



# WHY TRADE SHOW PARTICIPATION IS KEY

If you are pitching the idea of attending a trade show to your team, boss, or upper management, it's best to know why a particular trade show would benefit the business. Here are a few major perks of attending trade shows.

# 1. CHECK OUT THE COMPETITION

Trade shows bring in the topperforming businesses from all around the world, and these companies will be putting their best effort into their booth's appearance, marketing materials, sales pitches, product demos, and the overall atmosphere at their booth.

This means that exposure to top companies in the industry and their best strategies to sell, build awareness, and make connections are just a few footsteps away! This is a HUGE deciding factor for many businesses to attend; for some, it's the main reason they go.

# 2. FORGE VALUABLE RELATIONSHIPS

How many opportunities will your team get to rub elbows with the top brands and partners in the industry? Did we mention your target customer will likely be in attendance as well?

Trade shows are unique in that they bring together both industry competitors and partners, where many deals are made and relationships established because it's a face-to-face meeting where you can make a connection.

Building an authentic partnership over email, LinkedIn, or by phone is challenging. At a trade show, you can set up a meeting time, walk the floor together, or grab a drink off-site. Building rapport with important industry professionals is another key pillar for businesses to attend these events.

# 3. BUILD BRAND AWARENESS

Whether you're a startup or a well-known brand, trade shows are a fantastic place to share your why, establish branding (or re-brand), and hustle to get your company in front of as many people as possible.

According to Hubspot, 64% of event marketers reported that the primary reason for hosting or attending events is brand awareness for their company or products. That's a lot of companies looking for new opportunities to branch out!

How can you achieve this? Let's break it down.

- The booth needs to be totally dialed in from graphics, language, product sheets, how the staff are dressed... everything should be clean and on-brand.
- Host a presentation or speak on a panel it's a surefire way to build brand awareness. If you have a team member who is comfortable speaking in front of an audience (ideally, the CEO or someone in upper management, or an employee with a relevant role within the company), this is an effective way to create a memorable interaction with your company for all attendees.

## 4. SELL

Yes, it's true - it is more than possible for your team to make sales at a trade show.

It may vary by industry, but many attendees at shows are shopping around and are ready to make a buying decision. If you're prepared, a potential sale is around every corner.

### 5. MANAGE YOUR TEAMS

Trade shows can ignite a spark of enthusiasm in your team; it's an exciting atmosphere to be a part of! It's great motivation for employees, particularly once they return home and head back to the office. Time to grind!





# BUILDING A TRADE SHOW STRATEGY

Establishing your strategy early on is the best way to find success at a trade show of any caliber. Let's discuss how to build a strategy that will keep you laser-focused on your goals.

# **DEFINING YOUR GOALS**

How do you measure success without a goal in mind?

Quick answer — you don't. As you carve out the strategy behind attending a show, keep the company's goals center stage during planning.

What do you want to accomplish by attending this show? What are some wins you can track along the way? Here are a few ideas:

- Number of new deals signed
- Number of business cards collected by each sales rep
- Number of new leads added to the sales funnel
- New social media followers/page likes

From the start, have your goals and wins defined so you can build on the show strategy from there.

# CHOOSE THE RIGHT SHOW

Choosing the right show for your business can be daunting; there are a lot to choose from, they all seem like the best and the flashiest... and they all cost a lot of money.

Here's how you can streamline the process of deciding on a show:

# 1. Check in with local organizations and associations within your community.

Local shows are great to attend for research purposes or to get your feet wet. Inc recommends testing a show out before exhibiting, simply by walking the floor and gauging the atmosphere, exhibitors, attendees, and overall feel.

### 2. Follow your competition.

As we mentioned, trade shows are a great place to scout the competition. To do that, though, you've got to be at the right show! Many tradeshows list on their website which companies will be exhibiting, so you can do your own research. If the show has an event hashtag, start scrolling to see if any competitors have tweeted that they'll be attending.

# 3. Lean on the advice of trusted relationships you have in the industry.

Seek out their opinions on particular trade shows (and the companies who host the show) and ask what their experiences were.

### 4. Know your target audience.

Get as much information from the show contractors as you can before you sign a contract. They'll be able to share valuable demographics about the attendee list, including gender, age range, job title, company name, and more.

# 5. Weigh the ROI

You'll want to understand how attending the show or event compares to the upfront cost of what you'll be investing. Trade show ROI can be calculated by a few factors, including:

- **Size of the audience** The more people who attend, the more foot traffic that will pass by your booth = a big bonus!
- The show's reputation Your best bet is to select the shows with a positive reputation in terms of bringing in new customers, vendors, and attendees each year. Get the best bang for your buck!
- **Cost** The overall cost of the show is an important metric because it's the starting point from which you have to build on. If the ROI doesn't surpass the overall cost invested the way it should, it may be time to look for a different show or rethink your budget.
- **Operational challenges** There are a lot of moving pieces that go into a successful booth. If the challenges from an operational or technical standpoint are greater than the benefits of attending, it's time to rethink your approach.

# BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

"What's all this going to cost?" is likely the first question your boss or colleague will ask during your pitch. And it's a fair question; there are a lot of costs that need to be considered when creating a budget for this caliber of a show.

Here are some of the main costs to consider (keep in mind others will pop up):

#### **Booth rental and show fees**

• The more people who attend, the more foot traffic that will pass by your booth = a big bonus!

#### Manpower for booth setup

 Your best bet is to select the shows with a positive reputation in terms of bringing in new customers, vendors, and attendees each year. Get the best bang for your buck!



# Marketing materials, booth swag, giveaways

- One of the most exciting parts of trade shows for some attendees is the swag. Offer something memorable and trendy that can becarried around all day.
- According to AMA, physical promotional products are tangible and therefore, more memorable. Shop around for booth swag to see what you can buy in bulk to save money.

- Giveaways are a great way to bring foot traffic to your booth, but they'll cost you! The big-ticket items gain the most traction at booths, so if you're going to promote an awesome giveaway, make sure the prize is something special.
- Lastly, the marketing
   materials from product
   sheets, brochures, business
   cards, direct mail pieces...
   we're talking preshow,
   during the show, and post show. The marketing
   materials involved in a
   tradeshow are astounding
   but necessary. So be
   prepared!



## Staffing

 You'll need team members working the booth and behind the scenes to have a successful show. Some will need to be working the floor and making connections with attendees, while others will be making sure the TVs and other tech are working properly and presentations are good to go.

#### **Travel**

- If the show you choose is local, great! Travel won't be difficult to arrange you can carpool, rent a van, or meet at the venue.
- If the show is out of state, consider the cost of flights, hotels, meals each day, and more. Be mindful of employees with families and the time period that they're comfortable being out of town.

## **Shipping booth materials**

• If you need to ship booth materials, make sure you meet the recommended dates to ship those items so you have plenty of wiggle room and leave a margin for error on the shipping carrier's side. Plan for delays in shipping so you aren't surprised. Get the booth and marketing materials ready as early as possible so you can ship them ASAP.



### PRESHOW PLANNING

We're making moves! You've picked a show, got the OK from management, and things are rolling. Preshow planning should consume the majority of your time leading up to the show; that may sound crazy, but there's A LOT to do. Let's jump right in!

### **Booth Design**

#### -OWN YOUR BRANDING

• It's best to be short and sweet when it comes to booth design. Implement your branding, colors, logo, and language, but keep it simple. Your staff will be able to go into the details of your business and its offerings. The booth should be inviting and engaging, so leave the rest up to the conversations happening. Remember - the booth is the backdrop, not the brochure!

#### **—KNOW THE VENUE DETAILS**

- It's crucial that you fully understand the layout of the venue, where your booth will be on the show floor, how you'll get your equipment and supplies inside, etc. You'll want to know these specifics before you arrive, so contact the event hosts to confirm all the little details. It can save you a ton of time and stress!
- Make sure you're aware of the booth space and amenities you paid for, along with any available upgrades should you need them. You'll want to know what's provided for you and what you need to bring, along with who at the venue is permitted to help your team if you need to make modifications.
- Review the contract thoroughly so you're aware of the terms and conditions, payment options, and the rules of the show before signing. If you have time, ask appropriate team members in the office to review the contract as well.



#### **Additional Preshow Exposure**

#### **—PROMOTE YOUR ATTENDANCE ONLINE**

- Enlist the power of your company's social media profiles to promote your attendance online. Tweet to customers asking if they'll be attending, use the event's hashtag to announce your attendance, and stay active on all channels where there's chatter about the show.
- Create email campaigns to customers, vendors, and friends in the industry to let them know you'll be attending and you'd love to meet up for a coffee at the booth.
- Make a few phone calls to customers or vendors you'd like to connect with in person and let them know you'll be available.

#### -INTEGRATE MARKETING & TRADESHOW STRATEGIES

- Use your current marketing strategies and segment the audiences you're targeting by their current status with your business.
  - If it's a current customer, use an email campaign to encourage them to stop by your booth to connect.
  - If it's a warm lead, build excitement by sharing the giveaways or big ticket items you'll be raffling off.
  - To attract new customers, create blog posts or social promotions that share the items you're giving away to anyone who stops by the booth.

#### **—PROMOTE ON YOUR WEBSITE**

- This could be a dedicated landing page with detailed information about the show and your booth specifically or a little teaser of what the attendees will receive if they come to the booth. Bonus points if you use a CTA for visitors to book a meeting!
- Create a few blog posts leading up to the show that create organic hype around the booth if you're revealing something new and exciting, or encourage customers to come chat with the CEO.

#### -SPEAK AT THE SHOW

- Speaking on a panel is not only beneficial for your business at the event, but it can win you some solid promotion preshow as well. Most show's list the speakers on their website and may link back to the speaker's LinkedIn or their company's website. Determine if someone in your company is qualified to speak, and reach out to the hosts to see if there's a relevant topic or panel they can join.
- Giving a great presentation is the perfect way to attract leads back to your booth for follow-up conversations and to establish a connection. Leave no stone unturned!

#### **Proper Staffing**

- Before the show, your planning strategy should include determining which representatives from the company will be manning the booth. Who will talk to potential prospects? Will it be sales? Will it be marketing?
- Perhaps it will be both, along with various team members, including
  Operations or Customer Support. It all depends on the show, the attendees,
  and what your goals are for bringing traffic to the booth.
- If you're trying to collect leads, make sure your sales team is on the floor.
   If you're meeting with current customers, it's a good idea to have Support team members present who can answer questions and build rapport with the important clientele. Marketing staff is always good to have around for support, speaking with potential customers, social campaigns, and more.

#### **Technology**

- As you prepare the technology you'll need for the show, remember what your goals are. If capturing leads is a major goal for your company, make sure you have the appropriate technology to collect lead information quickly and efficiently on the show floor.
- Aside from lead capturing technology, you should have a plan and a point person who will be manning all the tech at the booth.
- This person (or people) should lead the charge on any sizzle reels at the booth, playing video or product demos, and even engaging the audience with live demos on the show floor. Make sure your equipment is in tip-top shape before you leave, and test, test, test some more once you're set up before the show begins.



### **DURING THE SHOW**

#### **CONGRATULATIONS, YOU DID IT!**

You've cleared the first few hurdles — planning, printing, shipping, and setting up at the show. You're basically a professional, but we've got a few more things to discuss before we let you leave the nest.

Let's talk about some effective ways to engage with show attendees and how to ensure your booth is memorable for the audience and successful at hitting those preshow goals you set out to achieve.

#### Foster an engaging presence

#### -GIVEAWAYS

- The purpose of a giveaway is to bring foot traffic and get attendees excited about your booth and business and hopefully collect their contact information in the process.
- Giveaways should be relevant and exciting; a foam football or company pen isn't going to cut it anymore.
- Try offering the latest in tech (we've seen hoverboards, Apple TV, drones, etc.)
  or anything buzzworthy at the show. Heck, your company's product or
  services may be a worthwhile prize!
- Instead of a giveaway, try running a contest at the booth with a winner to be chosen at a later date. Anyone who wants to enter must provide their name and business email. You've just captured their valuable contact information and now have more opportunities to speak with them individually post show to see if you can win them as a customer.

#### -QR CODES

- To create a direct path to a particular resource, such as a demo request page, your company's website, or even a special sales incentive, using QR codes is the new frontier of optimizing interactions at a tradeshow.
- When an attendee wants to download your pitch deck, review your products, or schedule a meeting with a sales rep, you can create unique QR codes that are easily scannable right at the booth. The attendee simply scans the code with their smartphone and they'll be redirected to a landing page to learn more or input their contact information.
- QR codes can also be printed on your team's physical business cards. When they're scanned, the code will take the user to a landing page

#### **Capture Lead Information**

- Efficient ways to capture lead contact information at a show include:
  - Business card scanner apps
  - Show-provided badge scanner (usually an upgraded cost for exhibitors)
  - Use a tablet or laptop with your CRM open and ready to input new contacts and leads
- Once the show is over and you're ready to create post-show follow-up campaigns, what marketing automation will you have in place?
- We're big fans of Hubspot the platform's functionality and features make
  it a total breeze to capture and prioritize leads, include them in post-show
  follow-up campaigns, and easily manage each salesperson's pipeline.

### Optimize breaks and time off

- Ask any trade show veteran and they'll tell you once the show starts, you only get a certain amount of time to network, sell, and make connections.
   Use your time wisely!
- Be strategic with who is on the floor at all times. Don't let all your best sales reps leave for lunch together. There should always be at least two of the strongest personnel at the booth to handle incoming traffic.
- When it comes to designated meal times, try to schedule meetings during this time. Dine with potential customers or partners and kill two birds with one stone.
- Some shows also offer private meeting rooms that can be booked on-site or ahead of time, so be sure to reach out to the show organizers to see how these rooms can be reserved.



# YOU SURVIVED THE SHOW! NOW THE REAL WORK BEGINS

In our humble opinion, post-show lead management and follow-up are the most important part of any trade show.

### **POST SHOW**

You took the time to execute a well-thought-out strategy and your team delivered an incredible booth experience for the attendees. Your product or service intrigued many, and you've got the contact information of (hopefully) hundreds of warm leads to show for it.

#### **Lead Management and Follow-Up**

Historically, the process in which marketing passes off inbound leads to Sales has been less than perfect. Wires get crossed, miscommunications happen, and companies lose potential revenue.

We can't stress this enough — ensure that Sales and Marketing are working closely, cross-functionally, to handle lead management properly to guarantee that the ball doesn't get dropped in the final act!

- 1. Segment your contacts into three types of leads: hot, warm, and neutral in the CRM.
- 2. Create a plan to nurture these contacts with outreach via email, phone call, or ask to meet for a drink and to continue your conversation from the show (especially if they're a hot lead!)
- 3. Contact all your leads within two days post-show. Consider the timing of your emails; everyone is traveling home from the show, and emails may get lost in the shuffle if you contact them in less than 24 hours. Two days seems to be the sweet spot, but make sure you hit send on a workday!
- 4. Keep your tone casual and the first message succinct. If you don't hear back, any additional emails should include a clear CTA, like scheduling a demo, jumping on a call, or downloading free content.
- 5. Continue reaching out on a monthly basis, in the event that they have a need for your product or service, your name or company will be top of mind.

# WHY YOU NEED LAIRE

LAIRE is a full-service B2B marketing agency that helps its clients generate reliable revenue to grow and flourish. We can help as you dive into the exciting world of trade shows, and here's how.

#### INTEGRATING YOUR EVENT MARKETING STRATEGY

Our campaigns begin with a MAP (Marketing Action Plan) that evaluates your business goals at a trade show, creates a strategic plan to direct your marketing efforts, and charts the path to reaching a larger audience of ideal customers at any event you attend.

#### **BOOTH & ASSET/MATERIAL DESIGN**

Our talented team of designers and creators will align your brand in a clean, concise way and make it pop at your booth. We can spice up your demos, promotional materials, and any other assets you need.

#### **PROMOTIONAL SERVICES**

To supplement your lead flow and create hype about the show you're attending, we offer digital advertising expertise in the following channels:

- Paid ads
  - If it's a current customer, use an email campaign to encourage them to stop by your booth to connect.
- Social campaigns
  - If it's a current customer, use an email campaign to encourage them to stop by your booth to connect.
- Landing page creation
  - If it's a current customer, use an email campaign to encourage them to stop by your booth to connect.
- Lead Qualifying & Nurturing

Our proven marketing automation tools offer customized email templates based on audience segment, assist with moving leads from one stage of the buyer's journey to the next, and even create custom workflows to ensure your message is delivered to the right prospect at the right time.

