

## MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TRADE SHOW EXPERIENCE

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**INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

The Planning Stage	1
Pre-Show Marketing	2
Casting A Perfect Attendee Lure	3
Your On-Site Presence	3-5
VIP Invitations	4
Post Show and Lead Retrieval	5
They're Only Young	6-7
Exhibitor's Website Exhibitor Services Kit/ Freeman On-Line	8
Contacts	8

Trade shows are the ideal vehicle for building awareness of your products, seeing established customers, finding new ones, and making sales. To ensure you get the best possible return on your investment, I have put together this guide full of tips and suggestions for making the most of the show.

TGCA & TPCA have been working diligently over the last year to bring to you the best possible Expo.

We are at your disposal to guide you every step of the way - before, during and after the show. You have our commitment that we will continue to give you and our attendees our fullest effort all the way through show time!

As member of an association for the Exposition and Events for over 20 years, I regularly attend workshops and seminars designed to help tradeshow managers and exhibitors make the most of their show.

In this guide, I offer to you some of the knowledge I have found to be most helpful.

A properly executed Pre-Show Marketing Campaign can be your biggest tool for success!

*Dana Fuller, CEM, TGCA*

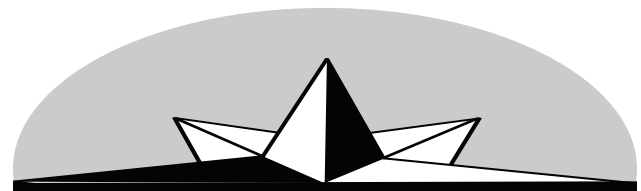
## I. The Planning Stage

Part one of exhibiting is determining what you want to get out of the show.

**Establish your Mission** — Is your goal to build awareness, make sales, or both? Do you want to introduce new products? Keep in mind that determining your mission will influence your exhibit strategy.

**Determine Benchmarks** — Is your success measured by the number of leads, number of sales, number of new contacts, or all of the above?

**Set Goals** — What are your sales and marketing goals for the show? Exhibitors who carefully plan for their



**IT'S A FACT:** Exhibitors who carefully plan for their participation in a show and set quantifiable sales-related objectives—such as number of leads, at-show sales, and post-show sales, are more successful than those who don't.

**Source:** Center for Exhibition Industry Research, *The Power of Exhibitions II: Maximizing the Role of Exhibitions in the Total Marketing Mix*

## II. Pre-Show Marketing

Part two of exhibiting is promoting your company's participation in the show.

**Identify Customer Contacts** – Determine who you want to visit your booth and take advantage of our VIP Expo Passes to reach your best customers and top prospects.

### PLAN PRE-SHOW DIRECT MARKETING

**Send out Promotional Pieces** — (via mail, fax, and/or e-mail) before the show with your booth number, product information, and show specials. Place the \*Expo Stickers with your booth number on your regular mailings and daily invoices. Don't forget to write in your Booth # on the space provided.

\***Expo Stickers** — a template is available on the "Current Exhibitor Site" site via the Expo website:

[www.txfoodandfuelexpo.com/html/exmarket.html#stickers](http://www.txfoodandfuelexpo.com/html/exmarket.html#stickers)

4-color Expo Stickers to use for your letters, invoices, envelopes, and advertisement to inform attendees of your participation and booth #. Just print as many sheets/individual stickers needed from a color printer on Avery #6879 Color Printer Labels. **Order Avery Labels at:** [www.avery.com](http://www.avery.com).

Put the Expo Logo or Expo Banner with a link to our website on your company's homepage. Visitors to your site will know your company is exhibiting and have easy access to show information. You can download our Expo Logo at the website listed above for Expo Stickers. The site provides you with step-by-step directions.



**IT'S A FACT:** Frequency will help fill your booth. Don't assume that one pre-show promotion or mailing will be effective. With each contact, the perception of importance increases and a response is more likely. ***A second promotion will usually increase the response rate by 50% and a third promotion will draw an additional 25% response.***

**Source:** Center for Exhibition Industry Research, *Pre-Show Promotion Tips that Increase Exhibiting Results*

To link to our Expo's Website, follow the simple instructions below:

- 1) Once you have downloaded the Expo Logo, have your Webmaster paste and link the URL address to the Expo Logo into a prominent location on your site.
- 2) The logo can be linked by using this URL address:

<http://www.txfoodandfuelexpo.com/index.html>

**Send VIP Invitations & Expo Passes to your Best Customers & Top Prospects** — They will appreciate receiving a VIP letter and Expo Pass, which will give them entry to the show and all educational sessions, which include:

- (2) **Outstanding Educational Sessions:**
  - ~ Monday: "Social Media at a Glance"
  - ~ Tuesday: "Reaching Beyond Excellence"

*See sample invitation letter on Page 4.*

**Expo Passes** — Complimentary passes are enclosed. Distribute these passes to your **Retailers and Petroleum Marketer customers and potential clients**. What better way to provide a product demo or sample than to invite them to the Expo at which you will be exhibiting! For add'l passes at no charge, and while supplies last, simply contact Dana Fuller at 800/856-8342 ([dana@txgca.org](mailto:dana@txgca.org)).

**Set Up Meetings** — Plan meetings and dinners with your best customers and prospects well in advance of the show as their time will be booked up early!

**Hospitality Suites** — Make your customers feel welcome. Hosting a Hospitality Suite is an excellent way to show your customers and potential customers your interest. You can cement relationships begun on the trade show floor and make an important personal connection that can lead to business success. The evening of **Tuesday, July 27**, will be left open for attendees, giving vendors companies the perfect opportunity to fill the gap. To reserve your Hospitality Suite, contact Annette Hicks, TPCA, 800/460-8662 ([ahicks@tpca.org](mailto:ahicks@tpca.org)).

# Casting A Perfect Attendee Lure

## *Focused Pre-Show Promotions Can Boost Booth Traffic*

Pre-show promotions can be a boost for exhibitors. In fact, according to a study by the Center for Exhibition Industry Research, an effective pre-show promotion can increase booth traffic by as much as 35%.

With a little preparation, they can give an added dimension and visibility to exhibitors' efforts. Without them, exhibitors would have to rely largely on word of mouth or hope that attendees somehow find their way through a tangled show floor to their booths. But there is a provision: Pre-show promotions would be used judiciously and with discrimination. It's easy to go overboard and waste time, money and effort promoting to attendees who will never be your customers.

The first thing for exhibitors to do when planning and creating a pre-show promotion is to define the target audience, and tailor the promotion to reach that audience. When brainstorming the promotional effort, it's essential to understand what appeals to and motivates this target audience.

There are many ways to entice an audience, but it's important to keep the message of the promotion consistent with the company's image. If the promotion is tacky, it reflects badly on the exhibitor. Such obvious promotions as sending a piece of a puzzle before the show to redeem at the booth for a prize, or sending a key beforehand that will unlock a door or safe in the booth and earn the attendee a fight can be very effective, but should be used indiscriminately. Only send such items to qualified prospects – people who might really do business with you and be sure any giveaways are branded with the company's logo and/or message.

Many exhibitors use pre-show postcards as promotions, often because they're cheap and easy. But, a postcard is merely a notification, unless it's part of a wider promotion that involves creativity and motivates attendees to come to the exhibit. No matter what, don't use overkill – only promote your exhibit to your target audience.

## III. Your On-Site Presence

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Part three of exhibiting is your on-site presence. To make your company stand out from the crowd, plan an integrated marketing program consisting of your exhibit display, show program advertising and sponsorships.

**Decide on Branding Opportunities and Sponsorships** — You are competing for visitors' attention. Sponsor events or services to make a lasting impression on buyers. A variety of promotional activities and Sponsorship Packages are available in all price ranges to meet your goals and match your budget.

Speak to your sales rep or go to the Expo's website, under "Sponsoring/Branding", which outlines five different sponsorship levels **Diamond, Emerald, Platinum, Gold, and Silver**, as well as some Elite Sponsorship categories:

**Hotel Room Key Cards, Conference Bags  
Inspirational Breakfast, Educational  
Sessions, Validation Stations, Aisle Signs**

Sponsorships, contact Annette Hicks, TPCA, 800/460-8662 ([ahicks@tpca.org](mailto:ahicks@tpca.org)).

**Sponsor a coffee break** — Talk to show management into allowing you to sponsor a coffee break. Put a very colorful sign nearby with a map to your booth and a prize or discount offer for attendees who find you.

**Follow your nose** — The sense of smell is powerful enough to lead attendees to something that just might be good to eat, like popcorn, fresh baked cookies, or beverages, like sodas/beer.

**Give them what they want** — Some serious brainstorming and come up with a novel, a really novel promotional items that will allow people to wear or carry your logo to the masses. The right item will cause people to ask where they can get one for themselves.

**Network like a madman** — Take advantage of every networking event. Pass out business cards with your booth # - maps too if your booth is hard to find. Buy drinks, dinner, and pass out promo items to everyone you meet or see.

## VIP Invitations

VIP Invitations are a great way to make your best customers feel important. Mail a VIP Invitation along with an Expo Pass, and a letter similar to the one below to your customers and hottest prospects.

John Doe  
Joe Doe Company  
1234 Sunshine Rd.  
Austin, TX 78731

June 7, 2010

Mr. John Hancock  
Hancock Supermarkets  
Dallas, TX

Dear Mr. Hancock:

We will be exhibiting at the **Texas Food & Fuel Expo, July 26 & 27, 2010**, at the at the Gaylord Texas Resort in Grapevine, Texas, **Booth #100**. As one of our top customers, we would like to invite you to attend as our guest.

The Expo is the place to see the newest and most exciting products for the Grocery, Convenience Store, and Petroleum Marketing industries. The Expo is the perfect opportunity to network with industry professional, attend free conference sessions, sample food and beverage products, and compare and buy products with on-site shows specials and discounts.

As a value customer of Joe Doe Company, we want to make sure you have the opportunity to visit the Texas Food & Fuel Expo for **FREE!** I am pleased to offer you the enclosed Expo Pass. Not only do these passes provide you with free admission to the show, but also they enable you to attend two inspiring and informative Educational Sessions.

We are looking forward to seeing you at the **Texas Food & Fuel Expo**. Please stop by our **Booth #100** and sample our **new juice line** we are premiering this year's Expo.

Best regards,

Joe Doe  
President

## On-Site Presence continued...

### Design a Visitor-Friendly Booth:

- ⊕ Make sure your booth tells people what your company is all about.
- ⊕ Don't miss out on interested buyers because they can't tell what you sell!
- ⊕ Provide samples if you market foods or beverages.
- ⊕ Encourage attendees to enter your booth.
- ⊕ Don't block your booth with tables or banners.

### Prepare your Booth Staff:

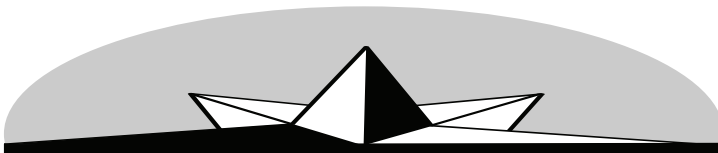
- ⊕ Make sure your booth staff is prepared and knowledgeable.
- ⊕ Educate booth staff on the types of buyers they'll see and the consumers they serve.
- ⊕ Share any research on your product's appeal.
- ⊕ Have an ample supply of company literature and business cards.

### Trade Show Do's:

- ⊕ Remain standing and be ready to greet visitors.
- ⊕ Wear comfortable/appropriate attire.
- ⊕ Wear comfortable shoes, you might want to bring an extra pair along.
- ⊕ Take regular breaks – do not leave your booth unattended.

### Trade Show Don'ts:

- ⊕ Eat or drink in your booth.
- ⊕ Talk on the phone in your booth.
- ⊕ Leave your booth unattended.



**IT'S A FACT:** The quality of information you collect and the efficiency of your follow-up will affect your show results. By capturing information on a customized lead form, your follow-up will be more precise and germane, generating good will between you and a future customer.

**Source:** The Center for Exhibition Industry Research, *The End of the Show*

### Get Your Return On Your Investment By Increasing Exposure & Traffic In Your Booth and Closing Sales On-Site:

Take advantage of the **Hot Buys & New Products/Services Guide** by announcing a Show Special and/or New Products/Services. It's a **FREE** service to all Exhibitors.

#### The Guide has two sections:

**Hot Buys:** Allows you to advertise a service or product show special/discount, which attendees can order only at show site. This portion of the guide will feature your company name, booth number, and a description of your "Hot Buys".

**New Products/Services:** Allows you to advertise newly launched products. This section of the guide will feature your company's name, booth number, and a description of your New Product/Service and when it was launched.

#### New Product Eligibility ~ Product Entries must be "truly" new:

- Products that have been introduced to the market place since the 2009 Texas Food & Fuel Expo or products to be launched at the 2010 Texas Food & Fuel Expo.
- A completely new product or product line offered by the participating company. A product with a significant modification to the original offering. For example, the addition/deletion of an ingredient (a new flavor of an existing product; a "sugar-free" version of an existing product), or a significant modification to equipment functionality.

#### Enter by the **June 7** and your special/discount and/or new product will be listed:

- "Hot Buys & New Products/Services" guide distributed on-site.
- Show Management will send out a broadcast fax to preregistered attendees listing the specials/discounts and new products.
- You will receive recognition and listing on Texas Food & Fuel Expos website – [www.txfoodandfuelexpo.com](http://www.txfoodandfuelexpo.com).
- Plus, a table-top easel display sign to post in your booth.

***If you are interested in participating, complete the enclosed Enrollment Form.***

## IV. Post Show

Part four of exhibiting is post-show follow-up.

**Follow-Up** - Don't allow leads to get cold. Follow-up in a timely and thorough fashion. Over 50% of trade show leads are not followed up.



We encourage you to take advantage of the **Lead Retrieval System by American Tradeshow Services** so you can obtain real-time leads during the Expo. Lead Retrieval units allow you to gather information about potential prospects on the show floor in a much more efficient manner – through bar-coded name badges. Collecting business cards and handwriting notes about prospective customers? Not any more. Our lead retrieval systems collect the information for you, allowing you to focus your time on the potential client. Capture and store contact information in **real-time**, type notes and qualify lead's needs and interests in seconds. **Discounts will be available to exhibitors who order early (ends July 12, 2010)**, so get your order in ASAP.



*~ Lead Retrieval Form available on Expo's Website under "Current Exhibitor Site"*

### They're Only Young Once

They get stuffed into pockets, tossed into briefcases, and packed into exhibitor cases. **Why, oh why**, are so many trade show leads left abandoned, growing old and valueless when in fact they **could have been** turned into **sales**?

Some estimates put the number of show leads that never get followed-up at as high as 50%. Why, you might ask, would someone spend the money and time on exhibiting only to leave the leads unworked! Distraction might be on answer.

*Trade Show leads are hot. But every day, the leads cool down a degree or two.*

#### **Don't Leave Home Without It**

The key to post-show success is to do most of the work before the show. Before you leave, as part of your pre-show planning, decide what you'll send as follow-up information. What literature do you plan to send? Do you have enough on hand? Who will send it out, and how?

#### **The Lead Form Will Lead You**

If you fill out your lead form completely, you'll have the information for your follow-up. By including one sentence that refers back to something you talked about at the trade show, the prospect won't care that they are getting everything in a form letter.

This planning is simple, easy, and will save you tremendous amount of time after the show.

Plus, it feels great to leave for the show knowing you've already made your follow-up plan.

#### **Too Slow or Too Fast**

For those who do follow-up, there seems to be two prevailing schools of thought about when to send literature.

#### **The Infinity School of Follow-Up**

This one has no time limit. You can follow-up any time between now and infinity.

#### **Won't They Be Impressed School of Thought**

Under this system you send your leads at the end of each day and back to the office, where they are turned into information kits with form letters, and sent out to the prospect via overnight express.

Only on the surface this seems like a great idea, but it overlooks one point. After you've been out of the office for several days, two things are guaranteed to be waiting on your desk; a two foot stack of mail and hundreds and hundreds of emails.

The average person just doesn't want to deal with these piles any longer than absolutely necessary. Your buyer will buzz through these stacks ruthlessly culling and tossing just to remove the clutter. They'll spend mere seconds on each piece of mail.

## Continued...They're Only Young Once

Frankly, I don't want my expensive follow-up package to be in that pile. That's why I developed what I call the Forty-Eight-Hour-Rule of Trade Show Sales Lead Follow-Up.

**The Forty-Eight-Hour Rule of Follow-Up** is simple by design and, an effective way of reaching the prospect in a timely fashion. The goal of the rule for the follow-up package to arrive no earlier than two working days after the show ends, and no later than forty-eight-hours after that. Think of it as a forty-eight-hour "window." Why?

- **Visibility.** You don't land in the big pile of mail. When your materials arrives, the clutter "while you were gone" pile has been cleared.
- **Memory.** The show is still fresh in the prospect's mind. If you develop a good rapport with them they'll remember you and your product line.
- **Creditability.** You told the prospect you'll be sending the information out right away, and now you've done it. You anchored in the prospects mind just how professional and dependable you are, and established that you can deliver as promised.

### Follow Through on Follow-Ups

Five working days after the show closes, your packet of information should be in the hands of the prospect. Call and ask if they received the information requested. Be sure and emphasize that you promised to send it to them.

Politely ask if they had a chance to look at it. If they have, then ask to set up a phone appointment later to discuss how you might work together.

The request for a phone appointment is very important. Don't assume that just because you've gotten them on the line, they have time to talk to you now.

Be considerate and offer to speak with them at their convenience. The appointment also underscores that what you'll be talking about is important.

If they haven't looked it over yet, then confidently say that you'll follow-up in a week to answer any questions they have. This will put the onus on them to look through the package. Again, set the phone appointment, to give it immediacy.

### The 5/10/20/40 Follow-Up

You start the 5/10/20/40/ Follow-Up System with your call to the prospect five days after the show. You continue at ten, twenty, and forty days after the show. With calls at regular intervals you have a plan for real sales progress.

Of course, if you close the deal on the second call, then you're better than most. But good salespeople know it takes time. If they are going to buy, it'll be from the one who stays in the game long enough to win.

### Get Leads on New Leads

One more objective is to get the name of another possible contact from the prospect. After meeting a prospect and following-up regularly, you usually build a good rapport with them. You can ask them to give you referrals, whether or not you do business together. In fact, sometime the ones that you don't work with feel a sense of obligation to help because of your relationship.

Remember, selling happens before, during, and after the show. With a timely and effective follow-up, you can take what used to be a two or a three day event and turn it into a campaign that brings returns for a long time to come.

*Source: Steve Miller,  
Exhibiting Marketing Magazine*

## Who Do You Know

Want to double your lead count with almost no extra effort? After each booth presentation, ask your prospects: "Who else do you know who could also use this product?" Now you've turned one lead into two! You'll get new contacts, and you'll be able, in most cases, to introduce yourself as being referred by someone they know.

## What Do You Mean By That

Take written notes of your conversations with a prospect in the booth. It will help you later to recall important details, specifications, and concerns your buyer has. It also signifies to your prospect that you are listening and paying attention to their concerns. Best of all, noting your customer's specific vocabulary allows you to use their terms in future conversations and show them that you "speak their language."

## EXHIBITOR'S WEBSITE & FREEMAN'S ON-LINE SERVICES KIT

[www.txfoodandfuelexpo.com/  
html/10exhibitorsite.html](http://www.txfoodandfuelexpo.com/html/10exhibitorsite.html)

This site is exclusively for the 2010 Texas Food & Fuel Exhibitors only. You will find all of the information you need to have a successful exhibit.

A lot of this information will be included with your On-Line Exhibitor Services Kit produced by FREEMAN, but you will find direct links and any necessary forms (PDF versions) your exhibit may require, including electrical, on-line, shipping details, etc.

**Please be sure to check it out!**



## SHOW MANAGEMENT CONTACTS

**Dana Fuller, CEM**

**Texas Grocery & Convenience Association**

**800/856-8342 | 512/342-9131 (fax) | [dana@txgca.org](mailto:dana@txgca.org)**

**Annette Hicks, CMP**

**Texas Petroleum Marketers & Convenience Store Association**

**800/460-8662 | 512/477-4239 (fax) | [ahicks@tpca.org](mailto:ahicks@tpca.org)**