



The effective exhibition

- get more business from your exhibitions

Congratulations on your decision to run a more effective exhibition

The Sales Pilots have been to a lot of exhibitions. We have seen the same sad tendencies no matter where in the world we have been presenting our business. Not many companies have any sense of how ineffective their exhibition is:

- Obviously bored staff, sitting down at tables
- Staff stands in clusters, talking amongst themselves
- Those manning the stand are hungover and have had too little sleep. In talking to them, the smell of alcohol confirms the suspicion that they attended a party the night before
- Business cards and data are collected in large quantities but no one at the company follows up on the leads
- The stand is so filled with products that no space is left for visitors
- The walls are covered with excerpts from a brochure – which takes about 5 – 10 minutes to read

Our main issue with these stands is that few understand making their stands effective. They overestimate the physical presence at the exhibition and underestimate the human presence. When we exhibit, our stand is filled with guests – even when all the other stands are empty. We know what makes a difference – and we would like to share it with you.

Of course, we would like you to hire the Sales Pilots to train your staff. But we would also like to see your exhibition stand succeed even if you do not use us for training.

Here are some of our best recommendations. In using them, you will see an improvement in the exhibition outcome – not just for you and your colleagues but for your visitors as well.

Have a successful exhibition!

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Preparation

An effective exhibition takes preparation far exceeding simply booking a stand and manning it. Here are some simple and demanding, yet utterly effective, things to do when preparing:

- **What is your goal?**
What are your goals in spending time and money on exhibitions? Be as concrete as possible. We would like X guests at our stands. We would like X leads. We would like to open a dialogue with these specific companies. Whatever your goals are, make them concrete. You can never know if your exhibition is a success, if you have no goals to compare your effort to. A proper exhibition is an investment; make sure that you have specific and concrete goals to aim for.
- **Be focused**
Never try to present ALL your products at the same time. Most people have difficulty processing more than three things at once. Choose 1 – 3 products that make sense in relation to the particular exhibition and those visiting your stand. No matter your business, a visitor cannot relate to all your products at the same time. Less is more.
- **Choose specific employees**
As a rule, the employees manning the stand must be those who actually want to be there. Do not select the employees randomly or send those who are somewhat expendable. Send those employees who like to attend an exhibition – and those who have excellent people skills. Your investment is much too large to pick employees who will be obviously bored or simply do not like being at exhibitions. Choose extrovert and happy employees. It pays off.
- **Behavioral training**
Train your employees in manning a stand. Or hire the SalesPilots to handle training – we deliver the effective solution to your needs. Take your time – regardless of whether you use the SalesPilots or do the training yourself. Being well-prepared makes a huge difference.
- **Sales training**
Make sure that your personnel knows the 1 – 3 products that you present at the stand. Make sure they know advantages and what a customer stands to gain from the product. Your presenters must be able to present the product thoroughly in 30 – 60 seconds. Never refer to simply technical product knowledge. Your personnel must know enough to give an elevator speech and create interest in the visitor in a very short time. Make sure all your employees know the elevator speech intimately. It is time well spent – especially considering your investment. Make a cheat sheet for your employees presenting advantages and gains from your focus products.



- **Pictures are better**

Visitors are more likely to pass you by if they have to read a small novel on your pull-ups and walls. Use interesting high-resolution images to create interest and draw in a crowd. Images say more than words.
- **Dress code**

Pay attention to how your employees are dressed. Being similarly dressed makes a good impression and makes it easier for your visitors to recognize an employee. Do coordinate to such an extent that employees are dressed in something resembling a uniform. Dressing like that makes you a living billboard advertising your company. Visitors can easily find you, and your overall impression is one of a strong unit. A specific dress code also benefits your employees' sense of a group effort.
- **Free gifts and contests**

Present gifts to your guests. Everyone loves a freebie. Using gifts as a marketing tool creates interest and will draw in more visitors. The same is true for contests. Plan in advance your gifts and your contests. Make sure, though, that your contest is relevant to your products. Selling office furniture but having a bicycle as a prize makes no sense. Your gifts and your prizes must be related to your product and what you want the participants to remember you for.
- **Be unique**

Planning based on what you and other companies usually do is easy. It is also quite boring. Do something that no one else does – and do not refrain from doing something because you are the only one. Being at an exhibition is about creating attention. Create attention by doing something unique.
- **Price lists, brochures, and business cards**

Remember to bring price lists and brochures. Having too many is better than having too few. Not having enough material appears unprofessional. Every employee at the stand must have business cards and be very active in passing them to visitors.
- **Use the internet**

Make a note on your website that you are attending the exhibition. Place the same message at the bottom of every email you send for 3 – 4 weeks before the exhibition. Actively use social media before and during the exhibition. Post images to your Facebook profile and make sure to write updates to your LinkedIn profile. Customers knowing that you are at the exhibition is only for the better.



The exhibition

Following solid preparation is solid execution. Execution is one of those things you need to do extensively. The rules are::

- **Everybody is ready!**
Staff must show up at the stand thirty minutes before the exhibition opens. Go through your focus products and elevator speeches together – and make sure that your stand is clean and proper and that you have plenty brochures, water, coffee and such.
- **Scheduling**
Manning a stand is hard. Create a schedule where everyone gets a break once in a while. Schedule a 15 minute break every 45 minutes. Being mentally fresh when you are “on” is very important. Breaks are a must, especially if the exhibition is more than a day long. Make a schedule and FOLLOW it. All breaks take place outside the stand.
- **Internal contest**
Create a competition on the targets you have for the exhibition. That the employee who, after the exhibition has made the most e.g. appointments, gets a reward is only good. Reward everyone when you reach X business cards a day or similar. Internal contests and collective rewards promote the employees’ motivation and activity during the exhibition.
- **Good shoes and comfortable clothes**
You have to be standing up for a long time. Everyone must wear proper shoes and clothes. Standing at a stand is just that – standing.
- **Establish contact**
You are at the exhibition to make contact with your visitors. Every employee manning the stand must be focused exclusively on those passing by. Simply standing around staring at people, passing by, gets boring after a short while. Seek out those passing by – do not focus on the ones already at the stand. Establish contact. But make sure that you do not “assault” those passing by talking about your product. If your employees find it difficult to establish contact we recommend using a pro magician or entertainer. Such a person creates attention by doing magic tricks (or like), drawing visitors to your stand. In that way your employees do not have to establish the difficult initial contact.
- **Create sympathy**
Stand in a relaxed pose, arms straight down, smiling and greeting everyone passing by. Radiate confidence and a giving personality. People with a positive demeanor are far more interesting than those who simply hang around. You have nothing to lose. Your exhibition experience is simply better when establishing contact to as many visitors as possible.



- **Ask open-ended questions**

“What has been good about the exhibition?”

“What interesting things have you seen?”

“Why are you at the exhibition?”

“What are you looking for at the exhibition?”

Open-ended questions are fantastic at establishing contact. After smiling and greeting, ask an open-ended question – it creates the basis for a conversation. 180% of all conversations you will be asked “What do you do?” That is where you present your sales pitch. In 30 – 60 seconds, you explain what you do and what your visitor stands to gain by getting to know you. You can NEVER know whether you are talking to a huge potential customer – or if she knows someone who may become a huge customer. So ask open-ended questions..

- **Business cards and materials**

Upon concluding a conversation with a visitor, the employee must hand over a business card and make sure that the visitor has all the relevant material. Conversely, make sure to get a business card from the visitor, and potentially schedule a meeting after the exhibition. Business cards from visitors are collected every day by one specific employee.

- **Schedule a meeting or a phone call**

Upon establishing a relationship to a potential customer, ask when you can meet or call each other. Be specific: Day and time. Typically, the untrained employee agrees to “call next week”. The downside to this is the likelihood of both parties forgetting the agreement. Book a future contact immediately.

- **Everybody, stand up!**

The only time an employee sits down is when on a break or in a meeting. In sitting down, you indirectly signals a visitor that you are busy. Fewer will visit your stand. Everyone must stand – **always!** So wear comfortable shoes and clothes.

- **Spread out**

You might find it nice to stand around in a circle talking to your colleagues. To an outsider, though, he or she finds discouraging seeking a conversation with a group of people rather than one person. Spread out – even when you are not busy. The maximum number of people in a group is two.

- **Lunch**

Being focused and standing up takes energy. Make sure that everyone eats regularly. All eating must take place outside your stand. Visitors do not like interrupting someone’s meal. You are at the exhibition to create attention but not by eating at your stand.



- **Gum and smoking**

No employee chews gum. If an employee is a smoker, he or she must take a breath mint after smoking. Nothing is more disgusting to a non-smoker than the breath of someone who just had a cigarette. Chewing gum and smoking create the opposite of sympathy and positive attention.

- **Gifts and contests**

If you have gifts, only give them to actual visitors. Do not present gifts to people simply passing by. Place an anchor in everyone receiving a gift by only handing it out after a conversation. The value of a gift is heightened by this and makes the customer remember your company more fondly. The same holds with contests. First a conversation, and only then ask whether the customer wants to take part in your contest or receive a gift.

- **Water and snacks**

Manning a stand is physically hard. Stock up on plenty of water for your employees. Passing out water creates good karma as well. Snacks are a good idea – for employees and visitors – but be inventive. Everyone else passes out chocolate or candy – do something else: carrots, fruit, crackers, or other healthy snacks. Make your stand the place for something healthy and refreshing – visitors will associate your stand and company as something “healthy”.

- **When you are busy**

Doing all of the above will pack your stand with visitors – even when others have none. So you and your staff are busy talking to potential customers. No employees can talk to all visitors – instead they should be completely present in conversation with those visitors you are actually talking to at any given time. Take a brief second to look at a new visitor who is not being served, smile and nod, and return focus to the one you are talking to. You can never know who is a huge customer or who will only waste your time, so you have to give everyone at least 2 – 3 minutes of attention. Excuse yourself from a conversation with someone who just wants to talk – but give them your 2 – 3 minutes and they will still leave with a positive impression of you and your company.

- **Party the last day**

Traditionally, exhibition staff parties in the evenings. Some employees see participating in an exhibition as an opportunity for getting drunk and partying all night. The next day, though, they look hungover and no matter how many breath mints they eat, the body will still reek of alcohol – and your visitors can tell. Never allow your staff to get drunk and to get too little sleep. Prepare them for partying on the last night of the exhibition. Who wants to visit a stand where the staff looks hungover and smells of a pub?



After the exhibition

After the physical and financial effort, it is quite natural that you want to return to your daily jobs. However, the exhibition is only physically over. Follow-up and evaluation is something very few companies do well. Even companies who invest millions in exhibitions have a tendency to overlook follow-up. Seeing as how you have made an large investment, you should do the following:

- **Send a personal email**
You and your staff have collected a pile of business cards. The same day that the exhibition closes you send out an email to everyone who visited you. In the email you congratulate them on visiting your stand. Write down a short version of your elevator speech, and inform them who they should contact for further information. Most people visit 20 exhibition stands. Make sure they remember you – which you promote by writing an email. Make it personalized; do not bulk-send emails. Time spent on every visitor who gave you their business card makes the potential customer feel unique. You and your company are remembered in a much more positive light.
- **Evaluation**
About 48 hours after the exhibition closes you must gather around your exhibition staff. Evaluate what worked and what did not. Find out if your goals for the exhibition were reached. Write down all the inputs so you can use them for the next exhibition.
- **Follow-up**
Make sure that the employees who made an agreement to contact a potential customer actually does so.
- **Activate the business cards**
Update your database with the business cards from visitors. Ask your sales department to reach out to the visitors on LinkedIn and other social media.
- **Measure your sales**
Following the exhibition, you have to measure the sales that is directly or indirectly related to the exhibition. Many believe that exhibitions do not result in sales, but very few attempt to measure an effect. Make sure you know how the exhibition affected your sales.



Get it done!

Getting more from exhibitions demands an effort that in all likelihood is greater than you usually put in. So naturally, you will tend to skip a step here or there. That is your choice. But everytime you skip a demanding step, you waste time and money.

Exhibitions are a Before-During-After marketing effort. Leaving out one of the phases, you risk losing out on an opportunity and lose your investment. Take the exhibition seriously. Prepare – Execute – Follow-up.

Get it done! After reading this folder you have no concrete reasons not to – unless you stop going to exhibitions.

Good luck on your next effective exhibition.
The SalesPilots





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