

## Part 1 – Pre-Show Planning

### Tip #1 - Exhibiting On A Shoestring

For many "mom and pop" companies, the cost of simply traveling to and from an exhibition may be prohibitive. Here are some tips to use when you need to cut your costs to the bare bones. We don't recommend these for everybody, but in a pinch they can make the difference between exhibiting and staying home.

- Keep the trip short. If you can get a cheap flight (that doesn't require a Saturday stay over), fly in the night before the show opens and leave the day the show closes to save extra meal and lodging costs.
- Eliminate your booth. Instead of paying costly shipping for booth crates, use a 5-by-8-foot vinyl backdrop drape with eyehooks that adhere it to the back of the booth. Vinyl is durable, washable and costs only \$75. You might also consider a table-top or portable booth that you can transport to the show yourself.
- Send literature and giveaways to hotel. Instead of paying extra handlers to store and deliver your booth, ship your boxes to your hotel with a shipping label that reads, "Hold at front desk for (name)'s arrival." Hotels do not charge for this service. The boxes can be transported to your booth via a hand cart.
- Co-op your booth space. Reduce your costs if you are a manufacturer by asking if some local distributors will co-op the cost of the booth. (This works both ways. If you are a distributor, approach the manufacturer about a co-op.)

Send a "fill-in" staffer. Instead of sending two or more employees to the show, send one with a spouse or friend to work the booth. This way you won't be shorthanded back at the office. Caveat: Make sure the "fill-in" is well-trained to work the booth. Also, spouses can share lodging, another money-saver. (If you pay the spouse's/friend's expenses, the IRS requires the person to be on your payroll. Minimum wage generally suffices.)

## **Tip # 2 - 5 tips for goal driven giveaways**

If you plan to use giveaways in your booth, what's your strategy? An effective promotional premium should reinforce your company's image and message in addition to supporting your communications goals at the show. With budgets tight, no one can afford to waste money on a premium that doesn't fulfill objectives. So before you order those coffee cups, a quick review of the desired results might be in order.

1. Do you have a new product or service and you want everyone in attendance to know about it? Choose a premium you can give to visitors you come in contact with.
2. Is your market highly targeted? Choose high-end premiums for qualified prospects and a lesser giveaway for everyone else.
3. Want to pull your primary prospects to your booth? Try sending a premium pre-show that has a second half or related item that's obtainable at your booth.
4. Want prospects to buy on site? Provide a special premium for on-site orders with upgraded premiums the more they buy.
5. How about lead cards? Offer a premium for those visitors who fill them out or sit through a presentation or demonstration.

## **Tip #3 - Creating Low-Cost Promotions**

Stumped on how to come up with a low-cost booth promotion? Here are eight basic tips that can get you thinking about how to develop low-cost traffic stoppers.

1. Low-cost attractions are appropriate for all types of exhibitors, from small booth, first-timers to larger, experienced exhibitors.
2. Good low-cost attractions usually require one or more of the following: creativity, risk, experience, adaptation and fun.
3. When creating effective low-cost attractions, it is acceptable to adapt other exhibitors' ideas to your own show situation.
4. Some of the best attractions are virtually free.
5. Good attractions are often timely in nature and take advantage of interests developed outside the trade show area.
6. In creating a good low-cost attraction, it is more important to strive to be good rather than to hold out for perfection.
7. The best attractions are often theme-related.

The best ideas are often implemented easily using people inside your company.