



Staffing For Exhibiting Success: Your People Make the Difference!

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Whether your exhibition program ends up as an investment providing a solid return or simply an expense, it will come down to the people working in your exhibit. When you strip away all the lights, sounds, products, and display architecture from the exhibit floor, you end up with an industry specific marketplace where people meet face-to-face to talk and do business. And only your booth personnel can talk and do business.

Effectively working an exhibition requires a person to recognize how the dynamics of the environment are different, and to adapt their behaviors and communication skills to the realities of the environment. Here are eight attributes of a highly-effective team member:

1. **Positive attitude:** Has a positive outlook on business and life in general. Likes working exhibitions.
2. **Extrovert:** Not afraid to walk up to a stranger, say hello and introduce themselves.
3. **Energy:** Can stand on their feet and effectively engage and interact with people for several hours per day over several days.
4. **Knowledgeable:** Knows your company, your products, the market, and the competition.
5. **Good questioner:** Asks good questions before talking about your products or services.
6. **Great listener:** Listens with their eyes and their ears. Hears not just the words, but the meaning and the intent behind the words.
7. **Concise communicator:** Can deliver your company story and your product/service points in a concise, persuasive, and interactive manner.
8. **Closing mentality:** Understands that the outcome of a qualified in-booth interaction is to get the visitor to commit to a next action step.

You should rate each of your team members on these eight attributes. If they are deficient in three or more areas, you should provide some form of team training to bridge the gap. As an alternative, you might consider renting temporary staff to help out.

Once you have the right people for your exhibit, you must prepare them for the exhibition. Here are seven keys to effectively preparing your staff for success:

1. **Put the right number of people in the exhibit:** Two to three people per 9m² stand is about the maximum. Any more and your stand will be too crowded - leaving little or no room for the most important people you want in your stand – the visitors.
2. **Have a good mix of team members:** If possible, have a mix of sales, technical, customer services, and management. Visitors often want to talk with different job functions in your company.

3. **Prepare a stand duty schedule:** Assign each person a 3-4 hour shift on specific exhibition days and be sure to enforce the schedule.
4. **Always conduct a pre-exhibition team meeting:** Have your team get together the day prior to the exhibition to review roles and goals, company and product messages, lead and sales capture process, stand duty schedule, and always be sure to do a walk-through of the stand.
5. **Set interaction, lead and/or sales goals:** Ask your team to focus on and be accountable for at least four visitor interactions per hour, and one qualified lead or sales order per hour.
6. **Reward staff performance:** To create excitement and build a sense of team spirit, consider creating team and individual contests for achieving goals. The rewards don't have to be expensive.
7. **Seek feedback from your team:** At the end of the exhibition, give your team a short survey to fill out. Ask them what they liked and didn't like about the exhibition and your stand. Ask them what they think you could do to create a more effective exhibition experience for the next edition.

By putting the best people in your stand and properly preparing them for success, you have laid a solid foundation that will make a dramatic difference in your exhibiting results.

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