

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OF INCREDIBLY SUCCESSFUL TRADESHOWS

Adapted from Ken Krogue, in Forbes-Entrepreneurs, April 5, 2013

1. **The early bird catches the worm. Generate leads before the event begins.**

Keep every contact and lead from years past, reach out 6 weeks ahead of a trade show or an event, and make appointments before the event even begins. Use social media like crazy. But don't spam. Just get to know people and meet them at your booth.

2. **Look sharp, be sharp, and be kind.**

Be assertive and talk to everyone, and have your entire staff do the same. Don't sit down. Don't leave drinks and food around the booth. Be kind. Never be a jerk like many of the old timer sales types I see who almost push you out of the way if they don't think you are important. In today's age of social media one person's disgruntled voice can carry far and wide.

3. **Trade leads with every other vendor at the trade show.**

Why? If you get 180 business cards, and they do also, now you have 360. 10% or 20% may overlap. That's ok. Way more than you got on your own. And many of those vendors can become prospects or great partners. Competition is awesome!

4. **Never go to a show that you can't speak at.**

Enough said. And sitting on a panel with 4 other people isn't the same as speaking, but it's better than nothing. If you can't speak, make your own event that you can speak at and invite everyone in your database to come hear you speak at the show. Oh, and speak well.

5. **When you speak, don't pitch your stuff. Grow your industry.**

If your content and research is really good, people will flock to you. If you sell your stuff on stage, they flock away from you. If you help them provide answers to difficult questions, they turn to you to help them in their business. But people hate sitting through a sales pitch masquerading as a seminar... don't do it. It hurts you. Have faith in your content and value.

6. **Give cool swag away that matters and pulls well.**

Make people sit through a 20 minute presentation to get a \$55 sweatshirt or a cool drone that flies from your smart phone. Why? You must educate Interest into Need, and only people with Need buy from you. Interest is the counterfeit of Need. Interest without Need wastes more time of your salespeople than anything else. Interesting and compelling bait on the hook catches a lot more customers.

7. **Be audacious and memorable, but smart and relevant.**

Don't pay for mermaids to swim in glass tanks in your booth that have nothing to do with your business. But it's ok if you are having a Hawaiian vacation for partners who send lots of leads to have Samoan fire dancers and Hawaiian hula dancers at your booth.

8. **Have your best lead generators at the event... and make it a game!**

Invite your representatives to shows and watch for the ones who really earn their pay. The others can stay home next time. Have contests, set goals. Gamify your tradeshow.

9. **Respond as fast as you can to all requests, and set appointments right at the show.**

Every rep should be typing or scanning in business cards at the show or at the latest in their hotel room that night. Get back with people quickly. Even better, set appointments during the show so you are on your prospects calendar. A business card scanner is great.

10. **Have your say!**