

maximizing your trade show experience

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Pre-Show Promotions that will Assist Your Trade Show Efforts

Attending an industry trade show can be overwhelming. At a major show like LegalTech New York in January, attendees have almost 300 companies vying for their attention. How will your company differentiate itself? Your battle for attendees' attention should begin at least 60 days before you're onsite. There are a few ways you can get an edge on your competition and stand out among the sea of booths – sponsorships, show advertising and pre-show mailers.

Show sponsorships can be an excellent way to expand your presence at a show. Usually, you are given several options. Success depends on your selection of the right sponsorship for your company. Whether you've chosen the banners in the exhibit hall or registration area; the coffee breaks or participate in the show treasure hunt, it is important that you are clear on what your desired return is – i.e. boost brand awareness, increase booth traffic, generate sales leads, or gain media awareness. Your show representative can be of great assistance in helping you select the sponsorship program that will work best for you. If a sponsorship you have in mind is not offered, speak to your show representative to see how you can make it possible. Sometimes they are more than happy to consider new ideas. A few things to keep in mind - sponsorship costs generally are based on attendance numbers. Sponsorships are more expensive at the bigger shows. Also the cost of the sponsorship does not typically include the cost of production. For example, a sponsorship to have your company logo printed on room keys will not include the cost the hotel will charge to have the cards printed.

Another important method of pre-show promotions is advertising. Advertising in industry publications like Law Technology News or The National Law Journal before and after a show is another way to stimulate traffic at your booth and build brand awareness for your company/product. This advertising will serve as reinforcement when they see your booth. Another option to consider is advertising in the show program guide. Remember each and every attendee receives one and quite often uses it as buyers' guides so your ad will have a long shelf life. Here are a couple of things to increase the effectiveness of your advertisement. Just like contracting a booth space, the earlier you commit to an ad, the better the positioning you can get. Additionally, make sure your ad clearly states what your company does - what product/services you offer and where attendees can find you before, after and during the show.

Pre-show mailers can also be used to attract potential prospects to your booth. The mailers should serve as a teaser and contain a good mix of product information and an offer for them to visit you in your booth. Typically, these mailers invite the attendee to receive a prize (giveaway, T-shirt, etc.) in exchange for visiting you at your booth. If you employ this method, make the attendee listen to a short demo/company description in exchange for their prize. In order for them to be the most effective, the attendees should receive these the week before the event. If you send them anything any sooner, they will forget before the show. In addition to sending mailers to the pre-show attendee list, be sure to also send the invitations to your clients in the area. This is an excellent time to invite your current clients to visit you at your booth. Also, a post-show mailer is an excellent way to follow-up and stay in front of the attendees. In addition to pre-show mailers, call campaigns to your clients/prospects work wonders and add that personal touch that a postcard can't. Pre-show attendee lists do not typically come with phone numbers or email address so call campaigns aren't an option for the entire attendee base, but work great for your clients.

Trade shows can provide a very powerful boost to your company's image and sales, but the effectiveness of your trade show program depends on how well your company executes the plan and makes the most of all available options. If you just sign up for the show, ship your booth, and stand in the back of the booth, you will not get your money's worth. With a little more effort and a few more dollars, a show like LegalTech New York can start your company's year off on the right foot and set the scene for a prosperous 2003!

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