

# THE TOP 10 TIPS FOR TRADE SHOW SUCCESS

How to Get More  
From Your Next Trade Show



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# Top 10 Tips for Trade Show Success

How to Get More success from your next  
Trade Show or Expo

**By Warwick Merry**

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I am doing this because I want the Trade Show and Exhibition industry to get better at what it does. Many Trade Shows and Expos have developed the reputation of being expensive and exhibitors are questioning their attendance. Other exhibitors are cutting non-essential business expenses and see the Trade Show or Expo as non-essential.

It is my belief that Trade Shows and Expos are one of the best ways to get new customers and connect with existing customers. I urge you to read this book, take action and Get More from your next Trade Show or Expo.

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## About the Author

### Who is Warwick Merry?

Warwick Merry is a gifted and sought after professional speaker, consultant and a leading authority in aiding individuals and organisations to live their passion. He is the founder of Get More, an organisation dedicated to igniting an inexhaustible passion for life in people. He has a business degree and a computing degree.

He has been working at Trade Shows world wide since 1993. This has included working for 12 months in Dallas Texas at a permanent Trade Show, presenting at Oracle World and advising strategies for better presence at the Oracle stand, successfully showing in Tonsberg - Norway, Sitges - Spain, Stresa - Italy, Denver – USA, and Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide in Australia. He has worked with large corporations like Oracle, Expo organisations like Pregnancy, Babies and Children's Expo as well as booth holders like Tap 4 Health energy therapy at the Body, Mind and Spirit Expo.

His combination of passion for outstanding customer service, energising team members, commitment to the business' bottom line and theatrical flair make Warwick perfectly positioned to make your next Trade Show or Expo more successful.

He is the Co-Founder of the Exhibiting and Sponsorship Institute, Australasia's authority on how to get better results from your Exhibiting and Event Sponsorship.

## Welcome

Greetings and welcome to the Top 10 Tips for Trade Show Success. Thank you for taking the time to invest in your own business and increased success at your next Trade Show or Expo.

First up it is important to note that while there is a subtle difference between a Trade Show and an Expo, the ideas and learnings put forward in this eBook are applicable to both formats. In fact, while you read this ebook, I encourage you to look for the similarities and not the differences. What I mean by that is that it would be very easy to read this book and say to yourself, “oh but that doesn’t apply to me or my industry”. Look at it from a “how could that apply to me and my industry” kind of way.

Maybe you don’t sell a product but actually just provide a community service, there are still ways you can promote the benefits of your organisation that are similar to selling even though you may not physically sell something. Maybe you don’t keep a large database but simply sell consumer products on site, is there a way you can keep in touch with your clients and prospects? Maybe some form of social media? Great ideas will come if you can apply lessons from areas that a different than yours but have a similar target market.

While working with my clients, it was obvious that there were some basic things that people and companies can do to make a marked difference in their Trade Show or Expo presence. At the time of writing, there is a lot of doom and gloom about the economy and what the future holds. It is important, now more than any other time in the last 10 years, to continue with your marketing strategy but to do it smarter. Trade Shows and Expos can be an effective tool in your marketing tool box. I must also say that they can be a COLOSSAL waste of money if you don’t work them properly! As you know, the booth itself is expensive let alone staff time, training, and accommodation, prospect give-aways and other incidental costs.

So in a time where every dollar, pound, euro, yen or yuan count, it is time to focus on the essentials of your Trade Show or Expo presence. In a strong economy when business is booming, it is easy to make an impact at an Expo. It is easy to have many people on site helping. It is easy to “throw more resources” at a situation and **make** it work.

Unfortunately that time has passed – for now. What you will read here are some simple yet effective tips to make your next Trade Show or Expo more successful. Keep in mind that when the economy improves (and it will in time) these tips are equally as valuable then.

I have learnt these tips from practical experience. My own experience selling an \$800 product at Trade Shows in Europe, USA and Australia and the experience of my clients who have run Trade Shows and Expos or exhibited at them all over the world.

Just to be sure that these tips are valid, I have spent a lot of time and money researching what other Trade Show experts, Expo gurus, exhibitors and suppliers have found. It was gratifying to find our experiences have been remarkably similar – world wide. What this means for you is that this book is a summary of my own opinion and that of many others in the industry.

The content of this book is not solely about Trade Shows and Expos. It is about business. While you may use Trade Shows and Expos as a form of marketing, it is rare that it will be your sole form of business. It is only an element of it. It is important to maintain that perspective and look at what can be done to maximise the positive impact that the Expo has on your business.

As with many resources you find to work on your business, you may find that this book will raise more questions than it answers. That is great, that means that you are moving forward and looking at issues that may arise in your business.

Write down those questions and send them to me. I continually blog about Trade Show and Expo issues and will happily answer them there. You can see this blog at [www.GetMoreShowSuccess.com](http://www.GetMoreShowSuccess.com).

The tips you will learn from this book will not be a major surprise for you. Most of them are common sense and as you would expect, most of them are not practiced by booth holders. The book itself is an easy read, where you have to invest is in the time to act on the knowledge or the reminders you get here. The information presented here can make a significant difference to your next show but only if you take the action.

I am the first to admit that sometimes taking the action can be a challenge. Should you need help with any action, if you want to talk about your specific situation, please contact me at:

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## Top 10 Tips

### ***1 - What is the one thing that will make the biggest difference?***

This is the question that came up the most. Whenever I speak with clients and prospects they always want to know; what is the “one thing” that will improve their show success. Unfortunately, I don’t have an “instant success pill”. I do have the answer you want but don’t be disappointed by it. It may not be what you want to hear.

The “one thing” that will have the most impact is – **Planning.**

The honest truth is most business would not know “success” at a Trade Show or Expo if they fell over it. Sorry if that sounds a little harsh, but my experience has shown that to be true. Mainly because they don’t know why they are there and they don’t know what “success” is. Sure you can get leads, sales, give away marketing gifts, build the brand, have a presence and fill the sales funnel but is that what you are there for?

Many larger companies are there because they were last year or their main competition is there. So the key answers you need to know are: why are you going and how will you know if you have been successful?

If you are going there to increase sales, what sales level do you need to call it successful?

If you are there to get sales leads, how many do you need to make it worthwhile? How do you define your sales lead?

If you are there for market awareness how will you know if it has increased? Is it by brochures you have distributed or people subscribing to your newsletter/ mailing list?

If you are there for competitor knowledge how do you know if you have it? Are they even going to be there?

So increased planning for why you are going and how you can tell if it has been successful is the number one thing you need to do if you don't already do it. But it is not enough for you to know it, everyone who works the stand must also know. What gets measured gets improved, so if your whole team knows how they are to be measured they can work on that aspect of the show.

If you want leads, they will get leads. If you want "qualified" leads then that will be their focus. If all you need is brochures handed out then that will be what they do.

If you are there to build your brand, how will you know if you have been able to do that? It can be a challenge to measure this but very worthwhile. It is best measured via survey. Whether you survey people as they come to your booth asking the relevant questions to help you measure brand awareness, ask the questions just after they leave your stand or survey visitors at a show as they are leaving, over time you will be able to build an accurate perspective on your brand awareness and how much a show can aid increasing it.

The secret is in the survey question. You need to make sure that you are measuring what you want to know. You could write a whole book on this subject so for now we will leave it at making sure you target the information that you want to improve.

Now that you know up front what is to be done, the next step is to do it. At the end of the show (and I strongly suggest daily subtotals) you need to measure your success and share the results with your team.

Planning is usually the most boring, most avoided, and most laughed at thing to be done. Because it works, you need to get over any negative feelings you and your team may have about it and do it. The more you plan and measure, the better you are at it and the better your results will be.

If you do this tip, you will significant improve your Trade Show and Expo results. The rest of the tips are just bonuses for you!!



## **2 - What is the best location?**

This is a tough question to answer. The most accurate answer is “it depends”. There are so many variables. Some Trade Show Experts have had multiple booths at shows to measure which position is best and even they acknowledge that is it not an accurate study because having multiple booths impacts on the success of the second and third booths that a prospect sees as they have seen the product before.

The best booth location is impacted by the size of the show, the weather, the layout of the Expo floor and many other factors. Frequently you may have no or little choice over where your stand is positioned on the show floor. Don't worry as there even if you get a less favourable position, there is always something you can do to improve it.

If location selection is possible, there are some key positions to avoid and some that give better exposure to you and your products and services.

### **The Entrance/Exit**

Stay away from the entrance or the exit. Most people are so excited to be at the show that they rush in and skip the first couple of booths. The same can be said for the departing guest. Once they have decided to leave or even that they will leave soon, their mind starts to focus on what they are doing next. So even if they stop at the booth, they are not fully present. So stay away from the entrances and exits.

### **Dining Area/Rest Rooms**

I once thought it would be great to have a booth near the meals area as people would browse as they ate. Bad move!! They were more intent on their lunch and dinner than me. The ones who were interested made a mess of my booth and my product. Your guest or prospects focus is not on you when you have a booth near the dining area or rest rooms. If they want to use the toilet they are usually in a hurry and won't stop to look at your booth. Again, avoid these areas.

### **Corner Site/Row Ends**

The jury is still out on a corner or end booth. Some of my clients love them and others will never have them again. Some find that the guests walk past them in a hurry to get to the next row; others found that the extra expense (usually they are more costly for the space) was not warranted as the increase in sales was not worth it. Others love it because it gives them a double front and they can “work the room” more.

### **Prime Location**

My research shows that the booth next to the one on the end is a very good one. You still have the prospects attention, without paying the premium of the end booth. If you can get this booth between half to two thirds of the way around the Expo floor (based on the logical flow of traffic) you are on a winner. The prospect has had a chance to see the majority of what is available, they have seen a lot of buying activity and if they are there to buy they are more likely to buy if your booth presence and value offering appeals to them.

Location is a funny thing. While it doesn't significantly positively influence a buying decision, it can significantly detract from it. At the end of the day, if your booth presence and value offering are on the money, your location does not have that big an impact.



### ***3 - How should I behave in the booth?***

Too often the people selected to work the booth treat it as a day off or they are annoyed they have to be there and make sure everyone knows – even the prospects! This is a prime opportunity to meet existing clients, engage with prospects and positively represent your business. Everything about you should reflect that. Your appearance, your behaviour, your language, even your stance needs to show your professionalism - it doesn't mean you can't have fun though. Here are a few pointers:

**Don't eat in the booth** – if you have a break, leave the booth and grab a drink and something to eat. You will appreciate the time off the floor and your prospects and guests will appreciate not having to watch you dribble dressing down your face or stuff down the last few chips! A lot of expos provide an exhibitors lounge which is a great place to relax and network with other exhibitors while you are there. You never know, you may find some great tips or trends from other exhibitors as you rest!

**Don't sit in the booth** – slouching on the table or sitting back waiting for something to happen don't give the best reflection of you. You appear bored and disinterested. It's ok if you are sitting in a designated client area with a client, otherwise you should be standing ready to engage with your next guest.

Some exhibitors get around this by having stools to sit on rather than a chair. This brings them up to a similar height to the visitor so they are still able to engage while in a seated position. While I have seen this work, I am not a fan of it. The tendency will be to remain seated. I believe that the best service is given by the engaged person and standing up gives you the flexibility to move around, reflect the body language of the visitor and truly engage.

**Turn off your phone/PDA** – We know you are important, but in the booth is not the way to show it. Step away from the booth to return calls if you have to. Nothing tells a client or prospect how unimportant they are more than you playing games, checking emails, making calls when you should be paying attention to them. It may be hard to take, but life will go on if you turn your PDA off for the day!

**Smile** – This is probably the most important thing you can do. If you are smiling you are much more approachable and able to engage with your guest. You are far more likely to have fun also, maybe even joke with them – It's a bit outrageous, but it works!

**Engage the Guest** – Smiling is a great way to do it, but the most successful sales people will know how to engage with your guest (prospect or client). If during the qualification process you discover that they are not interested in your product or service, there are many simple ways to finish up with the guest in a manner that has them reflecting positively about you and your company.

**Become a Hub** – This is one of the secrets of a successful booth, but it can also be a challenge. Somehow you need to make your booth so that people want to come there and then after they have left go and get their friends and come back. It has to be relevant to you and your message to work also.



## ***4 - Do I need Booth Babes or Booth Blokes?***

Many Trade Shows and Expos employ what can be generically referred to as Booth Babes or Booth Blokes (BBs). People who are there for their looks in the attempt to get people interested in the product or service. Car and Motorbike shows are known for them.

BBs can be very successful or very frustrating. I went to a recent motorbike show and was interested in a Honda. The BB at the Honda stand had no idea what I was talking about. If you have an audience who will know a bit about your product, the BBs can make a mess of the situation if they are not well trained. At the same show I went to the BMW stand. It was staffed by sales people but also people from head office. They knew the product and had enough training to satisfy the guest or at least know when they couldn't and refer them on.

The secret to success with BBs is training. The same can be said with all of your staff. The Centre for Exhibition Industry Research found that 85% of visitor's positive feelings about a booth were due to their experience with the staff. They also found that 86% of visitors had not been seen by a sales person prior to coming to a Expo. So this is a vital area for the success of your next Expo or Trade Show.

When selecting who represents you, focus on the five "P's"

**Positivity** – Expos are hard work. Lots of people, lots of noise, lots of unhappy children, parents and lots of sore feet!! You need someone who will treat every visitor like they are the first one to the stand. They have to have fun with what they are doing and be able to attract visitors to stop and look at your stand.

**Personality** – your team needs to be able to talk to anyone. There is lots of small talk and they need to be able to engage with the visitor to discover what they are looking for.

**Passion** – Your staff need to know all about your products and services, maybe not every tiny detail but they must know a lot about it and believe in the benefits it provides to your customers.

**Prepared** – I strongly suggest that you give daily briefs and debriefs to your team. Let them know why you are here, what you expect from them, what notes or lead information you want them to keep. At the end of the day find out what sort of day they have had. How many leads, how many sales, what questions were asked, what market research do you now have, what can be done better the next day or next show.

**Presentable** – You want your team dressed for the occasion. You may have team shirts or a dress standard – something comfortable that gives the image you are after. This also means you want their actions to be presentable too! No talking on the phone, texting friends, eating in the booth, sitting at the back letting customers walk past without chatting to them.

It is well worth spending the time before the expo to brief your team on what is expected of them and what you want from the show. Since you let them know what you want, you also need to give them feedback at the end as to how well you did.

BBs can be great if they are well trained because they can be a spare pair of hands as well as attract people. They don't need to know everything about the product or service but they must be outstanding at customer service. They need to know what you are trying to achieve from the stand and they need to know when their knowledge runs out. Guests don't mind being referred to a subject matter expert, but they don't appreciate having the brochure read to them!





## ***5 - What sort of price discount should I give at the show?***

The simple answer is NONE!

I don't like giving discounts. It devalues the product or service and isn't fair to others who have previously paid full price. I also get that Expo guests want a deal. They have usually paid a price to come in the door and they are typically your target market also, so it is not unfair for them to expect a deal.

My clients and I have had a great deal of success in giving bonus value at the Expo only. Typically something that costs you very little but is of great value to them. It can be providing a free teleclass with each item sold, free or half price installation, buy two get the second one half price or bundle a group of your products and services together for an Expo only price.

The secret is to increase the value with minimal cost to you. You do need to have some deal though. Your target market is coming to you; you don't have to find them. Surely that has to be worth something to you and your business.

Don't be scared to play around with it. Over the course of a three day expo you may want to offer different bundles or different price points to see what works best for you. You will find that different combinations will work best in different cities of different days. Again, don't be scared to try different things to work out what is best for you. Only by doing this will you be able to fine tune the best combination.



## **6 - What should I do now?**

This is a great question to be asking yourself when it comes to Expos. There is always something else to be done, but we want to focus your energies in increasing the success of your next show.

There are three main time zones to consider for this question: Before the show; During the show; and After the show.

### **BEFORE the Show**

Use time before the show to research different techniques that may work in your booth. While other Trade Shows and Expos will give you examples, look around for other inspiration. Retail stores do some great window dressing. Maybe you do get inspiration from them for your booth?

Listen to “spruikers” at shopping centres and markets. Many will be noise, others will just read the latest and greatest specials, but there are a few who are truly engaging. What are they doing that works that you could use to engage people?

Observe sales people. You will have far less time than them as Trade Shows and Expos are very busy, but again you may discover an angle, a positioning statement or a unique approach that you could tailor for you.

As well as doing research, it is time to do some promotion. There is a range of promotion you can do prior to the show. Whether it is a specific individual you are inviting to the show or a broadcast email to your customer base letting them know about your show, it all boils down to getting people who are interested in you to your booth.

Granted, the business that has put the Trade Show or Expo together will be doing some advertising, marketing and promotion. But why not build on that and do your own specific promotion. You could do some or all of the following:

- Personal invitations to your booth
- Arrange prospect appointments
- Advertising in the relevant press
- Update your website with information on your booth
- Write an article for your newsletter regarding your booth and the show
- Direct mail your database
- Issue a press release
- Update your blogs and facebook page to include information about your booth
- Update your email signature to let people know about your booth at the show

Some of these cost very little and still have a positive impact on your profile. So which ones will you do?

### **DURING the Show**

During the show there are two things to be concerned about:

- 1) Getting people to your booth
- 2) Providing the best experience

### **Getting People to Your Booth**

This is a continuation of the promotion that you have done before the show. While the show is on you may consider some of the following:

- Sponsoring the show
- Advertising at hotels
- Advertising at the airport,
- Billboards
- Adverts in daily papers
- TV adverts
- Press kits

While these are more traditional methods of promotion, they can work well. New media is a lot more affordable and can be a more focussed way of letting people know what is going on. I strongly recommend you look at doing the following during your show:

- Update your blog
- Update your FaceBook
- Use Twitter to send updates on what is happening
- Send texts to interested parties with updates

Technology is having an “instant” impact on Trade Shows and Expos. People are able to send photo’s and comments about what they are experiencing at a show to their friends. This has been known to attract more people to the show or even the flow of people at the show

Take advantage of this technology. Build your “tribe” by getting people signed up to your blog, newsletter, FaceBook, Twitter stream so that as you are sharing what is happening, it attracts them to the show. This means that your posts and messages can not be a sales message but something that ads value to them, a piece of information or humour that they would appreciate.

This is relative simple technology, yet it makes a significant impact on your Expo experience.

### **Providing the Best Experience**

Now that you have people coming to your booth, what will you do with them?

I have seen a variety of behaviour in exhibition booths – some that works well and some that was disgraceful. I like to think of working in a booth as inviting a guest into my work space to find out more about what we can do to help them. So I behave as I would when talking to a friend in a public place.

Here are some do's and don'ts:

## Do

- Do smile – it is the easiest way to attract guests to your booth
- Do engage your guest as they walk past
- Do ask what your guest is interested in
- Do encourage your guest to go in to your lucky draw or register for your newsletter if they are interested
- Do allow your guest to say “No thanks, I am not interested” – there will be so many people at the show, having one who disqualifies themselves as a prospect is doing you a favour
- Do pay attention to those accompanying your guest – even if they are small children, it shows you are interested
- Do respect the booths around you – they can be part of your team, covering your booth during breaks or referring their guests over to you when they are leaving
- Do have breaks when you need to – leave the booth, put your feet up have some “down time” so you conserve your energy for your guests
- Do refer your guest to other stand that you think may interest them – this is good for the show and good for you as they will remember who “helped them”
- Do have a bit of fun – it relaxes your guest so they don't feel like they are being “sold” to

## Don't

- Don't just thrust a brochure at them – qualify if they want one otherwise your costly brochure will end up in the bin
- Don't check your text messages or play with your PDA in the booth – focus on your guests
- Don't chew gum – you know why!
- Don't eat food in the booth – take a decent break and eat something away from the booth
- Don't sit in the booth – be available for your guest
- Don't just chat with your co-workers – compare notes about what you are doing and what works best
- Don't be afraid to interrupt a conversation with your co-worker to engage a guest – the guest has the priority
- Don't forget how to politely disengage with a disqualified prospect if you have other guests waiting
- Don't behave in a manner that would damage the brand of your company or your own personal reputation – It will be busy, you will get tired, you may even get a bit snappy. Make sure you take a time out if you need it
- Don't forget to check your presentation after you break – a breath freshener, a check for food in your teeth and that you look presentable can save an embarrassing moment later
- Don't forget to have fun – I mentioned it before but it is important. If you are going to be there for a couple of days you may as well enjoy it!

## **AFTER the Show**

Phew! It's been a busy show, three or four days on your feet, lots of contacts, lots of leads and lots of email demanding attention now you are back. This is the time that shows the difference from successful exhibitors and outstandingly successful exhibitors. Let the email wait, we still have more important things to do first.

To be outstandingly successful we need to look at our Expo experience overall. Did we meet our objectives, what was our Return On Investment, what follow up action do we need and how can we make the next Expo better?

The first thing is to go back to our objectives and find out whether we met them. You may have had sales targets, visitor targets, branding targets, opinion poll targets – whatever your objective, did you meet it? If possible, go one step further – what is your Return On Objectives. These are easy to calculate if your objectives are quantitative.

For example, if you wanted to have contact (defined as a visitor talking directly to one of your team) with a certain number of visitors, you could easily calculate your cost per visitor contact as total cost divided by total number of contacts.

But if you were after a qualitative objective, such as increase brand awareness, you will need to work a little harder to measure this. It is not impossible it just takes a little more effort. It is become more common to see groups of people clustered at the exit of an Expo chatting with visitors as they leave. These people are researchers who are asking detailed questions to help measure these things.

The follow up action is the thing that is most neglected by exhibitors. It is easy to get swept up in the “urgency” of day to day operations, but the follow up is the area that has a huge payback. But it also has a time frame. My experience is that follow up has a half life of about 10 days. That is your contact interest in your will drop by half in 10 days and then drop half again in the following 10 days and so on. I urge you to complete all initial follow up within 10 days.

It maybe something as simple as calling back people you have listed on lead cards and then putting them into your standard sales process. If you work at consumer shows, you are more likely to not have lead cards as your interested guests would have purchased then and there. As I said earlier, it is 7 times easier to sell to an existing client than it is to get a new one. So use any details collected to send them a thanks for coming email.

If you are not selling a product but providing a service, maybe you could send a newsletter with observations from the Expo. It could be something as easy as updating your FaceBook page with photos and stories from the show. This enables you to stay top of mind and to give them an opportunity to share their experiences with friends, family and colleagues.

The final step of After the Show is to look at what improvements can you make for next time. Get input from the entire team about their perspectives. You may find something that will surprise you. Maybe shipping could be done earlier to save on an express service; there could be ideas on better ways to staff the booth; different suggestions on bundle pricing for that city; booth layout ideas. Who knows what will come up.

Grab these ideas while they are fresh and look at which ones you will incorporate to improve your presences at the Trade Show or Expo and increase your overall Return on Investment or Return on Objectives.





## ***7 - Should I have a give away prize draw?***

The give away prize is a very common occurrence at Trade Shows and Expos. Like every part of your Expo experience you need to make a considered opinion whether to have one or not.

They are a simple way to collect contact details of people who may be interested in your business or your products and services and give a prize in return. The biggest mistake that people make is having an irrelevant prize in relation to their product or service.

For example, at a recent IT Show the prize was for a Wii – the latest and greatest piece of fun technology. The company offering the prize sold large capacity storage devices. All people had to do was to put their business card in the bowl and they had a chance at winning a new Wii. What most businesses do is use the list of people that they get at the show to follow-up with and sell their product or service.

Let's look at this situation. Why would you put your card in the bowl? Naturally it is because you want to win a Wii for your or your family. How is that relevant to large capacity storage devices? It's not! SO the sales team are just about to waste a large amount of time contacting people who wanted a toy, not to find out more about their product. Or maybe worse, maybe all that would happen is that the business cards would be thrown out!

They would have been better to offer free installation, 1 day's use of a consultant, or 20% off a new storage device – something that is relevant to their market. This will ensure that only their qualified customers will enter into the draw.

Prize draws are an easy way to gather contact details but you need to make sure they are the people you want to contact!! Make the prize relevant. A sample of your product or service or may be a special deal. It may mean that you get fewer contacts, but they will be quality contacts who are far more likely to do business with you.

You also want to make sure that your signage indicates that anyone who enters the draw agrees to be contacted by your team. This ensures you are not breaching privacy legislation and also gives you permission to put them on your newsletter subscription or contact them with further details about your business.



## **8 - What about marketing materials?**

Like all parts of your Expo presence, marketing materials requires planning. One simple tip is to allow an extra two weeks than the lead time your supplier gives you. You may not need it, but experience shows that many exhibitors don't allow enough time to get their marketing material. It is soul destroying to see an exhibitor finally get their material on the last day of a 3 day show or to have their exhibit without some of their key marketing materials.

Again, expect the best but plan for the worst!

There are two main areas of marketing materials, handouts/fliers and gifts.

### **Handouts and Fliers**

I have seen Trade Shows and Expos where exhibitors have spent thousands of dollars on glossy, high quality marketing brochures only to find that most of them ended up in the bin at the end of the aisle or outside of the show floor.

You need to match your materials to the show and your stand. What would your customers expect? If you were at a motor show, wouldn't you expect at least a one page summary of a vehicle with a couple of pictures and the specifications on it? If they were expecting \$20,000 and more for their car, it would not make sense for a simple photocopy of a black and white print out.

Yet if you were exhibiting at a PC Technology Show, your customers would most likely be happy with a simple black and white photocopy of common software and hardware price list. It would not make sense to have high quality handouts for a \$100 item.

You may even qualify a visitor before giving them an expensive piece of collateral. I was at a recent travel show when a poster caught my eye. It was for a motorcycle tour company. They do organised trips all over Europe, USA and some parts of Asia. After talking with the sales person I found that they had several styles of tour and motorbike available. I was very interested so I asked for some information.

Based on our conversation, the sales person had been able to qualify me. I was keen on travel, I was keen on motorbikes, I rode a large motorbike (Honda ST1300) so would most likely be able to afford the kind of tour they were after. It was all going in their favour. All he had to do was reach for the hidden brochures and give me one.

At the very least he could have given me a simple one pager with a reference to their website and I could get my curiosity about the tours satisfied.

With your marketing material, you want to make sure that you plan to run out. It doesn't mean you will run out but you need to know what to do should it happen.

It is all part of my "Expect the best, but plan for the worst" philosophy.

At the same travel show, a different booth had run out of brochures on the day before. So now the guy just sat there with a sign on his booth saying "Sorry, we ran out of brochures yesterday". What a waste!! At the very least he could have photocopied the front page of a brochure with his business card on it and instructions to check the website for more detail. This day and age hotels will happily do photocopying, late night/early morning services exist, some 24 hr services exist.

One of the key reasons people visit Expos is to get information on products and services available. Don't be the one to not have some kind of information ready for your booth visitor.

## Gifts

Typically at Business to Business Trade Shows, exhibitors will give gifts or marketing paraphernalia to their booth visitors. This is less common at Consumer to Business shows and Expos. At consumer shows, you are more likely to get a product sample or branding gift, like a poster or balloon.

Corporate gifts range in quality and price. One of the most common is pens, with hats and t-shirts also being popular.

Again, you always have to consider what is the value of the corporate gift? There is a lot to be said for something that gets used many times. This gives good brand awareness as the recipient will be constantly looking at your logo.

There are many companies available to customise a gift for your company. I urge you to consider these guidelines when selecting a gift:

- Does it fit your corporate image?  
If you sponsor a golf competition then it would make great sense to give branded golf tees as a gift. If you are in the electronic payment industry, maybe a credit card holder would be a great gift. Make it relevant to your industry and image.
  
- Do you need a “double gift” strategy?  
That is, for normal visitors they may get an inexpensive gift, say some branded golf tees, but for qualified sales leads, they may get a more significant gift, say some branded golf driver covers. This ensures that your brand is grown but your focus is on your true prospects.

- How will you measure the effectiveness of the gifts?  
By now, you are most likely aware of my belief in “what gets measured gets improved” approach. So how will you measure that gift giving works? It may not be easy, but you must give some thought as to how you will determine if it is worthwhile. It could be your money is best spent elsewhere.
  
- Don't forget your existing customers!  
Age old customer service statistics say that it cost 7 times more to get a new customer as it does to retain an old one. Why not consider rewarding your customer's loyalty by sending them a gift prior to the Trade Show or Expo so that they feel special.



## **9 - What should I do about my “real” business?**

This is an important point. Make no mistake about it; the Expo is part of your “real” business too! Whatever objectives you have set for the Expo, they need to sit within the overall objectives and focus for your business, otherwise you have to ask yourself, why are you doing it?

The Expo becomes a simple matter of planning. During the course of the show your focus and attention needs to be there. In fact, it is not uncommon during the course of an Expo to have meetings with others in your industry and make strategic alliances. Many businesses use the show to find new mentors, suppliers, distributors, markets and associations.

Look at increasing your contacts and market position while you are there. Your day to day operations can be delegated to another of your team or you can simply wait until you are back in the office. I have seen at shows business operators who are neither in the office nor at the show. They are trying to do all things and end up doing nothing!

If something urgent happens you will be able to check your messages and return the call throughout the day. This may be a blow to your ego but you are not so important that business stops without you!!

Too often having a multiple focus means we water down the delivery of the service we want to. In this situation, be where your hands are. Focus on the Expo at hand and then deal with any other matters as appropriate.

I know you will find that you will enjoy the Expo more also.



## ***10 - What sort of follow-up system do I need?***

The follow up system that you have will depend on the kind of show you attend and the product or service that you offer. As you read earlier, the follow up action is the thing that is most neglected by exhibitors. Follow up has a time frame. I believe follow up has a half life of about 10 days. That is your contact interest in your will drop by half in 10 days and then drop half again in the following 10 days and so on. You need to be sure to complete all initial follow up within 10 days.

Typically at consumer Expos products or services will be sold on site or major brands will use the show as a continuing branding exercise. This means there are few opportunities to follow up with the visitors directly.

In this situation it is best to use the Expo experience as content for your newsletter, blog, PR and advertising. Let people know you were at the show. Thank them for visiting and share some observations or stories from the show. That lets your customers and supporters feel like they are “in” on the secret. If you were collecting email addresses at the show, it also communicates to them that you are doing something worthwhile with their information.

If you are selling something more substantial, you are more likely to use the Expo as a source of qualified lead generation. When you do this, you need to be sure to have a lead capture mechanism in place. You don't need to get too sophisticated; something simple will do the job.

One of the most effective things I have seen is a small piece of paper that will enable you to capture the core details to be acted on later. I recommend you don't collect too much information or it may start to feel like a survey for your visitor. Simply record the basic information about them:

Name, Title, Organisation, Phone, Email



Have some check boxes so you can quickly nominate which of your products and services that they may be interested in. It is also good to have some check boxes to indicate the time frame in which they are considering a purchase.

The only other information you may want to ask is the best day of the week to follow up with them. This will show consideration of their schedule as well as provide a day that they will be most receptive of your call.

Finally, leave some space for comments and a category of A, B or C. In the comments area put any other information that will be of value to the person who does the follow up. You have to assume it won't be you otherwise you will leave the comments blank because you say to yourself, "I'll remember."

Trust me, you won't remember. You will have so many people through; you can't possibly remember all of the detail. As the saying goes, the bluntest pencil remembers far more than the sharpest mind!

With the A, B and C categories, these are your assessment of where the visitor is in their readiness to purchase – A being the most likely to purchase, C the least likely and B somewhere in between. These are usually allocated on gut feel.

What the assessment does is allows you to prioritise your follow up effort. Essentially the A's are low hanging fruit. Go for them first to get some return on your investment and then follow through to the B's and C's.

Again, when you use a Trade Show or Expo for lead generation, you still want to use the show experience as content for your newsletter, blog, PR and advertising. It will continue building the reputation of your business to your target market.



## Bonus Tip

### ***11 - What are common Trade Show and Expo problems?***

The main issues that cause grief at Trade Shows and Expos are to do with logistics - getting the right stuff in the right place at the right time.

Bump In or Set Up can be very chaotic. Every exhibitor trying to get their goods into their stand, arrange any storage they need, set up their booths and get off the Expo floor as quick as they can. Make it easy on yourself.

Allow a lot more time than you think it will take. Murphy's Law says that anything that can go wrong will go wrong. Allow time for it. With that extra time you can chase up missing deliveries or deal with any issue that you may have.

Rehearse your booth. When I was exhibiting I would set up the booth equivalent in my kitchen to be sure I had all that I needed. It meant that I could do running around getting Velcro dots, thumb tacks, posters and other requirements before the Expo and not on the set up day!

Leave anything that could be a distraction at home. There are some serious Occupational Health and Safety issues during the setup of an Expo. It is not the place to take any kids, pets or bored spouses. Leave them at home or at someone else's home as you will have more than enough to deal with. The same can be said for Bump Out or booth close down.

When it comes to booth set up, keep it light! When you have a booth at a show, less is more – particularly if you have to travel to get there. I used to exhibit internationally. I made sure that my exhibit would fit into one suitcase and one banner bag. It meant that I was not reliant on couriers, transit teams or storage people to handle my booth. I was selling services and an expensive product so I did not have much stock.

Your booth maybe more significant or you may need significant amount of product to sell. You can keep your damage at a minimum by packing well. Most of the newer display booths have great systems to store the displays in. Stock also needs to be well packed. Damage stock or display material is painful. You want to do all you can to minimise it.

The other thing you want to minimise is misplaced or misdirected stock or display equipment. Clear and large labelling is essential. I am a firm believer that there is no such thing as too big a label. That's why Qantas writes its name on the side of all of its planes, so they don't get lost!! Maybe not, but spending time chasing misplaced materials is so frustrating. Do what you can to avoid it.

Most of the problems you can have at an Expo can be avoided with clear communication. Keeping in touch with your team, your suppliers and the Expo team will minimise your issues. Allowing sufficient time for what you need to do as well as having some time put aside for contingencies will also minimise your pain.



## Conclusion

Trade Shows and Expos are still a very effective way to market your product and service, particularly in the current economy. It is simply a matter of a planned approach to maximise your Return on Investment.

The simple tips stated in this book will help you make the most of your next Trade Show or Expo. While they are simple, they are too often not done well. This is great news for you and your organisation because if you follow these tips you will now be ahead of any competition you have in this marketplace. I am astounded at the companies who continue to waste money and resources at Trade Shows and Expos. Not just small companies who are working at mastering their booth but big, established brands who should know better.

I trust that what you have learnt by reading this book and applying it will contribute to your success. Remember, reading is not enough. You need to act on this knowledge to get the reward.

If I can help, please contact me and I will do what I can. Good luck and have fun as you Get More from your next Trade Show or Expo.



Warwick Merry  
The Get More Guy

