



## **HIGH-IMPACT PRE-EXHIBITION MARKETING:**

### **How to Identify and Attract Enough of the Right Visitors to Your Exhibit**

*By Jefferson Davis, Competitive Edge*

Successful exhibitors know that competition for the visitor's limited time on the exhibition floor is fierce. To get their fair share of stand traffic they do not just rent space, show up and hope people find them. They use targeted pre-exhibition marketing to get "in the mind" and "on the agenda" of the right visitors before the show opens.

Consider these exhibition industry facts:

1. The average exhibition visitor will visit approximately 26 stands.
2. 76% of visitors arrive with an agenda of stands they plan to visit.
3. As many as 3 out of 4 stand visits are pre-planned.
4. Less than 20% of exhibitors utilize targeted pre-exhibition marketing campaigns.

So how do you get on the visitors' "must see" list? It's easier than you think. Below are four steps to help you fill your stand with qualified, interested buyers.

#### **Step 1. Invest 15% or more of your total exhibition budget toward pre-exhibition marketing.**

The average exhibitor allocates just 6% of their exhibition budget toward pre-exhibition marketing. Don't do what the average is doing, as most aren't getting good results. Of all the things you will spend money on, pre-exhibition marketing is one of the most important. Do not skimp in this critical area! It's often the difference between a busy stand and standing around watching buyers pass by in the aisles.

#### **Step 2. Identify who you want to visit your stand and build target visitor lists.**

Start in-house with your sales team and your distribution channels. Build a list of customers and current prospects you would like to visit your stand. Include anyone who has inquired about your products or services over the last 12 months. Ask yourself, "What types of companies and what job functions/titles do we want to visit our stand?"

#### **Step 3. Give visitors a compelling reason to visit your stand.**

Don't just concentrate on selling products and services – focus on educating, solving problems, creating opportunities, and delivering meaningful value from a visit to your stand. Analyze your company, products and services carefully. What is your value proposition? What do you want to teach visitors? What problems do you solve? What opportunities do you create? What do you do better than your competition?

Use powerful visual images and captivate buyers' interest with strong benefit and ROI focused headlines like: "Learn how to avoid the biggest problem impacting your business". Everyone is interested in learning, solving problems, reducing costs, improving results and getting more value. Tell them specifically how you can help and they will come running to your stand.

**Step 4. Use a combination of media to execute an integrated pre-exhibition marketing campaign.**

An effective pre-exhibition marketing campaign integrates multiple media to touch prospective visitors at least three times before the exhibition opens. Start with mass media like print advertising and publicity in industry journals. Try trade publications and exhibition specific publications such as the official show directory. Then, add one-to-one media like mailing personal letters of invitation, postcards and formal invitations. Be sure to include an exhibition pass or discount code, when available. Put the finishing touch on your program with social media and more personal media including email and personal phone calls. To increase response, offer a reward for responding. This may include entry into a contest or better yet, invite them to your stand to pick-up a free educational gift.

With a little creative thought, some basic planning, and focused execution, you can have a stand full of interested and qualified buyers. All it takes is targeted pre-exhibition marketing.

**Jefferson Davis** is President of Competitive Edge and a leading tradeshow productivity expert. Since 1991, his consulting and training services have helped clients improve their tradeshow performance and results. Mr. Davis can be reached at +1.704.814.7355 or [Jefferson@tradeshowturnaround.com](mailto:Jefferson@tradeshowturnaround.com)