

Winning the Show Floor: The Secrets to Successful Exhibiting

1 SET GOALS BEFORE YOU WALK IN

- Define a needs goal (break-even point) and a wants goal (stretch outcome) before every show.
- The wants goal keeps you energized when your feet are tired on day three.
- Every show should accomplish the needs goal at minimum – everything beyond is a win.

2 BUILD BOOTH TRAFFIC BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

- Booth traffic doesn't show up by magic – new exhibitors often leave this to chance.
- Use three-phase pre-show marketing to warm your audience gradually, not last-minute blasts.
- Pre-show outreach via event apps, email, or LinkedIn drives qualified visitors to your booth.

3 YOUR BOOTH DESIGN IS A SILENT SALES TOOL

- That default table at the front of a 10×10 closes you off from attendees – move it to the side or back.
- Configure your space to be open and welcoming so attendees flow in and conversations happen naturally.
- Know the rules in advance so you have the confidence to set up your booth correctly – even when neighboring exhibitors push back.
- Design for accessibility: meet ADA minimums, then go further. Nearly 1 in 12 men has some colorblindness – that should shape your graphics.

4 TRAIN YOUR TEAM FOR THE SHOW FLOOR

- Sales training doesn't translate to booth performance – staff need trade show-specific coaching.
- Train opening questions that skip small talk: “Are you looking for...? Have you considered...?”
- Coach your team to share the booth space fluidly, like a well-coordinated restaurant team.

5 QUALIFY LEADS: HOT, WARM, COOL, NOT

- Replace fishbowls with a four-tier system: **Hot / Warm / Cool / Not.**
- Define each tier's criteria with your team before the show, enthusiasm alone is not a hot lead.
- Use on-site oversight to review lead notes live and coach staff during the show, not after.

6 PLAN YOUR FOLLOW-UP BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME

- Post-show fatigue is real – beat it by deciding your follow-up sequence in advance,
- Mix at least **2-3 communication channels** (text, email, LinkedIn, direct mail) within a 2-week window.
- Tell hot leads in the booth exactly what to expect next, building trust before you walk away.
- Watch which channels each lead responds to and tailor long-term outreach to their preferences.

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7 APPLY THE “ROBIN DAVIS TEST” TO SWAG

- Branded pens and candy bowls attract everyone – including the wrong people.
- Ask: would anyone want this regardless of whether they can buy from me? If yes, rethink it.
- Your booth attraction should draw in the right visitors, not the biggest crowd.

8 THE SHOW NEVER STOPS OUTSIDE THE BOOTH

- From the airport to the reception, keep your eyes up and engage with people around you.
- At events, **split up from colleagues** – you can talk to your team anytime; social time is for new connections.
- Even contacts who can't buy today may introduce you to someone who can. Be the connector.

9 THE 3-PART TRADE SHOW TRAINING FRAMEWORK

STEP 1 ONBOARDING

Well before the show
Align your team on goals, processes, lead criteria, and booth behavior before anyone boards a plane.



STEP 2 FULL TRAINING

Practice & refine
Rehearse opening questions, lead qualification, and booth choreography. Test and iterate for this audience.



STEP 3 ON-SITE COACHING

During the show
Walk the floor, review live lead notes, and coach staff in real time. Don't wait until after the show to fix habits.

“Optimization doesn't happen by accident. Exhibitors who show up with clear goals, prepared staff, and a follow-up plan already in place are the ones who win the show floor.”

— Robyn Davis, Trade Show Trainer & Consultant, WINH LLC

SPEAKERS



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