

de-mystifying road shows

as a means of effective event marketing

By JoAnna Forshee
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The term “road show” conjures images of rock stars and back stage parties. In actuality, marketing and sales road shows, which have been a popular marketing tool utilized in Australia and Europe for quite some time, are now also gaining more popularity in the United States. Until recently, most road shows held in the United States were strictly for investor relations.



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For face-to-face marketing on a grand scale, there is no greater vehicle than a tradeshow. Shows such as American Lawyer Media’s LegalTech series allow companies to reach thousands of prospects in just a couple of days. Sometimes the number of leads from a large show can be overwhelming and it becomes a chore picking through all the contacts to get to the ones that are a fit for your target client. Wouldn’t it be nice if there were a way to bring pre-qualified leads directly to you? There is. Road shows differ from tradeshows in that they focus on a much smaller, targeted audience and allow for a much more in-depth presentation. Road shows can be multi-city events that enable your company to reach pre-qualified prospects and serve as a supplement to your trade show program.

As in any successful marketing endeavor, the first step should be to determine what you would like to gain from your road show program and what benefit you can offer to your attendees. Begin by deciding what type of road show will best fit your goal.

There are two types of sales and marketing road shows – for prospects or for your client-base. Goals for a client-focused road show could include the following:

- Generate add-on sales “leads” from client base
- Develop stronger relationships with clients
- Collect research/customer feedback
- Gain more referenceable clients
- Increase awareness of your range of products and services
- Cross selling of products and services
- Introduce key decision-makers from firms to your executives
- Educate the client base to your vision and direction in a controlled environment

Goals for a prospect road show could include:

- SALES! Create interest in your product/service
- Build market awareness of your product/service
- Build relationships with key players in market

If you are planning on hosting a prospect road show program, there are many ways to come up with the names for your invite list. In addition to your internal sales lead list that you have compiled from trade shows and your sales team, lists can be obtained from circulation data for American Lawyer Media publications, LegalTech show attendee lists, and the Leadership Directory (Legal Yellow pages). You can also create databases from the Am Law 100 or NLJ 250. Martindale Hubbell allows you to search and create list by size of firm, geographic location or practice area. Once you have selected your list of invitees, you can send invitations via mail or email.

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A large part of devising your road show strategy involves determining what will draw your audience to you. It will take more than free food and the promise of a day away from the office to draw quality attendees. Make sure the benefits to your attendees are highlighted in your invitation. Let them know what they will be receiving in return for sacrificing their time. A few examples is peer networking, industry news, product updates, increase in efficiency, and general education. In addition, offering CLE credits is an excellent way to add value to your program and increase the attendance tremendously. You can coordinate through a legal event planning/marketing agency to get your programs approved for CLE credits or work directly with the applicable state bars to accomplish this.

In addition to your audience, there are many logistical things to consider in planning your road show program. The format for your program is completely up to you. Will you have it at a hotel or have a client host it? Will you invite end-users or high-level decision makers? Will you plan for a full-day or half-day program? Will you offer sponsorship opportunities to your partners and help offset the costs? Do you plan on a keynote speaker or matter expert to add sizzle? Your opportunities are virtually endless.

No matter what route you choose, a road show program can be an invaluable addition to your sales and marketing plan. It is one of the few times you can completely control whom your marketing dollars reach!

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