

## **Get the Biggest Bang for your Buck!**

Trade Show Marketing - The Keys to Success in 2010

Here we are, 2010, and trade shows are still a very popular way for new and established companies to reach retail buyers. Where else can you get in front of so many buyers looking to source new products for their stores? Not many other places.

But with the economy taking its toll on small company budgets, how can you get the most bang for the buck out of your trade show marketing? The answer is to make the most of your time and money when planning to attend these shows.

Last year, I attended a handful of large consumer product trade shows including the House Wares Show in Chicago and the ABC Kids Expo in Las Vegas. Both traditionally are very crowded and even booking hotel rooms can be tough and of course quite pricey due to high demand. This past year, these shows, while still busy, were just not that crowded and that can be a source of concern when you are planning to spend your marketing dollars. The retail buyers seemed to be there, but knowing that budget constraint prevents even retail executives from jumping on a plane means that there are fewer of them walking the floor. That means that you must do whatever you can to maximize your trade show experience and be fully prepared to do business!

Here are some smart ways to make the most of your time and money at trade shows in 2010:

- If you are an inventor or small startup, consider sharing a booth space with someone in the same situation. Sharing a booth can save you hundreds if not thousands!
- Try seeking out others you may know in your industry and share a hotel room. May sound a little awkward, but if you know someone that you feel comfortable with then why not halve your hotel costs and share the room.
- Don't overspend on giveaways. You know what I mean. The pens or coffee mugs you get made up with your company logo. These can cost hundreds of dollars...and you have to ship them to the show. Skip these and instead have bottled water and some cookies or something at the booth. I know I love a good chocolate chip cookie when I am trolling the trade show floor!
- Take the red eye to and from the show. I know, who wants to fly in at 2am, but hey, if you don't have to arrive at a specific time you can save money.
- Utilize the shuttle bus services. Most trade shows offer shuttle buses to and from the local hotels. Take advantage of them. Renting a car can be expensive, and if the show is in a big city then you probably won't need the car for anything else while you are there. Take an airport-to-hotel shuttle when you arrive and save yourself the time and expense.
- Don't order a lead retrieval machine. These machines, which look like a credit card machine you see in stores when you shop, can cost a few hundred dollars to rent. They are convenient as a buyer can simply swipe their badge on the machine when they visit your booth and you have a record of their information. However, asking for their business card is the same thing and does not cost a cent.

There are many ways to save money and collectively they can really add up. In the end, buyers are looking to do business with those that offer a great product with clear benefits for their customers. Dressing well, being at your booth on time, and saying hello to everyone that walks by will ensure that you have the best shot at having a productive show.

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