

Business Tip of the Month

...from the desk of the Client Services Coordinator

Tradeshow 'Season' Lasts All Year!

My curiosity was piqued the other day, when I overheard someone talking about getting ready for the tradeshow season. A researcher by nature, it didn't take me long to confirm that tradeshow 'season' is actually 12 months long!

Today's tradeshows aren't the same as the medieval fairs and ancient bazaars where vendors exhibited their wares but they still provide an excellent option for businesses to promote their products and/or services.

It is important for you, as a business owner, to determine if a tradeshow is the right fit and then build a solid, strategic plan for participating. It is also important to allow enough lead time to prepare a professional, results-oriented exhibit.

When weighing the benefits of presenting your product or service at a tradeshow, table-top expo, conference or business fair, you will want to be clear on your objectives, and know how you will measure your results (e.g. a way to track your resulting sales or the number of leads you obtain). You will also want to talk with the organizers to find out the total attendance, exhibitor turnover and the demographics of the attendees.

Don't forget to find out the fee for your space and exactly what is included for that fee. There will be other costs to consider as well – carpeting and display tables may not be covered in your initial fee, and you will need décor, signage, literature, handouts, etc. Your research and planning will help you determine if your anticipated results warrant the expense. As a small business owner, you might decide that trade shows are not the most effective use of your time or money.

Once you decide on a show that is best suited to you and your business, there are many things you will need to know. A simple Internet search for 'tradeshow tips' will get you started. There are hundreds of sites specific to tradeshows that provide helpful information, insight and free eNewsletters. You'll discover that there is a tradeshow code of ethics, etiquette (no sitting, eating, or drinking at your booth) and protocol (no soliciting in the aisles) – you'll even find tips on body language and the best location for your booth. You can learn how to promote your attendance prior to the show and how to follow up with leads and contacts afterwards.

For many, a tradeshow can provide a great marketing opportunity – make sure you prepare to take full advantage of it!

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