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Vendor shows give your business exposure

TERRI LYNN HASMAN • NOVEMBER 30, 2008

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So, your business needs a boost. But with the news of the economy and [the stock market](#) performance, many have put their wallets in a time vault marked "Impending Doom! Do Not Open!"

In the current circumstances, your once-lucrative advertising budget is now an unaffordable luxury. What do you do?

Vendor shows are usually happening year-round in different locations and can be a fast way to get high exposure for your business.

However, if you've never participated in a vendor show, it can be confusing.

With some planning, you can minimize the confusion.

How do you know which event to participate in?

The best thing to do is go as an attendee. This will familiarize you with the layout of the building, as well as available space for your potential table.

Scope out the attendance and talk to other vendors about their experiences with the show.

Feedback from vendors as well as the attendees is important.

During the show, ask yourself:

- Is this a recurring event?
- How much advertising was done?
- Are you allowed to sell product, or is this strictly for generating leads?
- What is the cost? Participating in several shows can be costly. Will you be able to recoup your cost from just one new [customer](#)?
- How long is the event?
- On what day of the week does it usually occur?

• Does this event attract the same people every time, or are there new faces for both the attendees and the vendors?
Once you find a show that suits your needs, you may encounter other vendors representing products and services similar to what you offer. This is where you need to stand out.

To help you get noticed:

- Stand in front of your table at all times. Angella Luyk, owner of Midnight Janitorial, has built her half-million dollar business from networking alone. "The table can be a barrier between you and the customer," she says.

"Standing in front of it gives a more personal feel and begins to establish a relationship faster."

- Make the table attractive, but don't overcrowd it.

Using attractive displays and arranging the information or product in a rising and falling fashion captures and keeps the viewer's attention.

Add subtle lighting and colors. Offer a free token or a raffle. Everyone wants something for free.

Once you capture the senses and the mind, the customer will be more open to what you have to say.

- During conversation, make sure you listen first.

Try to determine what customers are looking for. Tailor your presentation to their needs.

At the same time, do not drag on while speaking. Say what you need to quickly, clearly and with the most excitement you can muster.

Remember, you have what customers need, now you need to tell them why and how you are going to be different than every other [business owner](#) that they meet.

- A name tag is vital. Make it fun and different. You want people to remember who you are.

By having a name tag that shows your personality, others will be able to bring you to mind more quickly.

- Finally, wear your most important accessory: your smile.

Terri Lynn Hasman is the owner of the Givers Gain Foundation featuring the products of Butterfly Worldwide and, as a member of RWN, is the co-chair of the Young Professionals SIG.

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