

# TOP 10 TIPS FOR POST-SHOW MARKETING ACTIVITY

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**sift**media  
interactive community publishing

100 Victoria Street, Bristol BS1 6HZ, United Kingdom  
tel +44 (0)117 915 3344, fax +44 (0)117 915 9630  
info@siftmedia.co.uk | www.siftmedia.co.uk

## Introduction

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Conferences, exhibitions and trade shows provide a unique opportunity to meet a high volume of potential clients face-to-face in a single venue. For some industries these events may happen only once a year and they can warrant a significant portion of the marketing budget as a result. Often those in charge of an organisation's presence at an exhibition will focus on planning up to and including the day of the show. But after such an investment of time and money, why leave the rest to chance?

Rather than relying on sales representatives to follow up on a couple of new contacts, this is your opportunity to really capitalise on the work done prior to the show and help maximise your return on investment.

Here are some of the key post-show marketing activities that we believe can make the difference between a mediocre event and a truly successful revenue generating one...

## **1 The event's over and you have your leads – now follow them up**

Okay, this may be stating the obvious, but we've been to enough exhibitions to witness staff on stands doing all they can to get business cards from potential clients, only to take them back to the office and leave them untouched until they've been on the desk for so long nobody can remember where they came from! When it comes to warm leads these are straight from the oven. That's a horribly cheesy way of putting it, but if prospects like this aren't followed up what other lead generative activities are doomed to fail?

Experience suggests that a sales rep will often focus only on the hottest prospect from an event at the expense of smaller or more difficult prospects. Brief conversations at an exhibition stand are unlikely to reveal all that a prospect has to tell you, so focusing energy on what might appear to be the best is a dangerous game.

"Brief conversations at an exhibition stand are unlikely to reveal all that a prospect has to tell you..."

Set aside the time to call each and every contact you've made, after all, you have their business card because they're interested in what you have to say – you never know what that second conversation might uncover.

## **2 Develop the relationship – a 'thank you' goes a long way**

Whatever system was used to capture your data (business cards, writing down contact details or using a scanner to 'zap' visitor's badges) one piece of information you almost certainly capture is an email address.

This is a golden opportunity to strengthen the relationship with the prospect that started at the event. A basic message thanking them for visiting you, reminding them of your services and offering a simple call to action is highly effective in generating a response.

You may decide to combine this email with a phone call, however it is worth spending some time reviewing the recipients carefully to avoid mixed messages – the two communications should be complimentary, not conflicting.

### **3 Review the exhibitor list – you could uncover some hidden opportunities**

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If you didn't do so before the event, there's still time to take a look at the list of exhibitors at the show and consider whether any may provide potential new business partnerships.

It goes without saying that a huge amount of networking goes on between exhibitors and these meetings often result in a variety of partnerships and business deals. A case in point is Sift Media's MyCustomer.com site, a resource for customer management professionals, which is approached regularly by other exhibitors looking to reach its audience. A number of successful partnerships have been reached as a result of such enquiries.

If you didn't get to meet other exhibitors in person, simply call and introduce yourself as a fellow exhibitor - it's an easy door opener, and your conversation will already be flowing.

### **4 Debrief – what worked, what didn't and what can be done better next time around?**

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All too often exhibitions come and go without any question of whether it was actually worthwhile. Appearing at trade shows and conferences is not cheap (especially when costs such as travel and accommodation, very often ignored, are taken into account) so why should any marketer not want to analyse the results of their investment?

#### **■ How could things be improved next time around?**

It's not just about the number of leads (although the finance director may disagree!). What channels were used to promote the event and were they successful? What activities and collateral worked well on the stand? What didn't? What was the stand presentation and location like? Were the staff manning the stand effective? How could things be improved next time around?

There are lots of other areas to consider, but remember to take into account the true cost of exhibiting (remember those travel and accommodation costs!) when looking at your ROI.

Okay, so you've maximised the opportunities from exhibiting at the event, you've reviewed the levels of success and you may even have started planning for the next one, but what else? Well, chances are that there were plenty of key prospects at the event who didn't stop to give you their details. The good news is that between the event website, brochure and your exhibition stand you should have achieved a good level of brand exposure – now it's time to compliment this with other activities in the promotional mix...

## **5 PR – if you’ve got something to shout about...**

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Now’s the time to consider the PR opportunities created by your exhibition. What new products and services were launched? What key clients were brought on board? What partnerships were created? If you have a PR agency, it could be time to give them a call and give them something to write about. If not, get your creative juices flowing and start writing!

Whether something genuinely ‘PR worthy’ occurred or not, you should at least consider writing a review of your exhibition in your company blog. (You do have one don’t you?)

## **6 Build on the brand exposure – this is where you can get the best results!**

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So you’ve achieved brand exposure in a physical setting via your exhibition stand, which is a great start. But you’re not necessarily in control of who actually sees the brand and, therefore, who sees the message you are trying to deliver. By following this initial brand building activity with a more targeted campaign, you are able to reinforce your message to a more select audience.

### **■ Look for something that is both targeted and measurable**

The key here is to choose the most appropriate channel for this activity. For example, an exhibitor at a show like Call Centre Expo may choose to advertise with Sift Media’s MyCustomer.com site – a community of tens of thousands of customer management professionals. The right channel will offer branding opportunities across an audience of targeted and profiled prospects.

## **7 Become a thought leader – now people know you exist, they’re ready to listen. So it’s time to start talking!**

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Positioning your company as an expert in the market is essential and one proven way to do so is by providing engaging downloadable guides (much like this one in fact!). Sift Media has offered these opportunities to clients for many years and the most important lesson learned has been that it is not an opportunity for a sales pitch. This is your chance to offer genuine insight into an area that the reader may not already know about. By all means make subtle references to your organisation, but you want to be seen as giving useful information not lots of sales patter.

If in doubt about the sort of content we’re talking about here, just check out the ‘Latest downloads’ section on the homepage of Sift Media’s MyCustomer.com site.

## **8 Lead generation: Part II – Where you can really maximise ROI!**

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The chances are this is the reason you exhibited in the first place. You can now leverage all the hard work that you've done so far to get more targeted and better qualified leads.

- **Post-show online activity has the ability to attract a higher volume of more targeted prospects...**

At the exhibition you will no doubt have ensured that the stand looked attractive, engaged the visitors and communicated your proposition to them. This is really not that different to the post-show activities we've just discussed. The difference is that post-show online activity has the ability to attract a higher volume of more targeted prospects to your brand and can deliver real-time qualified leads by offering immediate calls to action.

Online lead generation opportunities can take a huge variety of forms – indeed there are plenty of exhibitions and conferences on this subject alone! There's not enough space for us to list all the options here, but the thought leadership articles discussed above can themselves be lead generative where a visitor is asked to enter a few details in order to download the document. Other examples may include online seminars or 'webinars', free trials, online games, podcasts or competitions, amongst many others.

Remember that a well planned and executed campaign online can last 12 months and provide twice as many responses for the same cost as your exhibition stand! We've also seen that maintaining momentum throughout the year is highly likely to increase the effectiveness of subsequent events.

## **9 Maintain the relationship – communication is key**

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So you've generated your red hot prospects and may have even converted a few sales already. Now, don't lose them!

You can engage them through content or adverts placed in industry publications, or even create your own email bulletin. There's always something to talk about; whether it's a new product or service hitting the market, special offers, an acquisition, exciting or important industry news, or even your own recent activities.

If you have the budget, but not the time or resources, there are plenty of companies who will take care of this for you – keeping prospective clients engaged is well worth the investment.

## **10 Book your stand for next year – and plan your marketing activity to promote your presence!**

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Now that you've taken every step you can to ensure your post-show activity was as effective as possible, examined what worked and what didn't, and followed this up with subsequent marketing activities you can look towards the next event.

Hopefully you've decided that your recent exhibition was worth the investment, and that you're looking forward to the next with eager anticipation. Event organisers are always keen to get re-bookings as early as possible and the chances are you'll be able to drive a hard bargain on the price of your stand space if you do it now. Remember it's not all about size though! It may be more effective to barter on the additional services rather than the stand space; inserts in delegate packs, supplying a speaker for a seminar theatre (fits nicely with the thought leadership feature!), branding on the event website and brochure, show signage, sponsorship of cafés and networking areas. The list is almost endless.

Once the stand is booked, remember to promote your presence as much as possible. Let prospects and clients know you're going to be there by sending them an invite, advertise in appropriate trade publications (remember online will always provide the most measurable response) and mention it in your new email bulletin a month or two before the event. You may also need to promote the event internally within your organisation. The importance of motivating staff who will be on the stand for two or three days should not be underestimated.

### **How can we help?**

Here at Sift Media we've been on both sides of the fence, as organisers and exhibitors at many events. We've also become experts in managing various aspects of the marketing mix for clients looking to complement their presence at an exhibition. We hope our experience proves useful to you.

If you would like to know more about the online solutions available to support your exhibition activity, you can contact us at [info@siftmedia.co.uk](mailto:info@siftmedia.co.uk), speak to Tom Dunkerley on 0117 915 8650 or visit our website at [www.siftmedia.co.uk](http://www.siftmedia.co.uk).

Good luck with your next event!