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Guerrilla Sales & Marketing

Emerging Trends In Trade Show Marketing

By Lori Turner-Wilson

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Lori Turner-Wilson



Technological advancements have changed the trade show game. The stakes are higher and participation is more expensive than ever. Nice collateral, a giveaway and a winning smile are no longer enough. You must more creatively attract and engage attendees to effectively compete.

Beyond the overdone PowerPoint or meaningless tchotchke, consider utilizing technology to feature a remote instructor teaching a class “in” your booth, or offer visitors the ability to interact with an educational kiosk. Kiosks allow attendees to engage with your brand until a member of your team can break away to speak with them directly.

Consider offering a five to 10 minute video demonstration behind a closed curtain as another way to generate interest. Encourage participants to provide basic contact information to enroll.

Integrate social media into your trade show strategy. Allow those “tweeting” about your booth, using a special hashtag, automatic entry into a Twitter contest. Bring an industry expert or celebrity to speak or be interviewed at your booth. Take photos of attendees with this expert, capturing their Facebook “handles” along the way. Post the photos on your company Facebook page, tagging those pictured, to create buzz and further engage attendees.

Post videos on YouTube of engaged visitors talking about your brand in your booth to extend the reach of your booth beyond the show itself.

Utilize QR (quick response) codes – square shaped bar codes – to allow smartphone users to quickly access a web page featuring educational content, a contest entry form, or an interesting product video. Don’t limit QR codes to just your booth. Embed them in other show material and outside of the exhibit hall if you can. Deploy a QR code scavenger hunt where attendees are given clues about where to find their next QR code and subsequent clue – ultimately leading to a grand prizewinner.

Not all attendees will be familiar with QR technology, so it’s wise to accompany the codes with instructions and a short alternative URL where possible.

Keep in mind that technology’s role at a trade show is simply to enhance face-to-face contact – not replace it. You must tune up your bonding skills for these brief encounters. Begin with an opening question such as “What’s catching your attention at this year’s show?” versus the predictable “How are you today?” which often yields an equally predictable response like “Fine.”

Once you’ve engaged attendees, your next objective is to quickly qualify

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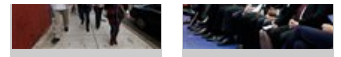
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them to determine: (1) if they are a viable prospect by asking a few high-impact open-ended questions to identify their needs or pain that your product/service can address, and (2) if they are a decision maker or influencer. If they are not a qualified prospect, move on quickly.

Leveraging emerging trade show trends offers an exciting opportunity to combine technological advances with quality face-to-face interaction to better engage prospects and deliver a stronger return on your show investment.

Lori Turner-Wilson is an award-winning columnist and managing partner of RedRover Sales & Marketing, www.redrovercompany.com. You can follow RedRover on Twitter (@redrovercompany and @loriturner) and Facebook (facebook.com/redrovercompany).



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