

How to Leverage a Small Tradeshow or Event Budget

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2010 is in full swing and for many of us that means a surge of new energy and excitement for what the New Year has to bring. For many of us it also means a new tradeshow season and new opportunities for growth no matter what last year looked like. As a small business owner who has a strong belief in strategy, execution and tracking results; that has worked with both nonprofit and small businesses, I hope that sharing what I know about the following might be beneficial to you and your organization:

- the effective use of booth space
- small tradeshow budgets
- your role if you are not an exhibitor
- other affordable "show" options

These are relevant topics not just for today, but something you should be aware of all the time. Over the last few years, many companies have approached these topics with more scrutiny.

First of all let me ask you: What do you think about when you hear the word "Budget"? Many of us feel a little squeeze of anxiety, a feeling of war zone and perhaps a bit of a "Whatever, it is really not up to me - shrug". However, I like to see it this way:

It is just another tool for creativity.

This is your chance to shine whether it is raining like cats or dog or the sun really is shining. Whether you are a part of a larger organization or a one man show – it applies to all of us one way or the other.

What are your challenges or questions? Perhaps **you have at some point felt overwhelmed finding the right show?** Or perhaps you **struggle to justify shows or get them approved?** Keep in mind what we discussed about the way to see budget and also let me suggest that you keep this in the back of your mind for now:

Suggestion # 1:

"Be where your customers are at the moment."

This would be called the Movements of relevance theory. Pretty simple right? But we still tend to forget. So, I would suggest revisiting this before any actions are taken. Does it matter how big (or small) your tradeshow budget is to make this an important topic? Not really.

Suggestion # 2:

There are several **things that I believe you should think about no matter what your tradeshow and event budget is.** Also, these are great check marks for an event **even if you can't exhibit:**

- Research, research, research. (Look up what type of show it is, does it offer seminars, the location, the audience, media attendance etc.)
- Pre, during and post tradeshow marketing. (Set meetings, smaller or larger target marketing depending on goal, make pre show phone calls, emails, direct mailers etc.)
- Goals (What is the intention or timing of the show? Is it a product launch, brand establishment, marketing, sales, profit increase or other goal focus?)

- Walk the floor with a note book. (Check out trends, look at competition, get ideas.)
- Visit the media room (Check out trends, competition, get ideas, build relationships.)
- Attend (or not attend) after hour events (Hosted by who? Invite someone to join you, set one up yourself.)
- How many really need to go to the show?
- Strategy, execution, evaluation – all the time, everyday.
- Map up clear ROI before the event. Small or large organization.
- What is your reason for bigger space?
- Always have a call to action/call to stop by the booth. For ex. a competition to find your booth.
- Invitation only. Make people feel exclusive.
- Look at your partners. Could you team up in a way that would benefit both? (Donations, cross over marketing, products, target market, international organizations/leader in the field etc.)
- Banners that are exchangeable saves time and money.
- Small informal meeting spaces make a different area for certain conversations.
- Outsource an event to a company that does similar events all the time. They will have the time and resources for it at hands.

Suggestion # 3:

We have all heard it before: “Think outside the box” and again to revisit my first suggestion: “Where are your customers?”. Here are some ideas for other show options:

- Host or find a VIP event. (Invite all or maybe just one of the following: best customers, new customers, prospects.)
- Become an event sponsor
- Make an In kind donations.
- Be part of a (business that is) match making session.
- Attend niche shows.
- Host or participate in a fundraising event.
- Attend a sporting event.
- Make an event by invitation only.
- Attend or speak at seminars and workshops.
- And don't forget to tie this into your online marketing (Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, Website, E-newsletter, blog etc)?.

Where are we heading in the show world?

Well except for the last bullet above - you have to tie all of your online marketing to the road shows - I also see a very clear trend towards smaller, more niche marketing shows. And the good thing about this is that your feet won't get as sore?. High Point specializes in event support, please drop us a line to discuss how we can help with your show needs.

I hope some of this information will make you feel ready to take on the world this new Millennium. Best of luck and please feel free to contact me before, during or after the SIA show with any questions?.

About the contributor:

Having experience with national and international non-profit organizations as well as for profit companies, Katarina C. Greene knows how to maximize marketing effectiveness at tradeshow and other events. After working at the Swedish American Chamber of Commerce, the Swedish Track & Field Association, and Body Bar Systems, she founded Peace of Mind Marketing, a marketing and business development firm with a focus on the health and sport industry. To see more about Katarina click here or visit www.peaceofmindmarketing.net.