



TRADE SHOW EXHIBITING TIPS

PROMOTIONS: Pre-show Campaigns

Mark Besh
Visual IMPACT!





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306 EAST 4TH STREET
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OVERVIEW

Helping Your Trade Show Program Succeed

These tips will suggest solutions for your trade show challenges, give you vital event marketing information, and increase your program's effectiveness and impact.

No matter how large or small your program is, our exhibiting wisdom will save you time and money.

In addition to this paper's focus, you may want to contact us for information about any one of the following categories we have expertise in:

- ▶ Budgeting
- ▶ Demonstrations
- ▶ Hospitality
- ▶ Installation and Dismantling
- ▶ International Considerations
- ▶ It's Show Time
- ▶ Lead Tracking
- ▶ Management and Reporting
- ▶ Photography and Graphics
- ▶ Planning
- ▶ Promotion
- ▶ Shipping
- ▶ Staffing
- ▶ Travel

THIS PAPER'S FOCUS: PROMOTION

Pre-Show Campaigns

SEVEN DEADLY SINS OF PRE-SHOW MAIL CAMPAIGNS

[Exhibitor Magazine Staff]

Face it: There's no end to the ways you can mess up a direct mail campaign. Most of us are familiar with the mistakes that lead to certain direct-mail death: don't ask for any action, mail the item too late, don't use benefits-oriented copy, or (heaven forbid!) don't send anything at all.

Pre-show direct mailers are a particularly demanding breed of the direct mail species. As such, there's even more room for error. Here are seven common pre-show direct mailer errors identified by Lorraine Denham, executive vice president, Unipro Marketing Services. Watch out for them in your planning.



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1. Wrongful assumptions. Don't assume that people know all about your company or its products. Keep your copy to one message, and keep that message simple. You can educate them on the other levels of your company and products once they are in the booth.
2. Mailer overboard. Giant type, multiple exclamation points, a dozen vibrant colors - ouch! Remember that pre-show mailers set the tone and spirit of your booth. You might discourage attendees from visiting your booth if your mailer is too loud.
3. Error of excess. Often, a pre-show mailer ends up looking like a product catalog, filled with specs and details. "You don't have to tell them how your product works," Denham says. "Just get them to see the benefit of coming to visit you."
4. It's the message, stupid. Sometimes, pre-show mail creators are so caught up in the "creative" side of things that they forget what they are supposed to accomplish. The goal is bring people to the booth, not convince them this is the cutest mailer in the history of exhibiting.
5. "We're the greatest." The pre-show mailer is not the place to laud your company's latest accomplishments. Instead, you need to tell attendees why they should visit your booth. Think about how your product/service benefits them, and let that drive the message.
6. Know the show limitations. If show management will be sending the mailer for you, be sure to check their guidelines up front. One company planned to ship its comic book style mailer in clear-coated plastic envelopes. They found out too late that show management's mail house couldn't process the materials.
7. Too many hoops. Some mailers simply ask for too much action. "Bring the mailer to the front desk, have it stamped, fill out a form, visit three product stations-" Make it easy for your recipient. Give them one simple step, such as interfacing with a sales representative or viewing a presentation, to redeem the mailer.

SEVEN TIPS FOR INCREASING EFFECTIVENESS OF PRE-SHOW MAILERS

[Robert Bly, Center of Technical Communication]

Done right, direct mail can be a powerful promotion that builds booth traffic, generates sales leads and creates awareness. Here are seven proven tips for improving your response with pre-show direct mail.

1. Don't underestimate the importance of the list. Even the most brilliant pre-show mailer will flop if sent to the wrong list. Often, the best source for names



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is your own internal database. Send your pre-show mailer to prospects and customers within a 100-mile radius of the exhibit hall, since most shows have a strong regional draw. Another source for names might be a list of people who have responded to ads for your products within the last six months but haven't made a purchase yet.

2. Make sure to include a call to action. Enclose a response card in your mailer. Instruct recipients to bring the card to your booth to receive a small gift. (Remember to print your booth number on the card in case they don't bring the whole mailer to the show.)

3. Get personal. The more personal the mailer, the greater response you'll receive. Always use an individual's name on the envelope and enclosed letter. Another technique is for salespeople to add a brief handwritten note at the bottom of the letter. This adds a personal touch to the communication.

4. Create a sense of urgency. A short "teaser" message on the outer envelope can prompt the recipient to open the mailer right away (for example, "Urgent: Open by Nov. 15"). If you're asking the recipient to RSVP, you may add a note at the close of the invitation that reads, "Hurry. Attendance is limited. Make your reservation today."

5. Give them a choice. Some of the people you invite to your booth will be unable to attend the show, but they still may have a genuine interest in your products. Offer to send them a brochure or a newsletter, or call them in person to tell them what they missed. One exhibitor even offered to send a videotape of his exhibit to no-shows. Always include a postage-paid business-reply postcard or envelope so recipients can respond to your offer.

6. Emphasize exclusivity. If you're introducing a new product or service at the show, play this up in your mailing. Highlight the importance of the new offering and the fact that the reader is having the exclusive opportunity to see it first.

7. Include a VIP pass. It's a good idea to include an official show pass or registration form in your mailer. Having a show pass gives the prospect the comfort of knowing that he has the necessary paperwork to get into the exhibit hall. Print your company name and booth number on the show pass, so the recipient will know which booth to visit and thank for the "perk."

SEVEN WAYS TO SLASH PRE-SHOW MAILER COSTS

[Kim Nyland, nyland graFX]

Pre-show mailers can be a good way to draw attention to your exhibit. But they can also be a budget buster to produce. Here are seven ways to keep mailer production costs down.



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1. Mind the size limits. Keep the entire, unfolded mailer within an 11-by-17-inch format. That's the largest of the standard film sizes that can be processed by most film houses. It is also the largest size of film that can be printed on a small press. If you go larger, you will pay more for both creating the film and printing the mailer.

2. Go two-color. Two-color mailers usually feature one color, such as red, along with black for the text. It's 25 percent cheaper than four-color because it uses two pieces of film (instead of four) and requires only a two-color press. Of course, you'll probably lose some impact by going two-color instead of four-color. But you can jazz things up a bit by shading the colors and using duotones. Ask your graphic designer for ideas.

3. Go four-color on the cheap. Some people try to save money by using two-color printing on the mailer's interior and four-color printing on the exterior. But if you're going to use any four-color graphics, you might be able to make the entire piece four-color without blowing the budget. Here's how. When you have the film made, place both the front and back pieces on the same piece of film. Then place marks where the printer can cut the mailer. You save money by using one piece of film and one printing press. (If you had both two-color and four-color graphics on your mailer, you would need to use two different presses to print the piece).

4. Use existing artwork. When an outside graphic designer creates a new image for you, it may cost around \$50 an hour and take 10 hours or more to create. If you provide the designer with existing artwork of, say, the company logo, it can be scanned in. Better yet, give them a digitized file with the artwork. It will save both time and money.

5. Purchase "photo disks." Photo disks contain about 400 "stock" images that can be used for your mailers. You purchase all usage rights for the images; the cost runs about \$250 for each disk. (Look for offers on such graphics disks in the back of magazines like Mac User and Mac World.) An alternative is to go to a stock photo house and purchase a picture - but that will run you about \$500 for one image.

6. Create one mailer for multiple shows. One company created a run of about 50,000 mailers for use at several upcoming shows. During the initial printing, a space was left open on the mailer where specific show information (show name/dates, booth number, booth map, etc.) could later be added for each event. The show information was printed in separate, one-color printing runs where only black was used for the text, making it a less-expensive venture.

Choose only one paper stock. If you're creating a multipage mailer or brochure, use the same paper stock for both the cover and interior pages. In most cases, using even one heavy paper stock will be cheaper than a combination of light and heavy stocks.



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STEPS TO POWERFUL MARKETING

[Lorraine Denham, Unipro Marketing Services]

Here are five rules to follow for integrated marketing campaigns:

1. Know your audience. Everything you do to market yourself on the show floor should be aimed at fulfilling the needs and wants of your customer. Clever doesn't necessarily sell. Next time you have a bright idea, ask yourself if your audience will care. If the answer is "probably not," go back to the drawing board.
2. Focus your message. Humans retain only 50 percent of what they hear, and 90 percent of that is forgotten in one minute or less. Keep it simple, consistent and relevant. Make one message your theme.
3. Set specific objectives. It's amazing how many projects are started without a clear set of objectives. You have to know what you want to achieve before you can begin to measure it. Make sure all staff members understand these goals.
4. Expand marketing resources. Integrated marketing means leveraging promotional equity you already have in-house and combining it with fresh marketing material. You don't have to recreate all your literature, advertising, videos, etc. for each show. Just make sure each piece supports your current message.
5. Create an experience. Smart companies are leveraging the power of interactivity to connect with customers in a more visceral way. Without interaction, an exhibitor doesn't really capitalize on the great opportunity trade shows present to learn from prospects and customers instead of just selling to them. Use presentations, promotions and multimedia to create an experience your audience won't forget. And don't you forget that when knowledgeable staffers are genuinely helpful, they make your exhibit memorable for customers, too.

TEN WAYS TO JUSTIFY SHOW PARTICIPATION

[Exhibitor Magazine Staff]

Why should my company participate in trade shows?

Regardless of company size, trade shows provide an excellent opportunity to collect qualified leads, make sales and build relationships. Trade shows can complement your other sales and marketing mediums. Choose and use them well, and you will realize many benefits. Consider these:

1. More bang for your buck. Trade shows are one of the most cost-effective ways for your company to reach qualified audiences. According to a study by Exhibit Surveys Inc., the average cost per visitor reached at a trade show is \$177, while the average cost of a field sales call is \$295. You do the math.



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2. Less work, more fulfilling. Trade show sales leads require less effort to close. Research by Exhibit Surveys indicates that only .8 calls are needed to close a qualified trade show lead, compared to 3.7 calls to close a typical business sale. Also, 54 percent of all orders placed as a result of a trade show lead require no personal follow-up visit, according to another study by the McGraw-Hill Research Foundation.

3. Fresh faces. A study by Exhibit Surveys shows only 12 percent of the average exhibitor's booth traffic have been called on by a salesperson from that company in the 12 months prior to the show; 88 percent are new prospects. Furthermore, trade shows bring you high-quality visitors. Eighty-two percent of an exhibit's visitors have buying influence for the exhibiting company's products or services, and 49 percent of an exhibit's visitors are planning to buy those products or services.

4. Competitive edge. Trade shows offer your company another opportunity to stand out from the crowd. You can outshine the competition with a well-trained booth staff, aggressive pre- and at-show promotion, eye-catching booth design, and conscientious follow-up after the show. Also, trade show attendees use the opportunity to "comparison shop." So this is your opening to point out where your product is superior - in performance, pricing, service, etc.

5. "Face time." You can reach more prospects in a three-day period than your sales force can in three months. Meeting prospects face to face is also the fastest way to build relationships.

6. Customer bonding. Customer service is a hot topic for many companies. Trade shows are an excellent place to reinforce existing customer relationships. Say "thanks" to key customers with hospitality suites, one-on-one dinners or special services, such as transportation to and from the convention center.

7. Hands-on learning. How much of your product line can your salespeople actually carry with them and demonstrate on the road? Probably not much. Trade shows are a great place for prospects to "test drive" your products.

8. Competitive analysis. The trade show floor provides an invaluable opportunity to study the competition. Where else can you find out so much information on a competitor's new product offerings, pricing and marketing strategies? Much can be learned by just watching and listening.

9. Media spotlight. Most shows (especially large events) attract lots of media attention. Use this to your advantage to gain media exposure. Be sure to invite key press contacts to visit your booth.

10. "Survey says-" Trade shows offer a great opportunity to conduct market research. If you're considering launching a new product or service, you can survey show attendees on pricing, distribution, features and benefits, and minimum quality requirements, among others.



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THREE LOW-COST EXHIBIT MARKETING IDEAS

[Robert Grede, Marketing Consultant]

We've all heard the bad news about what it costs to exhibit at shows. (Estimate: \$7,000 for a 10-foot portable!) The good news is that there are also many inexpensive ways for small companies to promote themselves at shows.

Here are three ideas:

1. Name awareness. Many people buy products simply because they're familiar with the name. To boost your name awareness at shows, repeat your name whenever and wherever you can. Add it to graphics, literature, bags, pre-show mailers, show daily advertising, hotel door drops.
2. Customer testimonials. Word-of-mouth is the best and cheapest form of advertising. How can you get customers to "talk up" your company? Ask them. They may already be attending the show, so you can avoid paying travel costs. Solicit customers' help to staff the booth, participate in a presentation, provide a "letter of recommendation" for graphics or a pre-show mailer.
3. Mailing lists. Collect demographic information from as many prospects as possible at shows. Asking booth visitors to fill out lead forms doesn't cost you anything. After the show, add their information to your database for follow-up and future promotions. Your marketing efforts are only as good as your database. So, keep it current. Even if someone is a current customer, it doesn't hurt to run his/her badge through your lead retrieval system to check against your database.

TWO ALTERNATIVES TO PRE-SHOW MAILERS

[Bob McGrath, Creative Interactions]

Tired of pre-show mailers? Looking for something new? Try one of these two promotional techniques:

1. Under-the-door flyers. Print up a flyer that entices show attendees to your booth (use show specials, promotional giveaways, live demos etc.). Approach the official show hotels to distribute these flyers under the doors of those hotel guests who are show attendees. Try to time these flyers to hit their rooms between midnight and 6 a.m. the day the show opens, so attendees get it right before they enter the show. Tip: Consider formatting your flyer as a newsletter. If attendees confuse it with a show daily, you've gained an additional reason they might read it. Cost: Usually between 50 cents and \$1 per room, plus the cost of printing the flyers.
2. In-room videos. If your organization has its own video that describes you and your product/service, approach the official show hotels to screen your



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video on their in-house conference channel. If possible, add a tag line with your booth number at the end of the video (sometimes this can also be added to run at the bottom of the screen throughout). Tip: Most of us tend to be channel surfers, so keep that video short! Three minutes is ideal; six minutes maximum. cost: Some hotels have set prices for this service (as much as \$500 per day), some do not. Don your best negotiating cap if you're budget-conscious, and try for a rate you can afford.

For both of these promotion methods, you need to get permission from show management to approach the official show hotel/s. Show management usually requests to see a copy of any materials first before authorizing your arrangements with the hotels. Remember to add time to your planning schedule for this approval time.

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[Since 1990, Visual IMPACT! has been a full-service 'multimedia' company with expertise in advertising promotions and marketing programs—specifically, in **print** collateral, **video** production, **web site** development, **trade show** exhibits, and **graphics design**—and the 'seamless integration' of them.

Our tagline, "***Ideas That Transform,***" refers to how we combine compelling design, a strong marketing strategy, and very innovative communications technologies to *change the impact* of a corporate message from commonplace to influential].