



CloserStill

10 Top “Must ask” Questions for Trade Show Exhibitors





Welcome

At CloserStill, events are in our blood. Whether you know us from our newer shows like Commissioning or AGM, or some of our greatest hits such as the Pharmacy, or Dentistry Show, you can't have missed how passionate we are about putting on high quality events.

And with the changes to ABPI guidelines, we know exhibiting to the medical and healthcare sectors can present its own specific challenges; we often get asked the same questions by our exhibitors, some that may seem obvious and some less so.

No doubt you will, as you read, be saying to yourself, "I know that!" Or perhaps, "I knew that, why am I not doing it?" So please look on this, not as an instruction manual, but an aide memoire – a nudge to make sure you have not overlooked the obvious.

We asked specialist event consultancy Task Force 2 to prepare this paper because we both want you to enjoy the best results possible from your participation in any trade show. From time to time we also run free training events, so if you have any questions, or would like to register your interest for our next event, please get in touch:

Task Force 2: results@taskforce2.co.uk

CloserStill Media: training@closerstillmedia.com

Regards

The CloserStill Media and Task Force 2 teams

Task Force 2
'Making Your Exhibition Mission Possible'



QUESTION 1 Why are you exhibiting?

There are three main reasons to exhibit:

1. **To make new sales***
2. **To make new appointments**
3. **To make new contacts**

*What you're selling at a trade show is usually a first impression

There may be some subsidiary reasons – market/industry research, profile-raising, but these will rarely justify the investment on their own.

Note that; "We always exhibit here." "We need to be seen to be there." and similar statements are not reasons that stand up to examination.

So, consider the possibilities and be specific – what sort of people are you hoping to meet, how will you identify them, and what will you be saying?

QUESTION 2 Who will be manning the stand?

"Our crack sales team." Might not be the best answer. What most of us want from a trade show is leads. Sales people in general are not lead generators and often do not fare well in that role. In addition, sales people like to have in-depth conversations with prospective clients. The last thing you want at an exhibition is your stand staff taking 20 minutes talking to one person while 50 promising visitors walk by.

Likewise, "Accounts Receivable is a bit of a slow area at present so we're drafting in a few of their people." is obviously a recipe for disaster – yet surprisingly often this type of thing seems to be one of the main selection criteria.

What you want on your stand are hungry lead generators. If you do not have such people on staff, consider outsourcing your requirements to a specialist firm.

At the very least arrange a briefing in advance of the event. A busy show floor, ten minutes before visitors start to arrive, is not the best time to be explaining your objectives and practicing your key messages.

QUESTION 3 Why is an exhibition stand not a tombola?

Many exhibitors put an activity in place to entice visitors onto their stand. And many do a great job of generating a list of people who like champagne, or iPads, or free pens, but sadly not their products and services.

Think about what you can offer that specifically attracts those interested in your business. Can you invite a brand ambassador or industry figure to hold a briefing on your stand? Can you give access to your technical team to showcase the level of expertise you can offer?

Talk to your show organisers as they may have activities in place that you can utilise and will certainly help you promote your own activity to delegates.

QUESTION 4 Have you set realistic targets?

Or indeed any targets at all? It is amazing how many organisations have no idea of how well, or badly, their last show performed. Mainly because they have no idea what they expected or wanted. The most common answer we get to the question, "How did the show go?" is, "Okay, I guess. I think we probably broke even."

Apart from the fact that breaking even should hardly be a satisfactory result, a palpable demonstration of vagueness such as this should at least worry the firm's financial director!

So, consider the costs of participating, determine what will be an acceptable return, set performance targets and *measure the results!*

QUESTION

5 Have you scripted your approach, your pitch & your escape?

If you are to generate the maximum number of qualified leads from your exhibition, you will have to ration the time you spend with each person. Certainly you have less than five minutes to attract, involve and dismiss each one.

You will need to confirm or reject the visitor within seconds, get your result (appointment, follow-up call or whatever) in a couple of minutes, collect the details you need and send them on their way in a few more seconds more.

This means having a tightly planned script that everyone learns and adheres to. Otherwise you risk having many meaningless conversations with many unsuitable visitors. And not getting the result you planned for!

If your product or service really does warrant a more in-depth discussion, can you organise an area on your stand, or book networking space at the show to accommodate your prospects in a way that won't deter new visitors from entering your stand?

QUESTION

6 Are you collecting enough information?

A business card will not tell you all you need to know. And an electronic 'zapper' will not pick up the quirky bits of information that could make all the difference to your long-term results.

You need a data collection form that your staff will complete for each qualified visitor.

It does not have to be complicated; two or three questions, an opportunity to make notes about the visitor's relevant colleagues and anything peculiar to your organisation's needs that you can include.

Make sure it is branded with your style and, where possible, get the visitor to complete the details – it will be the beginning of their involvement with your company.

QUESTION

7 How fast is your follow-up?

The most common complaint from show visitors is of tardy or non-existent follow-up.

Everyone has their horror stories and the loss of business is colossal. Are you guilty?

We believe that follow up should be 'instant' – which means an email waiting when the visitor gets back to his or her office next day. Which means, of course, that you must send the email *today*. Consider what processes you could put in place to gather the leads each afternoon and action them immediately.

Again, it does not need to be complicated but it *must* be followed by substantial contact within a few days. People are more impatient today than ever before in history (probably something to do with the Internet, that universal scapegoat). If your follow-up is perceived as being slow (read 'lazy') prospects will wonder how likely it is that your performance as a supplier will be satisfactory. And they will act accordingly.

QUESTION

8 Will you be able to cope with the volume of enquiries?

This is probably a subsidiary question to number 7. One of the problems many organisations face is that sales staff are faced by an influx of leads to follow up, *in addition to their normal work-load*.

Add to this the fact that many show leads are sub-standard (not yours, of course, especially if you act on the suggestions in this booklet!). So what happens? The exhibition leads are shoved to the bottom of the pile and attended to weeks later, if ever.

If you do not have sufficient manpower to cope with the expected influx, for goodness' sake, outsource the follow-up!

Grade your leads so that the 'hot' ones are dealt with immediately by your top sales people and let a third party organisation carry out a holding operation to keep the second- and third-string leads warm until they can be properly dealt with.

Think about how you will get any additional information you uncover at the show to the person who will be contacting the prospect. Show you remember and value the time they spent on your stand.

QUESTION

9

Are you handing out literature as an alternative to making solid contacts?

You know how it goes – you are walking down an aisle, looking for a stand you want to visit, when a large, glossy, expensive, full colour brochure is thrust into your hand. It probably ends up in the bin as you leave, but the offending company gets a report back about how much interest visitors have shown – "We even ran out of brochures!"

Treat your literature as the expensive and precious resource it is; make visitors work for their copy by committing to a meeting or at least a follow up telephone conversation.

And this is controversial: consider not handing out literature at all!

BONUS

11

Are you tracking your Return on Investment?

Trade shows are expensive. So it is important that you keep track of the resulting sales. Depending on your sales cycle, this could take anything from days to years. But it must be done otherwise you will have no idea whether this show, or any show, is worth the time, effort and cost involved.

Most of us now have CRM systems that make it easy to track results, sadly many of us do not use them properly. If you do nothing else as a result of reading this small volume, *please* promise yourself that you will evaluate your results, no matter how long it takes.

QUESTION

10

What is it that you do again?

One of the most depressing features of many exhibitions is the lack of imagination shown in the area of stand design. Exhibitions are show-biz – if you don't show (stand out) you won't get the biz. It's as simple as that.

This is a particular challenge for companies whose products or services cannot be easily displayed on a stand. How many halls have you walked around where you cannot even guess what type of product the exhibitors are offering?

Think about what attracts you to a stand. (Settle down, gentlemen; ignore them ladies.) Now get your stand designer to take your preferences into account; you are not looking to win an award for 'design', you want to attract the right visitors.

So, unless you are a household name already, forget about your identity and concentrate on a big, bold BENEFIT that no-one can miss. That should bring them running.



About CloserStill

CloserStill Media is an organisation that specialises in professional events in the healthcare, medical and related markets.

Our portfolio includes some of the UK's fastest-growing and often award-winning events including Commissioning, The Dentistry Show and the Pharmacy Show.

The CloserStill stable has a formidable reputation for delivering event after event that smash expectations in the medical arena. With ever growing footfall, and quality, highly engaged delegates across our portfolio, our exhibitors trust us to deliver on our promises right from launch.

training@CloserStill.com
0207 348 5250
www.closerstillmedia.com

About Task Force 2

Making a success of an exhibition is no easy task. Many managers find exhibitions a challenge, with no clear idea how to set achievable targets and measure results.

Task Force 2 has developed a reliable process to take the uncertainty away. We're so confident in our techniques that after agreeing achievement targets with you, if we don't achieve them, you won't pay. But don't get too excited - we've never failed to achieve our targets.

Our staff don't just offer empty plastic smiles and miniskirts - with over twenty years' experience in marketing, public speaking and business consultancy, we are serious about getting a tangible return on your investment.

From stand mystery shopping, to stand manning services to providing you with your very own outsourced exhibition department, contact us to find out how we can take the guess work out of your events.

www.taskforce2.co.uk
info@taskforce2.co.uk

