

Picking the Right Trade Show



John A. Hill, President & CEO
Trade Show Coach
John A. Hill & Associates, Inc.
516-473-7202
jhill@johnahillandassociates.com
www.johnahillandassociates.com

One of the major problems most companies have when it comes to choosing the right trade show is they never do the necessary research to make sure that the show is the right one for them. You ask the question, “Why do you want to be in this specific show?” and the response usually is, “Because my competition is in this show.” If this is the only reason why you want to be in that show, then I suggest you invest your money in advertising. If you are going to make the investment in a booth, the creation of graphics, and travel expenses, then I suggest that you do your research before making that kind of investment.

Have you asked your clients what trade show(s) they attend? Why not do a survey amongst your client base? Ask them what trade shows they attend, and why? If you are going to Trade Show A, and the majority of your clients go to Trade Show B, then you better have a good reason for making an investment in Trade Show A.

Many companies make the mistake, when they are looking at trade shows, of deciding on the biggest trade show—the one with the highest attendance. This may look good on paper, and may impress your boss, but it is no guarantee that you will generate any business. You may end up with a lot of tire kickers—people that go to almost any trade show. They are the cup, pen, and tee shirt collectors. The reason they like going to the large trade shows is that they have a larger selection of stuff to choose from. You have to ask yourself, did they come to your booth to talk with you or to pick up one of your giveaways? What do you think?

When it comes to choosing a show for your organization, I repeat—you have to do your research. Personally, I would rather go to a one-day trade show, where a very select group of prospects is invited and pays an admission fee to attend. You know when this group goes to a show, they are there to investigate, evaluate, and to get ready to make a purchase based on the information they have researched and collected at the show.

Some of the questions that you should ask:

- How long has the show been in existence?
- What are statistics from the last two shows?
- How many of your competitors participate in this trade show?
- Do your clients, prospects, and suspects attend this trade show?
- Do the seminars and discussion sessions conflict with the times that the trade show is open?
- If you have a combination conference and trade show, and the majority of the attendees will be at training sessions, how much time does that leave for the attendees to visit the trade show floor and visit the booths?
- What is the profile of the attendees?
- Do they go to the same location every year?
- What other trade shows does this trade show operator produce?
- What type of advertising is done to promote the show?
- Will you receive a copy of the attendee list, including e-mail addresses, at the end of the show?

When you get answers to these questions, you will have a better understanding of the show, and whether it’s the right show for your organization. The point being: don’t be impressed by the number of attendees. Attendees, in general, don’t purchase your products or services. It’s the qualified prospect, who has come to this trade show for a specific reason of finding out what is available, this is the person who will be buying your product or service—not the tire kickers or pen collectors.



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