

## Exhibiting At a Trade Show? What You Need to Know

By Roy G. Miller, RGM Communications



A trade show can be a goldmine or a ghost house. If you're planning to exhibit at a show and make a good showing, make the most of it by planning, thinking, creating and "working it" aggressively. A great trade show means you "work it" hard--before, during and after the event.

### **5 "Gotta Knows" Before You Exhibit**

1. **Research.** Before you commit to a show, know its history of success (attendance).
2. **Relevance.** Make sure the show is marketing to the right audience--your prospects and customers.
3. **Expense.** Know you'll be spending bucks. Exhibiting isn't cheap. You'll be charged for everything, from wattage and wastebaskets to carpet, foam pads, trash cans, drayage. And more.
4. **Engage.** Decide and commit, then map out your plan, personnel, strategy, theme and approach. If you don't have time, [bring in an expert](#) to help.
5. **Pad Up.** Beware of no-pad zones in your booth. Don't cheap out on carpeting and foam padding. Do both. Without them, your feet and legs will hurt for days and weeks. This decision determines whether your show team will love you. Or not.

## Get Ready To Exhibit

- **Show Attendees.** Whether attendees are clients or walk-bys, make sure you do your pre-show invitations to both, have a master schedule for at-booth briefings, and are prepared to showcase your company, cause, products and services. This means you may have give-aways and leave-behinds, from business cards and marketing hand-outs to logo'd toys, USB drives, word magnets and more. These often fit a theme or message, and are most effective when part of a strategic show plan.
- **Your Show Team.** Make sure you have defined roles for your booth personnel. Lay down the law among your team to minimize in-booth socializing, chatter and idle activities. The most important aspect of your show? Make sure you're being active listeners who are friendly, genuine and relational with guests.
- **Lead Generation.** Capture leads and guests who visit your booth. Make sure you have a process for capturing information, remembering "who's who" and quickly following up after the show. Remember, cost per hour is huge at a show. Build your team, build your presence. And build your leads! [Need help with lead generation?](#) We have a great resource.
- **Your Booth.** Typically, booth sizes start at 10x10. If you expect more than two people in your booth at once, size it up to at least 10x20, and configure the booth with a table and a couple of chairs.
- **Location Matters Most.** When signing up for a show, make sure you're not stuck in a no-traffic zone near the loading dock. View the exhibit floor map, find where your competitors are, and seek locations that are high-traffic areas, such as near food vendors, bathrooms and the show entryway.
- **Layout Matters.** Create and manage a comprehensive booth list of everything you need at the booth-prior to the show. List everything, from chairs and booth lightbulbs to wastebaskets, extension cords, business cards, even a small first aid kit for "boo-boos."
- **Sex Up Your Signage.** Signage and graphics at your booth require sizzle, pizzazz, color and all the sex appeal you can muster. [Need a supplier? E-mail us.](#)

- **Master Your Message.** Deliver a message that is clear, concise and consistent. Make sure The Message resonates in everything, from your Elevator Speech to Signage to your marketing materials.
- **Brand It.** Make sure your company name and/or logo are prominent, front and center. Show your professionalism by showcasing your quality and philosophy. Have fun, provide interactive games and promotions-perhaps even gimmicks, but avoid the standard "booth babes" and other cheap tactics.
- **Enjoy the Experience.** Show your fun side, have fun, make it fun. Help your team have fun. Being real at your show will shine through to your team, customers and prospects.

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Roy G. Miller is president of RGM Communications, a public relations and marketing services firm in Wylie, Texas. For more information, visit [www.rgmcomms.com](http://www.rgmcomms.com), or send e-mail to [events@rgmcomms.com](mailto:events@rgmcomms.com).