

Staffing For Exhibiting Success: Your People Make the Difference!

By Jefferson Davis, Competitive Edge

Whether your RSNA exhibit ends up as an investment providing a solid return or simply an expense will come down to the people staffing your exhibit. When you strip away all the lights, sounds, products and exhibit architecture from the exhibit floor you end up with an industry specific marketplace where people meet face-to-face to talk and do business. And only your staff can talk and do business.

Effectively working a tradeshow requires a person to recognize how the dynamics of the environment are different and to adapt their behaviors and communication skills to the realities of the environment. Here are eight attributes of a highly-effective exhibit staffer:

1. **Positive attitude:** Has a positive outlook on business and life in general. Likes working tradeshows.
2. **Extrovert:** Not afraid to walk up to a stranger, say hello and introduce themselves.
3. **Energy:** Can stand on their feet and effectively engage and interact with people for several hours per day over several days.
4. **Knowledgeable:** Knows your company, your products, the market and the competition.
5. **Good questioner:** Asks good questions before talking about your products or services.
6. **Great listener:** Listens with their eyes and their ears. Hears not just the words, but the meaning and the intent behind the words.
7. **Concise communicator:** Can deliver you company story and your product/service points in a concise, persuasive and interactive manner.
8. **Closing mentality:** Understands that the outcome of a qualified in-booth interaction is to get the visitor to commit to a next action step.

You should rate each of your booth staffers on these eight attributes. If they are deficient in three or more areas you should provide some form of exhibit staff training to bridge the gap. As an alternative, you might consider renting temporary booth staff to help out.

Once you've got the right people for your exhibit, then you must prepare them for the show. Here are seven keys to effectively preparing your staff for success:

1. **Put the right number of people in the exhibit:** Two to three staffers per 10x10 booth is about the max. Any more and your booth is too crowded with your people leaving little or no room for the most important people – the attendees.
2. **Have a good mix of staff:** If possible have a mix of sales, technical, customer service and management. Attendees often want to talk with different job functions in your company.
3. **Prepare a booth duty schedule:** Assign each person 3-4 hour shift on specific show days and be sure to enforce the schedule.
4. **Always conduct a pre-show staff meeting:** Get your team together the day prior to the show to review roles and goals, company and product messages, lead and sales capture process, booth duty schedule, and always be sure to do a walkthrough of the booth.
5. **Set interaction, lead and/or sales goals:** Ask your staff to focus on and be accountable for at least 4 visitor interactions per hour and one qualified lead or sales order per hour.
6. **Reward staff performance:** To create excitement and build a sense of team spirit consider creating team and individual contests for achieving goals. The rewards don't have to be expensive. Use gift cards, send flowers home to their significant other, give them casino chips; even a little cash can go a long way.
7. **Seek feedback from your exhibit staff:** At the end of the show give your booth staff a short survey to fill out. Ask them what they liked and didn't like about the exhibit. Ask them what they think you could do to create a more effective exhibit for the next show.

By putting the best people in your exhibit and properly preparing them for success you have laid a solid foundation that will make a dramatic difference in your exhibiting results.

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