



## Maximizing Your Trade Show Success

Trade show season is upon us, and many companies are busy designing booths for the biggest events in their industries. There are several tactics that companies commonly use to lure traffic to their booths – food, interactive displays and games, and prize giveaways. But trade shows are only as valuable as you make them. If you actively engage attendees, you will identify new business prospects, re-connect with current customers and see a valuable return on your investment.

Consider these tips to make your World Pork Expo experience successful.

### Pre-Show Preparation

**1. Create a plan.** Identify your goals and objectives before the show and develop a sales strategy to ensure a more rewarding experience. Why are you here? What are your goals and objectives? Do you want to identify 25 potential new customers or place 10 product orders? How will you reach your goals?

Evaluate your return on investment. Keep track of all expenses — entry fees, travel expenses and productivity costs — associated with attending trade shows and all the sales leads generated. How do they measure up?

**2. Select staff carefully.** Your trade show staff represents your company and your brand. The people working the booth should be knowledgeable about your products and services. Arrange a staff meeting prior to the show to communicate goals, how to answer frequently asked questions and identify the “go to” person when issues arise. It is important for everyone to be on the same page so messaging is consistent.

Assign a trade show coordinator. Establish a “go to” person to keep the booth running smoothly. Make sure the person has copies of all the contracts and key contact information so they can deal with any situation that may arise.

**3. Schedule shifts.** Your booth should always be staffed but never crowded. Arrange shift schedules so employees can set appointments with customers, take a lunch break, and check messages.

### Be Proactive

**1. Ramp up your public relations efforts.** PR is one of the most cost-effective and successful methods for generating awareness about your products and services and increasing your sales. Get a list of media outlets attending the event, and send them relevant press releases focusing on your new products and services and your niche in

the market place. Put together press kits that include product spec sheets, photos and contact information for key personnel. Then assign someone on your trade show staff to work with the media.

**2. Give visitors an incentive to visit your booth or hospitality tent.** Send a mailer to your current and prospective customers a few weeks before the event to notify them that you will be at the trade show. Include your booth number and a complimentary voucher to increase your return rates.

**3. Interact with your current customers and employees.** Trade shows are valuable from more than just a new business perspective. Explore methods to interact with your current customers or provide continuing education opportunities to your employees. Host a customer appreciation dinner or an awards banquet for your employees, dealers or retailers to capitalize on the time you have with your staff and customers.

## **Working the Show**

**1. Be engaging and inviting.** Make eye contact with attendees and engage them in a conversation, so they don't stroll right on past your booth. Ask about their business. What is their role in the company? What are they looking to accomplish at the trade show? A knowledgeable sales person can explain how your products will meet their needs.

Put your cell phone away and shut off your laptop if it is not part of the presentation. It sends the non-verbal message that you are too busy to talk with attendees. You want customers to leave your booth with a positive impression that sets you apart from your competitors in the next aisle.

**2. Little details make a big impact.** Evaluate all of your attendee touch points. Are there other opportunities to get your brand in front of customers? Small gestures and subtle messaging creates a positive impression of your company and an enjoyable experience for attendees. If you have giveaways, make sure they are memorable, communicate your brand's message, promote your company, and motivate people to purchase your products.

If you serve food giveaways, have plenty of plates, silverware and napkins on hand and avoid messy items. Food or beverages should be approved by trade show management staff before the show to avoid contractual conflicts with the exhibit building.

## **Follow-up on Leads**

When the trade show ends, the real work begins. Your efforts are all in vain unless you follow-up with prospects. Develop a method to collect contact information before the show begins. Make sales representatives accountable for following-up on leads and track their success. It is critical that you make contact with potential customers within a week to increase your chance of closing the sale.

Develop a plan to capitalize on this trade show season, put it into action and watch your business grow.