

Tradeshows Tip Sheet

This month: Why Do Visitors Go to Shows?

- > 1865 Beach Ave NE
- > Salem, OR 97301
- > 503-371-9411
- > Fax: 503-371-9402
- > www.interpexhibits.com
- > Tradeshowguyblog.com
- > Editor: Tim Patterson
- > [Twitter.com/tradeshowguy](https://twitter.com/tradeshowguy)

What Brings Tradeshow Visitors to the Show?

After spending four days at the Outdoor Retailer Summer Market 2009 in Salt Lake City in July, I came away with a new appreciation for what it takes to get visitors to come to a tradeshow. And more to the point, once the visitors are at the show, how to get them to come to your booth.

The two questions are separate but connected. Getting people to the show is largely the responsibility of the show promoters. Getting them to stop for a few moments at your booth falls squarely in your lap. Given that a tradeshow typically starts small and builds momentum over the years, the industry itself is also a large part of the show's success. Since the outdoor industry appears to be a growing segment, companies who participate in it with products

and services contribute to the overall success, as do the legion of customers and recreation fans.

Part of the reason visitors are coming to the show is the state of the industry. Another element is the previous success of the show. There's also the competition within the industry for other similar or complementary shows, and of course the buzz the show generates among the attendees: is it fun? Does it make sense for people to attend? Are they getting good things out of it? Is it a show that for whatever reason they simply cannot afford to miss?

Will Visitors Stop at Your Booth?

Assuming that the show is of significant value to the attendees that have made the effort, expended the time, energy and money to come to the show, it's your job to lure them into your booth. Once they're in your booth, you need to do your best to accomplish the goals you have set regarding visitor interaction.

Walking the floor of Outdoor Retailer, it amazed me the extreme differences between the staffers from booth to booth. One booth had several people engaging visitors with a smile and handing out samples – as a result they had a lot of visitors. Another booth across the aisle had a staffer who was sitting in the back of the booth, pounding away at a laptop. No visitors.



Of course, location is an asset, as is the 'look and feel' of your booth. Of the handful of exhibitors I talked with that were NOT satisfied with the success of their show, they all attributed it to their location in the hall. They all maintained that a better location would have given them more visitors and more success. Would a targeted pre-show promotion or in-show demo or promotion have changed that?



Who's on our latest tradeshow marketing podcast?

Find out today at www.Tradeshowguy.com/podcast

What details resonate with the audience at the tradeshow that are on your upcoming exhibit schedule?

Who's Hiding Behind that Laptop?

If the show producers and the zeitgeist of the industry or the show have done their job, you'll have plenty of visitors passing by your booth. Now what? Are they stopping? Or are they taking one quick glance at your booth and moving on? If so, is there something that you're doing (or not doing) that is making the visitor shy away?

One thing that I saw many times at the recent show: booth staffers tapping away at a laptop, oblivious to their surroundings. This activity sends a blatant message: "Leave Me Alone." No wonder you're not getting any visitors. Ask yourself: Can this be done at some other time and place? Can you check e-mail when you're off your booth shift? Can you talk on your cell phone later? Is your 'distracting' activity so important that you simply can not put it off?

Having an 'approachable' booth means communicating subtle (and not-so-subtle) messages to show visitors. By keeping your head down in your laptop,

the message is clear: *don't bother me*. By talking on a phone, you're indicating to the passerby that they're less important than your phone call. By eating in the booth (which is the number one turn-off for visitors), you're telling your potential customer: *NOT NOW!*

The downside of telling your visitor *NOT NOW* is that chances are pretty good she won't return. Hey, there are hundreds, possibly thousands of exhibitors at the show. Even if they WANT to come back, they may not have the time. And if the visitor was a potential new client that could have been introduced to your product or service, by being 'unapproachable' *you just blew your only chance with them*.

Attention to Detail

Other things I noticed while wandering the aisles were the little things. Were the graphics in place? Were they of good quality? Was the carpet clean? Was I able to find the booth number? Was the overhead sign helping to direct me? If there were stacks of brochures, were they tidy? If the booth had walls (and many did at the DRSM), was there an obvious booth entrance?

More and more – and particularly at the Outdoor Retailer Show – 'green' exhibiting is coming to the fore. It's clear that the audience is in tune with that approach, and very accepting of using materials that may not have been available or considered just five or ten years ago. But now, mounting graphics

on cardboard, or constructing booth walls with cardboard tubes tells the audience that you're hip, your company is trying to reduce costs and weight and showing concern for the environment. Those kinds of details resonate with that particular audience.

What details resonate with the audience at the tradeshow you plan to exhibit at?

Bottom Line

Drawing visitors to your booth isn't a matter of luck or location. Sure, they both help. But the best thing you can do is have a trained and energetic staff, be prepared to greet and help all visitors, and have an attractive booth that fits with the image of your company and products or services. Pre-show marketing can bring in key players. Post-show follow-up is critical if you want to make your tradeshow

marketing investment worthwhile.

Your ultimate goal is to attract people to your booth. That takes a combination of choosing the right show, having a good exhibit and staffing it with good people. Miss any piece of that puzzle and you may be twiddling your thumbs at the next tradeshow wishing more people were bugging you!

