



## **The Pre-Show Briefing Meeting**

It's the most important trade show of the year; your exhibit is completely installed, touched up, wiped down and vacuumed. Your products are working correctly and their support materials are in place and well organized. The stage is set for your selected performers from sales, marketing, technical support and management to add the all important "human element" of trade show exhibiting to consummate this very expensive and time consuming investment. The exhibit is ready for the trade show challenge, but are your people ready?

It's the night before the show opening and in a local hotel suite the pre-show briefing meeting is ready to begin. The objectives of the meeting are to draw focus to the uniqueness of the trade show environment, review key issues with the products on display and encourage and motivate those selected for booth duty to maximize the many sales, service, support and customer relations opportunities that the show promises to deliver.

There are two teams of booth personnel comprised of sales, marketing, technical support and management each lead by a booth captain who is responsible for scheduling, booth assignments and the overall people management on the trade show floor. Two shifts of booth teams will work the exhibit while the Exhibits Manager sees to it that the entire effort runs smoothly and efficiently at all times.

A pocket booth duty roster and product guide has been produced that lists all the products on display with a brief review of their features, benefits, pricing and competitive analysis. It also lists meeting schedules, key phone numbers and any show information deemed important.

The suite is set-up as a kind of company command head quarters ready room where the entire exhibit support team will meet each day to relax, compare notes, review the day's business on the show floor, share and discuss sales leads and organize various sales and marketing activities. It will also serve as a meeting place for invited editors, key prospects and important customers to meet with the company's technology and top management experts to review new products, business issues, old and new opportunities.

The pre-show meeting begins with the company President making opening remarks relating to the time and money it costs to exhibit at the show, why each of the exhibit team has been selected to represent the company and the overall goals and objectives of maximizing the returns on this trade show investment. It is also important to announce that management will be working the booth along side sales, marketing and support to ensure that customers and prospects appreciate the company's total commitment to service before, during and after the sale.

The Exhibits Manager then displays a complete layout of the exhibit and reviews the schedule of related events and various details pertaining to how the booth will function, who to look to for

help and the dos and don'ts of working the exhibit. In addition, a complete trade show exhibit floor plan is presented showing where various competitors and services are located. Also at this time the sales lead gathering and processing system in use at this particular trade show is reviewed and demonstrated to ensure that all sales leads are completed and managed properly.

A presentation like: "Bridging the Gap Between Trade Shows and Sales" sets the stage for booth personnel to understand the differences between selling in the field and selling at trade shows. It also demonstrates that the exhibit will function in a non-verbal graphic fashion that delivers prospects seeking additional product information and it is then that the important "human element" of selling begins.

Each product marketing manager is then invited to present his/her products that are on display covering the important features, benefits and competitive advantages. Knowing that the competition might be in the next booth, product, service, pricing and delivery details must be able to stand firm as savvy prospects will often compare claims in a matter of minutes to support their purchasing recommendations and decisions.

The end of the meeting again brings up the company President who closes the session by encouraging all to do their best and make the most of this selling opportunity. It's noted that the company will see and meet more prospects in the next three days of the show than it will most likely see in six months in the field.

Once the meeting ends, the entire group makes its way to the convention center to preview the exhibit first hand and to familiarize themselves with individual product presentation stations, literature distribution function, storage availability and the sales lead processing system, etc.

A meal roster and schedule has been developed for this trade show that includes all members of the booth duty team and provides opportunities for management to reinforce good team spirit by spending quality time sharing ideas and experiences during available breakfast, lunch and or dinner hours.

## **Conclusion**

Trade shows always create a myriad of sights, sounds and emotions. Often travel, out of town food and generally being away from home confuses the senses to a greater degree. The one factor that remains is the business of business somehow always finds its way to the trade show floor. And even though you might have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on an exhibit, the fact remains people sell products to people and therefore staging a pre-show meeting should always be an important part of your trade show program if you expect to maximize your return on the time and money invested.

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