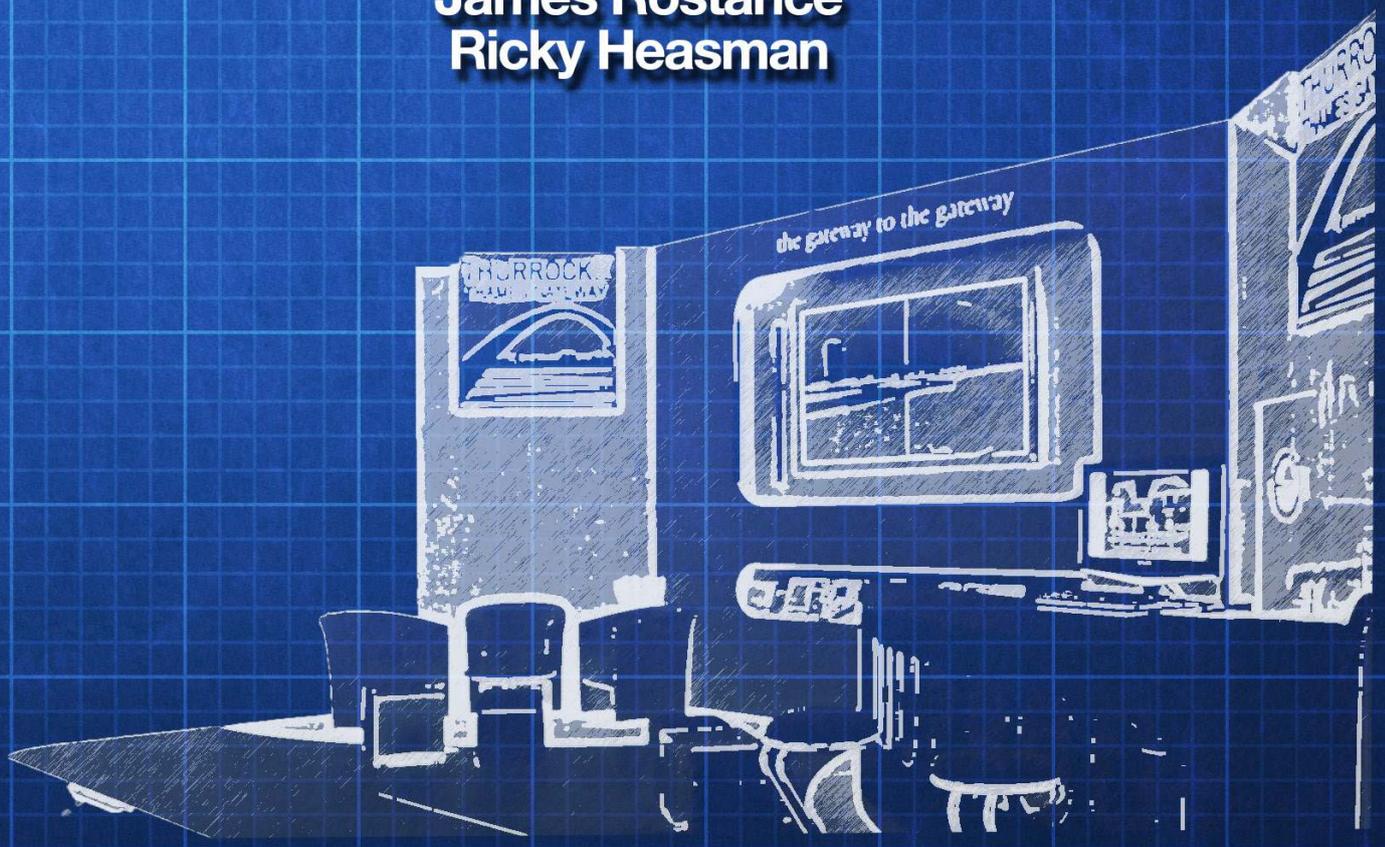


Exhibition and Trade Show : BLUEPRINT

The definitive guide on
how to exhibit successfully and profit
(QUICK-START VERSION)

James Rostance
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INTRODUCTION

Whether you're a trade show veteran or you've never exhibited before, this book will help you plan and execute a successful exhibit and directly help you increase sales at a show.

Presented as an easy to follow step-by-step guide, you will be able to avoid the worry and stress which so many other professionals needlessly put themselves through.

With this edited highlights version of the full publication, the huge rewards which successful exhibiting can offer will be within your comfortable reach.

Work still will be required! But you'll be able to take great satisfaction in knowing that every movement of your time will directly be contributing to your ultimate event and sales success.

"Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe."

-Abraham Lincoln
16th US President (1861-65)

1 A SOLID GOAL

The very first task to undertake when setting about exhibiting is clearly defining a goal.

- To sell your product or service directly on the day
- To showcase your new or existing product or service to current customers, with the aim of making a final sale at a later date
- To showcase your new or existing product or service to prospective customers, with the aim of making a final sale at a later date

With a goal in mind, you will be able to choose an exhibition site effectively.

Examples of which would include:

- After carefully studying an organiser's promotional material, you feel that the profile of likely visitors would meet your own profile of target customer and that there would be sufficient volume for you to achieve a healthy ROI (Return on Investment)
- You have a successful history of exhibiting there and your most recent show was a success for your company in terms of ROI

2 RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Depending on when you ultimately plan to make sales. You have to take time to carefully consider, whether or not exhibiting at a particular show will provide you with a good ROI (Return on Investment).

A number of factors will contribute to determining whether or not that will be the case. Such factors will include:

- The number of expected visitors
- The number of visitors who you will be able to interact with personally (staffing numbers and size of stand are deciding factors)
- The match of the show's visitor profile to your own target customer profile
- Competition from other exhibitors with a similar product or service to your own
- Your sales strategy for the show

- Estimated sales volume
- Projected sales conversion rate

3 THE EXHIBITION TEAM

In small companies you may not have the luxury of choosing an exhibit 'dream team'. But, if it is possible, the ideal option is to choose motivated people who are qualified and enjoy working as part of a team.

4 TEAM BRIEFING

Commonly, members of your team will have unique experience and knowledge that they will be able to offer.

Such offerings can include:

- Ideas for extra products or services that could be sold at the show
- Potential problems with production or service delivery
- Logistical problems
- Timing problems
- External factors, such as a competitor's product launch
- Industry, customer or economic problems
- Staffing issues such as prior commitments, booked holidays, maternity or paternity leave

Whatever information different members of your team bring to the table, be it large or small, it should be evaluated and acknowledged. Their collective knowledge can be invaluable for planning in the early stages.

5 ATTRACTING VISITORS TO YOUR STAND

You will have a finite capacity to meet and interact with visitors.

This is why, smart exhibition organisers think very carefully about who, and how they will attract people to their stand. You see, not every visitor who comes to an exhibition will necessarily be potential customer for you.

6 OPENING INTERACTIONS

You have to grab an exhibition visitor's attention within the first 15 seconds. You will do so by using an 'opener', which is a carefully scripted piece of dialogue that will do everything that we have just mentioned.

Here, is a fail-safe list of 'hooks' that you can use in your openers:

- How you can solve a problem for them which they currently have or know that they will soon face
- How you can solve a problem for them which they do not know they currently have, or that they are likely to face in the near future
- How you can save them time
- How you can save them money
- How you can make their life easier
- How you can help them make more money
- How you can help them to significantly improve something they already do
- How you can help them serve their customers better
- How you can help them differentiate from their competition
- How you can help them to perform a new activity efficiently and effectively

The format for constructing an opener is:

- Articulate the problem or desire faced by your prospects in a conversational frame
- Link to, and introduce the solution that you offer

7 QUALIFYING

Time at the exhibition is both limited and precious. This is why qualifying needs to be undertaken as soon as possible for the benefit of all. To determine your qualifying process you need to define what qualities a legitimate prospect for you needs to possess. The best way to approach this is for your team to list what these should be, preferably in a bullet pointed list. The qualities that you will be looking for will more than likely fully mirror your day-to-day customer background profile. However, you should not take that for granted.

8 DIFFERENT TYPES OF BUYER

When trying to understand who your buyers at the show will be, you need to know that buyers can come in one of three different types:

1 – An Actual Buyer

They have the power and authority to make a purchasing decision all on their own.

2 – A Potential Buyer

A potential buyer is somebody who also has power and authority to make a purchasing decision on their own.

3 – Someone With Influencing Power In A Buying Decision

The first form of buyer for example, is understandably likely to be considered the most desirable form of exhibition stand visitor; but that can lead to problems if you are not careful. You should never let the category of buyer influence the level of service and attention that you give to someone.

4 – Non Buyers

Everyone on your stand should be courteous and polite at all times. However, that should not be confused with feeling a need to continue an interaction once it has been established that a particular visitor is a non-buyer.

9 PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE

It is your responsibility to ensure all members of staff possess an agreed, defined base-level of product knowledge. Additionally a predetermined procedure for referring difficult questions should also be created. Through proper staff training your entire team will be better qualified to make sales as well as impressing those visitors who will have had unsatisfactory experiences with other exhibitors.

10 PRODUCT DEMONSTRATIONS – INTRODUCTION

Companies each have different product demonstration possibilities and capabilities. The ideal situation is where you can get a prospect physically or emotionally involved in the demonstration in some way. A demonstration within the larger context of your tightly scheduled sales presentation is a lot more memorable, and more effective, if you can involve the prospect

directly. For this reason, you will benefit greatly if you and the exhibition team sit down to really work hard at figuring out how you could do that.

11 PREPARING FOR A DEMONSTRATION

The golden rule of any demonstration is that any staff involved, must know how to carry it out flawlessly.

The only way in which staff can carry out a perfect demonstration every time is by practicing in advance. When you are on your stand at an exhibition you are performing live. Just as news presenters do not rehearse their lines on air, your staff should not be learning how to demonstrate your product on the stand at the show.

12 WHEN TO DO A DEMONSTRATION

The correct answer for when to hold a demonstration can only be determined by your own needs and plans for your exhibition.

Under no circumstances should you 'busk it' and 'see how it goes on the day'. Your planning process will allow you to decide if you intend the demonstration to act as a pulling factor to draw people to your stand or if you use it at a defined point within your sales presentation. Keep it short and sweet.

13 DEMONSTRATION LENGTH

One of the key principles in exhibiting is that you have a very limited time in which to interact with a prospect. It is for this reason that demonstrations should be kept as short as possible.

You need focus purely on demonstrating the key benefits or unique features which your product or service offers. Sticking to that will ensure demonstrations engage and excite!

14 PRESENTATION OF DEMONSTRATIONS

Your stand may involve staff demonstrating to people individually.

Subtle use of PA can be used to gently reinforce what is being said for the benefit of onlookers and to spark the interest of others, even if they were not already watching the demonstration.

Another more commonly overlooked opportunity for improving demonstrations is with the use of specialist lighting. Lighting can highlight your demonstration as well as making it easier to see. It also has the added bonus of making what you are presenting look more desirable.

15 SALES MADE OVER A COURSE OF TIME

Some companies are able to make definitive sales and sell product on the day at an exhibition. For a large number of companies that will either part be the case, or not at all. In which case, another kind of target needs to be set for the conclusion of all successful interactions at a show.

If a sale cannot be made on the day, then something has to be engineered so that a sale over the course of time may be pursued.

Instead of passively asking for their details so that YOU may make a sales call, you could instead, set out to make a value driven offer to help them with something.

This is based on one of the primary interest drivers which we also covered earlier and they included amongst others, to help a prospect:

- Save time in what they do
- Save them money
- Directly help make their life easier
- How you can help them make more money

16 MOVING VISITORS ALONG

The ability to conclude and move on is an important skill which you and your team must have because prolonging an interaction beyond any of those points will not bring any further benefit.

It may be tempting to carry on talking with a stand visitor for a number of reasons. However, you are there to do business and as much of it as is physically possible. Once the interaction reaches one of those points, a staff

member needs to be polite but resolute in bidding the visitor farewell and setting about seeking a further prospect.

You can choose to either have a standard 'moving on' script that your whole team can learn, or you can allow team members to devise and tailor their own. Either option is good, just so long as each member of staff knows in advance what they need to say when the need arises.

17 COMPETITOR KNOWLEDGE

A key aspect of preparing for a show includes having in-depth and up-to-date information about what your competitors are currently doing. More senior staff members or sales professionals may well have much more detailed and in-depth knowledge of your competition and this knowledge will need to be disseminated to the rest of the staff.

18 THE HOLY GRAIL THAT IS DATA CAPTURE

Data capture is the one process which companies most commonly do incorrectly or worse yet, not at all.

The term 'Data Capture' is widely used in business and is actually partially to blame for a lot of companies getting it wrong. The problem is the name implies the process is simply getting a person's details, thus completing the capture process. However, capturing or soliciting a person's details at a show is only part of the process.

To readdress the misconception which the traditional title is prone to creating, it would be more accurate to refer to it as 'Data Capture & Management'. The management side of the task refers to what you do with the data after you have captured it. Data Capture and Management is a key part of the sales process, which is bad considering that that so many companies get it wrong (even if they do collect names, address and some details).

There is absolutely no golden rule to how much or how little information you should seek to gather. What information you do gather, should be determined by the needs of your own sales process. Your sales department will be able to tell you exactly what they need to know, to help in ultimately making a sale. Core information such as the sales representative's name, the prospect's company and contact details, along with the date all speak for themselves.

19 VISITOR TRACKING SYSTEMS

Visitor tracking systems are a standard feature at well organised events. When visitors register and sign in on the day their details are recorded and they are given a visitor badge with a barcode or a QR code.

When an exhibition closes the visitor tracking system links all the scanned ID badges with the registrant's corresponding information that the organizer holds. That information is then printed or delivered electronically.

All information that you collect, needs to be reliably connected to any externally sourced information such as that from a venue's visitor registration tracking system.

20 PREPARATION OF MEDIA FOR THE SHOW

Media that you will need for the show will include brochures, leaflets and any additional printed material such as name badges, show special offer leaflets, or stickers.

Planning in detail with your team early on what media you need and would like to have at the show is important and beneficial because it will help to guard against any mistakes caused by last minute commissions of work, as well as avoiding the significant increase in costs associated with fast-turnaround media and print production.

All media has a certain amount of lead time and all too often companies leave it until the last minute which causes an unnecessary risk of making mistakes and could increase cost. Early media planning saves jobs, sanity and money!

Showing your product or service being successfully used in a real-life application or the development and manufacturing process behind it is both engaging and effective. In which case, you should seriously consider a short demonstration video to do just that. A specially produced video for display at an exhibition need only be short because video is such a powerful sales tool and this is why the majority of companies make use of it an exhibition. A good video these days does not necessarily mean expensive either; but by our definition a 'good' video is one that directly helps you in ultimately making a sale.

A company who specializes in producing this kind of short and punchy video, specifically for exhibitions is www.WOWvideoproduction.co.uk

21 SELLING TO YOUR EXISTING CLIENT BASE

You might have heard that it is seven times harder to gain a new customer than it is to sell to an existing one. To look at this another way, it is seven times easier to sell to your existing customer base or clients.

A lot of companies focus purely on attracting and selling to new customers at an exhibition. Whilst that is most certainly a valid strategy and, without being too pedantic about percentages, it should represent one half of a company's exhibition prospects. Ultimately, the overall goal for your company exhibiting is to make sales in one way shape or form.

Given that it is seven times easier to sell to existing clients, it speaks for itself that you should make efforts to get existing customers to visit you at the show so that they may be sold to. Previous customers and existing clients would have bought from you because either they liked your product, your service, or better yet, both. So it stands to reason that so long as they were looked after throughout their customer experience, they potentially would be interested in an invite to see you at the exhibition.

22 INVITES WITH INCENTIVES

On its own, a simple invite for customers you would like to visit your stand is not enough. The invitation should first be a personal one, addressed directly to the recipient and having targeted the invitation correctly, the next crucial part to it is the content. It should predominantly offer a benefit or a reward of some kind to get them to visit you at the show.

An example of which would be:

- To be one of the first to try out or see your new product offering in person
- A one-on-one consultation that would be of notable benefit or help to them
- The opportunity of a show special or discount for purchase on the day
- A voucher which can be exchanged for a gift upon arrival
- The opportunity to meet a celebrity or industry expert you have arranged to be on your stand at the exhibition

23 SELLING TO NEW PROSPECTS

There will be visitors to your stand who will be there because of the show's own publicity. Out of those visitors there will be a number who should have an interest in what you do. There is perhaps a much greater opportunity for you to solicit visitors who would have an interest in your product or service, but as yet do not have plans to visit the exhibition.

To invite new potential customers you can use a similar, if not the same method and approach as for inviting current customers. Anyone who has enquired with your company recently would also be a valid target. To obtain contact details of new potential prospects, you can use a reputable specialist list broker or a service such as the Thomson Directory.

24 THE INVITATION PROCESS

Getting people to visit your stand will require several steps in the design of an invitation process. Part of this process may include giving away free tickets to an exhibition that the public may or may not otherwise have to pay for. Once you have acquired a list of potential prospects from a single or a variety of sources, you should use a combination communication approaches which includes:

- Direct Mail
- Telemarketing
- Email Marketing

25 ADDITIONAL SALES GOLDMINE

The main attraction for most visitors to come to an exhibition is for them to see many different companies and their products, at the same location in a very short space of time. Another factor which is a significant draw for attendees is the offer of seminars held by leading industry speakers. However, the fact which is commonly overlooked by exhibitors is how those people are selected.

Content is most certainly King; so the best way to determine what your talk should include is to draw up a bullet pointed list of the main topic areas which you think you could cover. Before investing into the idea fully and setting about scripting it, you first need to successfully sell the idea to the event organiser. The bullet pointed content list which you produced will provide you with just the right content for you to write an introductory piece about the talk. That introductory piece will serve as your sales pitch to the organiser, as it will demonstrate how you can offer real educational or entertainment value to exhibition visitors.

26 SHOW SPECIALS

A lot of show visitors come with the expectation of being able to find special deals if they buy at the exhibition. Discounting is the obvious choice; however, considering the impact on your bottom line which discounting can incur, a show special does not necessarily have to involve that.

To incentivise purchase on the day and to satisfy the desire of show visitors to find a special deal, in place of a discount you could seek to add extra value to a purchase in one of many different ways.

Discounting is popular and it requires little thought and imagination because it most certainly affects your bottom-line. Yet, with a little creativity and some good old-fashioned 'outside-the-box' thinking you can generate enough excitement to stimulate a buyer into purchasing or initiate a purchase on the day without having to discount.

27 PREPARING YOUR MEDIA & PRESS CAMPAIGN

Trade journals and magazines are read by industry professionals, who in turn are your customers. These publications are constantly on the lookout for good quality content.

To get media coverage you first must hook the interest of the media and sell your idea to them. Specifically you need to create a press release which enables you to do just that. It can be beneficial to consider using a PR agency or consultancy to assist you with promoting your presence at an exhibition. Many Public Relations organisations are happy to work on a 'project' basis rather than on a long term contract.

28 MEDIA COVERAGE & OPPORTUNITIES

Pre-show Coverage

Publications, both online and printed, commonly run preview features of forthcoming shows and exhibitions. Different publications will each have their own deadlines for submission. In each case it's worth finding out what they are well in advance. The pre-show coverage will generally appear in the edition prior to the show and the content will tend to be more general in nature, although any teases about big announcements are invariably included.

Show Features

Exhibitions commonly have 'show features' which act as a major source of attraction for audiences and the public. At a 'Homes & Gardens' exhibition, celebrity house stylist Linda Barker was responsible for designing the complete interior of a show-home. Her work is followed by many, and she used furniture from the manufacturer Lombok to furnish part of the house. Lombok in turn used this accolade in their press and PR material.

Your products may get chosen purely by chance in these kinds of situations, or you could choose to actively seek to get your products used in 'show features'. The show organiser will be able to provide you with details of any

show features plus the necessary contact details of those responsible for producing them. The work involved is worth it, both for the exposure in the features along with the 'bragging' potential from a PR angle.

29 PREPARING YOUR MULTI-STEP FOLLOW-UP SEQUENCE

Your follow-up sequence needs to be executed, the moment that you and your team get back from the show. In order to seamlessly do so, it needs to be fully prepared in advance.

Certain prospects will give you specific requests that will demand special consideration and attention from you and your sales staff. For the majority of prospects, they will simply require a well drafted follow-up letter to accompany or satisfy their request. You should seek to produce a 'form letter' to cover each of the most common areas of interest and likely sources of request for information. If you are not familiar with 'form letters', they are pre-written communications which are simply tailored and personalised to include the recipient's name and address.

30 MULTI-STEP SALES CLOSING

It takes on average, seven interactions between a prospect and a company before a sale is made, therefore, your follow-up system should be designed with this in mind.

The seven steps may comprise of person-to-person interactions, telephone calls, e-mails and letters.

The subtlety of this approach is that it keeps you in the prospect's mind and they also ultimately regard you in a favourable light. If on every occasion that you contacted them you continually asked for a sale, the chances are that they would either start to ignore you or you would end up annoying them. Compare that situation to one where for at least three separate occasions over a course of weeks, you are there to simply help and offer value.

31 PRODUCE AN EXHIBITOR'S KIT

Producing an exhibitor's kit will greatly facilitate in making sure that everything goes to plan during the exhibition in the way in which you intended.

A kit is best presented in the form of an A4 folder or binder, and contains fact sheets with further information on specific subjects. The kit should include the following type of information:

- Full exhibition venue location details
- Accommodation details
- Schedule for working hours and breaks at the show
- Team member details such as contact info & roles at the show
- Health & Safety Risk Assessment
- Official Press Releases
- 'Mission Objectives' which clearly reinforce the goals for the exhibit
- Pre-show marketing strategy (for existing and potential customers)
- List of appointments along with any corresponding briefing notes
- Product line details & pricing
- Show Specials
- Competitor product line details & pricing
- Exhibition stand layout plan
- Details of Products on Display
- Exhibition hall map with your location and likely traffic flow
- List of equipment and materials that are needed at the exhibition
- Details of any shipping and drayage arrangements, along with contact information and reference numbers
- Strategy for opening interactions with stand visitors
- Strategy for qualifying prospects
- Demonstration Strategy
- Strategy for 'moving on' or concluding an interaction
- Storage policy for completed show lead forms
- How to deal with the Press
- Details of all services that have been ordered with reference numbers along with a contact at the show
- Details of any other potentially useful contacts
- Daily team briefings and de-briefings
- Show wrap, breakdown and departure details

32 YOUR ARRIVAL

Regardless of the amount of preplanning, there will always be the risk of unexpected complications or last-minute problems. To enable you to prepare and avoid these potential eventualities, your early arrival on site will be your greatest asset or leverage to be able to deal with them, particularly where the cost of investment in an exhibition on your company's part runs into the thousands, tens of thousands of pounds, or higher; your arrival on site should be no later than two days before the show itself.

Not only should you, your team and your stand be fully ready to go a good hour or two before the show opens but you should all be fully rested, excellently briefed with everything in place the night before.

33 FINAL PRE-SHOW MEETING

Your final pre-show meeting should take place on the morning of the show, a full one to two hours before it officially opens. That meeting will give yourself and the team one last chance to re-cap all of the various elements which you have planned as part of the show. The morning of the show should also be the time when your competitor's stands will be fully ready as well.

A last-minute reconnaissance mission by one of your team members immediately before the meeting may be able to gather some useful information about what your competition are planning to do. If anything does come up, this will provide you with the opportunity to discuss it as a group and decide a way in which to counter or handle any objections that potential customers may have.

34 STAFF MANAGEMENT & CARE

Managing and looking after your staff is equally about making sure your staff do exactly as they are supposed to, as well as ensuring that they have the best possible conditions in which to work. By making sure your staff are well looked after you will enable them to perform optimally and deliver maximum results from their performance.

The biggest threats to performance at an exhibition, from a staff capability point of view, are late-night activities and the excessive consumption of alcohol. The impact which either or both of these behaviors pose to your exhibition success is so great that you should seriously consider banning the consumption of alcohol, as well as instigating a curfew.

35 DEALING WITH THE MEDIA & TRADE PRESS

You should have a dedicated, media-trained person on the stand that is responsible for looking after any press members who are expected, or turn up unannounced. There should also be a deputy press contact as part of the team who is equally well briefed on your company's presence at the show, along with an ability to effectively deal with the press. This deputy is necessary in case the primary contact is on a break, or is simply away from the stand when a member of the press arrives. All staff on the stand need to know the press contacts are so that they can direct, and introduce press members to them.

36 DAILY MEETINGS

A team meeting before the start of each day's business will give you the opportunity to share one another's expectations, experiences and opinions of the progress so far. It will also give you an opportunity to update one another on any developments that you have learnt your competition has undertaken.

Whilst it may feel sneaky or slightly underhand to scope out your competition throughout the course of an exhibition, it is absolutely necessary. You could delegate this task of information gathering, or you may choose to do this yourself. The sharing of your collective competitor knowledge in a meeting will allow you to fine tune and adjust your exhibition strategy as necessary.

37 TIME TO CASH IN

The follow up sequence is initiated the first day in which you and the team are all back in the office. It is this final stage which most companies get wrong or disastrously, DON'T DO AT ALL!

It's very tempting upon returning to the office to focus your efforts on what you would regard as 'getting back into the swing of things'. Examples of which would be replying to all emails as well as other comparatively menial day-to-day tasks. It is extremely unlikely that anything could come up that would be more important than sending out the sales information which has been requested by prospects at the show. Each of the completed forms in your possession will be highly qualified leads that you and your team created from a dream list of criteria. Those leads will be the closest thing which your company now possesses to a signed order form and a cheque.

38 USING CRM SOFTWARE TO MAXIMIZE LEAD POTENTIAL

CRM stands for 'Customer Relationship Management' and there is a wide range of software solutions to help with that task. If your company does not already have a CRM system then you should actively look into the purchase and installation of one.

CRM Software is purposefully designed to record, track, and help with your sales generation process in ways that go far beyond what a simple calendar and notebook can do. In most cases the 'old fashioned' way of doing any given task invariably still works today. However CRM software empowers sales staff to go about their business of selling much more effectively and more quickly. It is widely acknowledged that the implementation of any CRM system pays for itself in a very short space of time.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

James Rostance is a Marketing Systems Specialist.

Alongside academic qualifications, James has spent many years learning from some of the world's greatest names in direct marketing: Eben Pagan, Drayton Bird and Dan Kennedy top his list of favourites.

His skill set centres on developing marketing processes which, once created, sell a product or service automatically. The use of media and technology is central to making this happen. However, the principles on which this is based, originate from traditional (old fashioned) direct-marketing.

In short, James either devises ways to sell a new product or service, or he finds a better and more effective way to sell an existing one.

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Ricky Heasman comes from a family with a long history in woodwork and craftsmanship, specifically cabinetry by royal appointment. His father, grandfather, and great grandfather were each cabinetmakers whose work was sought and commissioned by many top figures, including The Sultan of Brunei, The Royal Palace of Qatar and furniture restoration for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Ricky, trained with his father in the family business and has gone onto diversifying into Exhibition Stand Manufacturing, taking the skills and knowledge of fine craftsmanship that he was taught. He now runs one of the country's most successful exhibition-stand manufacturing companies.

Today, Spectrum Exhibitions proudly offers what are perhaps the best designed and built exhibition stands in the industry, as well as winning awards.

www.SpectrumExhibitions.co.uk

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