

Exhibiting Advice - 10 Cunning Ways To Make Sure You Sell More At Your Stand

Contributed by Andy Szebeni
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Why is it then that we see so many poorly dressed, ill-mannered, unenthusiastic people manning exhibition stands? When a company spends thousands on the display, more on the space at the event, weeks of preparation and even more on invites and tie-in advertising, all this investment can be undone by a poor show on the stand itself.

We have spent years helping people to get more out of their exhibition space. And we have learnt dozens of excellent ideas for generating more enquiries and interest from visitors. However, the main lessons seem to be things NOT to do rather than things that should be done. So here are the 10 most powerful bits of advice we can give to anyone looking to exhibit at a conference or seminar.

1. Don't Sit.

You give attendees the impression you don't care or you're lazy. Attendees won't interrupt your private time, as they see it. If you need a rest then go and lie down or sit down in the exhibitors area or somewhere out of the way of visitors. And make sure that you all take shifts and don't leave any one person on the stand for more than 2 hours without a break.

2. Don't Read.

Don't look for distractions by reading your own literature. Even worse is reading a book or magazine! You are like a sentry, alert to any passing victim. You aren't able to make eye contact with attendees as they walk by your booth.

3. Don't Smoke.

If you must smoke then go outside or somewhere where there is plenty of air. You will still smell of tobacco but it will be slightly less unpleasant to the many non-smokers that come to your stand. It's impolite and can actually be offensive to a prospective customer.

4. Don't Eat or Drink.

It is just plain rude and messy. Potential customers are too polite to bother you when you're eating. What is more it will do nothing for your breath. Make sure you suck mints throughout your duty on the stand. Another reason to be careful what you consume is to avoid sugar rushes and lows.

5. Don't Ignore Attendees.

If you're busy when someone approaches, either acknowledge him/her or try to include him/her in your conversation. If you're talking with a fellow exhibitor, break it off immediately. The person you ignore could be on their way to a competitor to place an order.

6. Don't Talk on the Mobile.

Why do you need a phone on your stand? Time on the phone is time away from potential prospects and tells everyone you have better things to do. Make provision for someone to take your calls all day ideally. Or switch the phone on for a few minutes each time you take a break.

7. Don't Be a Border Guard.

Don't stand where you become a barricade or block the attendees' view. Stand near the aisle and off to the side. Let your visitors wander onto your stand area to see what you have put on offer and to enter your lair.

8. Don't Hand Out Literature Freely.

Your catalogues and brochures end up in a bag with everyone else's literature. Be discriminating in who gets literature. Better yet, mail them to qualified prospects after the show. The literature costs money and it can be an opportunity for a follow-up if you use it wisely.

9. Don't Underestimate Prospects.

Get out of the habit of sizing up somebody simply by the way they look. Qualify them, don't classify them. Some of the

wealthiest business people feel no need to dress to impress. Some of the most junior staff see exhibitions as a chance to parade in their best suit but may be a total waste of time as prospects.

10. Don't Cluster With Friends and Other Stand Personnel.

This comes back to the idea of not being a street gang or border patrol. It scares off potential visitors and means that you cannot maximise the full space of your stand. Don't be a "street gang." Nobody will approach a group of strangers, it's too intimidating. Be more approachable. Stand alone but in an open stance so people are attracted to you. Smile gently so you seem friendly to anyone that might want to ask a question.

Andy Szebeni is director of sales training and telemarketing company A&P. For more information and free tips and hints go to <http://www.a-and-p.com>.