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Tricks of the Trade Show: Engagement

February 15, 2014
by [Lew Hoff](#)

For any trade show to truly deliver value, participating brands must focus on not solely themselves, but the people standing in front of their booths. Audience engagement is a necessity during these events.



Lew Hoff

President at Bartizan, Lew has spent the last 40-plus years focusing on bringing buyers and sellers together, face-to-face.

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If representatives come off as just a corporate head, instead of someone who is truly trying to help prospective customers address their needs, then establishing a long-lasting relationship is made that much more difficult.

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Speaking with Great Falls Tribune, Michael French, a financial adviser with Waddell & Reed Financial Advisors, said trade shows are effective, but long, placing even [greater emphasis on engagement throughout the entire event](#).

"You need to smile and make eye contact. I don't bring a computer and I stay off my phone while I'm in the booth. You need to talk to people as they go by. If you are not doing that, it's just a waste of time and money to be here," French told the news source.

If employees are expected to be on their feet for the entire duration of a trade show, brands may want to do a little more to make sure participants are more comfortable. French said that rather than subject himself to standing on hard concrete, he brought a padded rug to a show, which "made a big difference."

Perhaps the most important point highlighted by French's interview with Great Falls Tribune was the fact that he does not attend trade shows to boost sales right then and there. This a problem some brands can experience if they push too hard to sell their products and services to everyone who walks by their booth.

"For us it's about making new contacts and seeing if it will be a fit for us to work together," he told the news provider. "I wouldn't say I've gained a lot of new clients who I have met at trade shows, but it's more than I would if I had spent the weekend at home."

Employee 'freshness' crucial for trade shows

If employees are heading into a trade show dreading the experience, they are not likely to put forth their best effort to represent the brand like the company expects. Businesses should gauge interest among staff members to determine who really wants to participate in these events. If that still does not work, what else can companies try?

Trade Show News Network's Alex Stowell recently suggested that [organizations to have upper-level management get involved](#) with sparking some competition among personnel for upcoming events. For example, managers can offer staff members incentives, reward programs and contests for those participating in a show to boost productivity.



JOB SEARCH

Firms should also be aware that a trade show is a long day, so only having two people at the booth for hours and hours is a draining experience. Stowell encouraged businesses to have other staff members at the event to give people a breather. This approach will ensure that everyone is fresh and it will benefit engagement levels as well.

Brands should also ask team members for insight into what they can do to make a trade show a more engaging experience.

"Get your team involved in all of it – set expectations together, ask for ideas, or what specifically will keep them motivated throughout the day," Stowell suggested. "This will also help promote creative thinking and foster teamwork. Leverage the collective thoughts of your people to create greatness!"

Trade shows should not be the bane of employees' existence, but an opportunity to showcase their skills and connect with prospective customers and industry professionals. Fresh and happy workers are engaged workers.

Download Bartizan's 110-Page Ebook with everything you need to exhibit like a pro. [Download the "2014 Exhibitor Marketing Toolkit" here.](#)

5 responses to 'Tricks of the Trade Show: Engagement'

Timothy Carter (not verified) said, on March 26, 2014 - 11:01am

Absolutely agree with having "fresh" employees at the booth.

They've got to be the type of individuals that are excited to be there, know their products, know how to connect with people and have the ability to quickly build a relationship in order to convert the visitor into a lead or a sale.

If not, it's a waste of money and a potential loss of leads/sales.

Great post Lew.

Timothy Carter
<http://www.nimlok.com>

[reply](#)

Lori Woehrle (not verified) said, on February 23, 2014 - 12:57pm

I am a trade-show organizer for an association and cannot imagine why booth staff are:

- looking at their phones
- talking on the phone
- sitting
- eating
- working on their laptops

But they are. Right during the show. I've seen it, over and over. Then they complain about the results.

[reply](#)

Rich Olson (not verified) said, on March 10, 2014 - 12:28pm

I completely agree if you are hosting an informational and interactive event your attention should be solely given to those who have gave their time for you.

[reply](#)

Lew Hoff (not verified) said, on February 18, 2014 - 4:13pm

Hey Jim, thanks for the comment.

[reply](#)

Jim Jain, SVP Mobile Technology Rentals (not verified) said, on February 17, 2014 - 12:10am



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The TSNN Awards celebrates trade show excellence annually in different host cities.



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- Breaking News (get all the trade show news you need as it happens)
- TSNN eXpoFiles (geared to all event industry professionals)

Very helpful article, Lew. As they say- if you want to win over your client you have to focus on your client and their need. For exhibitors to be successful at the trade show, it is about delivering the very best service in a sincere and enthusiastic way.

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June 12, 2014 - 5:15pm

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