerns and presents your staff with an opportunity to offer solutions.

Role playing exercises may feel awkward at first, but often help staff develop the confidence needed to work the show floor effectively. Actually practicing conversations also gives the opportunity to discuss non-verbal communication cues, including posture, physical space, gestures, and eye contact.

Routes:

What happens to all the leads your staff gathers after the show? If you've recently finished a show season, ask your staffers what happened to all those business leads. If they're scratching their heads and looking puzzled, you know you've got a problem.

Leads have an extremely short shelf life. The longer they go unpursued, the more likely they are to either prove fruitless, mediocre or they went

to the competition. Staff should be trained to gather all possible contact information, and to make relevant, specific notes on the lead form. Having a system in place to distribute and follow-up with leads immediately after the show will capitalize on all the time, effort, and resources you put into your trade show participation. There is often a disconnect between trade show leads and the sales staff. Stress to your sales staff that creating new business relationships based upon trade show leads is a company priority. Make them accountable for any leads that they were given to avoid having the new leads getting lost in the shuffle.

Recess;

Schedule some fun training exercises, both to reinforce the educational aspects of your day and for teambuilding purposes. Trade show days are very long, and a team that not only works well together but enjoys each other's company will have a tremendous edge over the competition.