

Task Guide

Creating a Trade Show Marketing Strategy

Responsible: Marketing or Sales

Project Description:

You have been tasked to create a marketing strategic plan for the next trade show. Follow the guidelines to develop your company marketing strategy.

Guidelines:

Companies attend trade shows to generate leads, learn what is happening in their industries, gain brand recognition, and sell products. Without a strong trade show marketing strategy, however, the success of these efforts is not guaranteed. So how can companies improve their trade show marketing strategies to ensure success? Here are some of the best practices you should consider when developing your winning strategy.

Task:

As a team, (not just one person you assigned to this task), go through each heading and discuss the topic and develop a plan on how you will infuse each area in to your strategy. Write your company marketing strategy using the seven topic heading below and write your strategy for each heading topic. When finished share your strategy with your leadership team and turn the finish plan into your teacher

1. Decide on your why. (Watch “Start with Why” found in the Video Library on the teachers website)

Marketing guru Simon Sinek says that the biggest question that every company needs to answer in order to be successful is: Why are we doing what we’re doing? According to Sinek, your “Why?” is all about your purpose, and purpose determines everything else. The answer to your company’s “why?” should drive every other decision you make. Sinek’s model for decision-making recommends that companies start with asking why they do what they do, answer questions about how they will do it, and then determine what it is that they will do. Working outwards, start with the general purpose of your actions or decisions, and then work towards the specifics that will help you achieve those goals.

WHY do we attend trade shows? HOW do we do the WHY? and WHAT is our plan?

2. Set Your Trade Show Marketing Goals

Your marketing campaigns should help your business achieve specific goals. Trade shows are no different. Trade shows present an opportunity to generate quality leads, spread brand awareness, and meet other objectives. The goals of trade show marketing can include:

- An Increase in New Leads and Sales
- An Increase in Organic and Direct Traffic
- An Increase in Social Media Following
- An Increase in E-mail and/or Blog Subscribers

3. Establish a clear call to action.

In order to track your success, you need a clear call to action and a metric that will help you determine whether your efforts are successful. These tactics are often focused on lead generation, and they can be easily tracked. Your CTA should have a lasting impact. When people attend trade shows, they can get caught up in the moment and seem excited about your company. However, when they leave, that excitement may falter. If your CTA brings them back to your company’s website after the trade show, you are more likely to convert them from trade show attendee into a lead, and then into a customer.

Here are a few examples:

- **Set up a landing page on your website that you will promote in your booth.**
- **Encourage people to visit and download information.**
- **Run a contest in the booth, and encourage attendees to enter to win.**
- **Create a hashtag for use on social media and encourage people to use it.**

That's why your CTAs should be everywhere. They should be on your signs, handouts, and giveaways. They should be mentioned in conversations when people visit your booth. Everything you say and do at a trade show should get tied into your CTA. Before you continue with planning your trade show marketing, you need to be fully aware of what your CTA is and what it's prompting visitors to do. Knowing this will bring your whole campaign together.

4. Be Unique

Everyone has a cookie-cutter booth. You put your logo in a few pre-assigned areas, place your handouts in the stand, and display images of your product or service on your LCD TV. If you look at the booth next to yours, you see the same thing. The only difference may be that your neighbor is handing out branded magnets, and you are handing out branded pens. The key to making your trade show marketing successful is to do something that makes your business stand out.

Start with the booth. Do you need to have the typical booth structure? Or can you create something that stands out? Maybe you can have a lounge or activity area that completely ignores the normal booth structure but achieves the same goals you have set for your trade show marketing. It may cost extra to have something "different," but the price is worth it if it attracts passersby. You can then create a more memorable experience and lasting impression so people are talking about you way after the trade show is over.

Next, think wardrobe. The majority of people at trade shows will be in business suits. Integrate your wardrobe with your messaging. Anyone walking by the booth area may ask you why you are dressed differently: that's just another excuse to talk about your theme and message!

5. Limit giveaways.

Limit giveaways to those who give you their contact information. In other words, try to avoid giving marketing collateral to unqualified leads. More generally, it's important to quickly qualify any attendees coming into your booth, so you can spend your time wisely.

6. Do a Post-Mortem.

At the end of the show, go over the show results with the entire team. What worked well, what didn't, and what should be done differently next time? Will you attend again in the future? Document this information, and use it when creating your trade show strategies for next year.

7. Follow up promptly.

Strike while the iron is hot. The sooner you are able to follow up with leads after a show, the better. This ensures that they still remember you, and are likely to respond more favorably to your follow-up offer. Many companies do this by uploading customer lists to the home office at the end of each day and sending a follow up e-mail to thank visitors for stopping by. If same-day follow up isn't possible, then be sure to follow up within 5 days.