



## Speed Briefings: The Secret to making FAST & POWERFUL connections

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**Q:** I want to engage, educate, and qualify more attendees on the show floor, but I don't want, nor can I afford, to use an in-booth presentation ... is there an alternative?

**A:** Consider Speed Briefings ... they're not your father's presentation.

The reason professionals attend tradeshows is not a secret; they want to see what's new and learn about the latest industry trends. So why do exhibitors—across every vertical—find it difficult to get attendees to visit their booths? Or conversely, if their booth is a destination on the show floor and *always* crowded, why do they find it difficult to deliver a clear message and call-to-action?

This article will explore a hybrid style of in-booth presentation that aligns with the attitudes and sensibilities of today's tradeshow attendees, and three ways it can be implemented on the tradeshow floor.

**The Modern Attendee.** First, a few words about today's tradeshow attendee. Much has been written about Millennials, and while it's true that they represent an increasingly larger portion of floor traffic, their presence cannot entirely account for a much pervasive trend; the shortening of attention spans ... en masse. Yes, Millennials are the generation who was reared on video games and the Internet, and approach life with a "bullet-point" mentality. This behavior, however, is not confined to this single group; attention spans have UNIVERSALLY shortened, including those of Baby-Boomers.

Remember, Baby Boomers AND Millennials (and every generation in-between) are competing in today's fast-paced marketplace, and to survive, *everyone* has had to become nimbler on their feet when hearing, understanding, and communicating information. The phrase "sound byte" didn't evolve on its own; it accurately describes how information is meted out in the press, on TV, on the web, and in one-on-one conversations.

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This shorter attention span has become a true challenge on the tradeshow floor; traditional in-booth theater presentations may be able to cut through the clutter and engage attendees of all ages and temperaments, but what if an exhibitor can't afford one? What can fill this void?

**The Speed Briefing.** This brings us to the topic of this article; Speed Briefings. To understand them better, let's quickly review what the average tradeshow attendee is looking for.

Put yourself in an attendee's shoes; when you hit the show floor and encounter an exhibit, you have three questions on your mind ... who are you, what's new, and what can it do for me?

You also have a powerful desire to stay up-to-date on the latest industry trends ... along with, perhaps, an overwhelming yearning for candied almonds. This is a volatile mix awaiting ignition. What's more, these questions and desires have not changed; attendees have had those three questions on their mind, and the same desire to be in-the-know, for over 50 years. So what DID change?

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The HOW changed. HOW attendees want to go about answering those questions ... and satisfying their educational needs ... is quite different. Not only have *attention* spans shortened, the time spent on the show floor has shortened. The economy has caused many companies to cut back on the number of days their staff spends at tradeshow ... often 1-2 days of a 3-4-day show ... and this reduced time is further divided between visiting the show floor, attending seminars, listening to Keynotes, etc. Attendee dwell time in ANY exhibit has become a precious commodity.

Enter the Speed Briefing. This is a short, 3 to 4-minute interaction that gives the attendee EXACTLY what they need to know in the shortest amount of time. Attendees who are reticent about spending too much time on a full product demo (because they aren't sure if it's relevant), will be much more willing to invest 3-4 minutes on what they understand to be a "briefing."

The best part is ... if, within those 3-4 minutes, you can *convince* an attendee you have something to offer them, that attendee will GLADLY invest more of their valuable time to connect with a rep for more information.

This all sounds straightforward, but constructing and implementing a powerful, successful Speed Briefing Program is a challenge; different audiences have different sensibilities, different verticals have varying regulatory parameters, and, of course, each company has different messaging. With that in mind, here are three different approaches to mounting a Speed Briefing. NOTE: This list is NOT exhaustive, but it may spark a few ideas.

**Exhibit Overview Speed Briefing.** This is the most obvious of the three. When an attendee approaches an exhibit, they see a blank slate. Signage helps a little, and video gets lost in the noise, so the only thing that can communicate to an attendee what the exhibitor has to offer is human interaction. One-on-one interaction is best, but given the fact that exhibitors routinely have 5-6 staffers to connect with 7 to 15,000 attendees, something else is needed. This is where the **Exhibit Overview Speed Briefing** excels.

A flat screen is erected on the busiest traffic corner of the exhibit. Stationed in front of this is a Business Communicator, working on mic. A low music bed could energize the area. There should

also be one or two Brand Ambassadors working the aisles, inviting attendees to stop for a few minutes and hear a short, exhibit overview.

The Speed Briefing ... 3-4 minutes in length ... should communicate exactly that; who you are, what you're offering in the exhibit, what it can do for them, and where they can find it. It should end with a strong-call-to-action to learn more or connect with a rep. In fact, reps should be stationed near the briefing area to escort interested attendees to areas that are relevant to them.

It's that simple. No fanfare, no magicians, no fuss; just good, solid, useful information that enables an attendee to self-qualify (walk away), or metaphorically raise their hand for more information. Now ... is this more effective than a booth staffer approaching random people on the aisle saying, "Can I show you a demo of our new product?" You bet it is. It puts the attendee in the driver's seat (another desire attendees share), and puts your company **on the map** of that tradeshow floor.

Speed Briefings can be made more engaging by integrating interactive technology; audience response systems, text messaging, etc. How or if you integrate this technology depends on your budget, brand, and regulatory needs.

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**Industry Update Speed Briefing.** FACT: **No one** cares about your products and services as much as you do. ANOTHER FACT: **Everyone** wants to know about the latest industry trends and developments. Therefore, it makes sense to leverage this desire and give attendees the information they crave ... but this way, you communicate it through your brand lens.

The monitor and staff set-up would be the same in the corner of the exhibit. However, rather than a booth or solution overview, attendees receive an *Industry Trends Update* about ... insert your trends here, e.g. the Top 5 Trends in Product Packaging. This is not perceived as a product pitch ... because it isn't. It is valuable, useful information that is worth a few minutes of their time.

While the content of this Speed Briefing consists of fast, punchy, industry talking points & trends, conveniently, they ALL track back to the solutions that your company provides. Any mention of your specific solutions is mentioned only at the CLOSE of the briefing ... and this mention is done ... briefly.

When this industry update is done, something significant will have occurred in the attendee's mind; your company will be positioned as a thought-leader who clearly understands the challenges they face and is giving useful information that could help. Sounds a lot like "content marketing," doesn't it? This application, however, is more practical and focused. When a company so clearly understands the attendee's challenges, and the current state of the industry, attendees cannot help but think that this company's solutions are worth a second look.

Technology can also be integrated into this style of Speed Briefing, especially through the use of visual surveys or polls that enable attendees to see how their opinions and views stack up against those of their peers.

**Booth Tour Speed Briefing: Part I.** This is another hybrid, and can be implemented one of two ways. First, some booths are massive, and attendees find navigating around it a daunting task. But think of the last time you went on vacation to a new city. Did you take a City Tour on your first day to “get a lay of the land” so you could return to the areas that interested you the most? This is exactly what a Speed Briefing Booth Tour does. Small groups of 5-10 people, accompanied by a “guide,” move through the exhibit making quick :30 second stops at different areas. At each stop, the “guide” outlines what’s new in that area, and what it can do for them. No demo, no tech talk, just useful information.

At the end of the Speed Briefing Booth Tour, the attendees may be given a Thank You gift, and then released to return to the area that interests them the most.

**Booth Tour Speed Briefing: Part II.** There is a second way to implement this strategy; a tour of your strategic-partner exhibits around the show floor. This strategy is effective when a company’s product or technology is an ingredient in other, more well-known products. Think microchips, and thing like that. Alternately, this is useful when a company has several strategic partners elsewhere on the floor.

The tour would start and end at your exhibit; it could utilize wireless headset mics so attendees could hear what the guide has to say; it could entail 4-6 stops at different booths around the show floor. As the group moves from one exhibit to another, the guide would deliver talking points about what they just saw, and what they are about to see, continually referencing how your company’s solutions drive their success.

There would be no need to ENTER each booth; you could simply stop at the corner, talk about what they’re doing and how your brand is helping them, and then move on. If this is a strategic partner tour, the cost could also be shared between ALL of the partners, delivering a great of bang for the buck

**Conclusion.** All of these examples are logistical explorations that illustrate a central idea; in-booth presentations do not need to drain your budget, time, or booth space.

Speed Briefings can accomplish many of the same objectives, but do it at a fraction of the cost and a fraction of the exhibit footprint.

Their impact, however, is HUGE.

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