



The Value of Facilitated Demo

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Q: My in-booth demos do not deliver the kind of results I'm after ... what can I do to improve them?

A: You should explore elevating your in-booth demo experience by implementing a Facilitated Booth Demo.

A well-defined communication program is the key to achieving business objectives at tradeshows and events. Every element of a booth is guided and powered by this strategy, and exhibits that do not have a clear one in place appear unfocused and do not deliver maximum ROI.

A popular tradeshow communication tactic is the “live product demo.” Nothing, it is presumed, better illustrates a product or service’s value than seeing it live, in action.

However, many companies that utilize this powerful tool miss a major opportunity to integrate industry best practices to transform their product “how-to” into a robust brand communication & lead generation program.

This article will explore how to evolve your in-booth live demo into a powerful “Facilitated Demo.”

First, let’s explore in more detail how the average in-booth demo is constructed:

In-Booth Set-up: An area of the booth is designated as the “Demo Theater,” and internal product experts are scheduled to administer the demo at intervals throughout the show.

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Promotion: Pre-show engagement (digital & print) promote the demos. In-booth signage may feature a daily/hourly demo schedule.

At-show Implementation: The show opens, and the demos begin.

Results: Attendance is sporadic, the size of the audiences are not consistent, and they rarely learn more than the bits and bytes of the product or service.

Furthermore, after the demo, attendees often drift away from the booth, and few connect with reps for detailed sales conversations.

Hidden Challenges

What went wrong? Everything was well-planned and executed ... where was the disconnect?

The fact is, in-booth demo programs contain many hidden challenges tradeshow marketers don't expect.

- Internal Product Experts may be highly knowledgeable, but they find it difficult to attract, engage, and hold an audience's attention on a noisy, visually cluttered tradeshow floor.
- While demo techs diligently prepare for their demos prior to the show, they normally speak "off-the-cuff." Therefore, the demos lack high-level messaging, such as the company's culture, brand promise, or corporate mission. This is the "sticky" messaging that resonates with audiences and makes them care as much about the company as they do the product. As Simon Synek states in his wildly popular TED Talk, "People care less about WHAT you do, and more about WHY you do it."
- At the end of the demo, attendees are often not given a clear set of "next steps" that compel them to remain in the exhibit for additional conversation and exploration.
- Over the course of a 3-4 day show, the staff administering the demos become fatigued, and their demos become increasingly tenuous.

How can these challenges be solved? By implementing ... a Facilitated Demo Program.

What is a Facilitated Demo?

A Facilitated Demo transforms a simple product "how-to" into a powerful corporate communication program that attracts, engages, educates, and converts attendees on a show floor. It incorporates a Professional Presenter, as well as other proven interactive engagement techniques, to ensure success.

Let's examine the components of a Facilitated Demo:

Message Development & Scripting

Weeks or months before the event, a detailed messaging outline is developed that includes input concerning the current state of the industry, analysis of the target audience and the challenges they

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face, as well as how your products solve those challenges. It should also include mini-case studies, the current corporate mission, future products in the pipeline, etc.

This input is used to develop a concise and persuasive demo script that contains a dynamic Opening, rich messaging to be delivered during the demo, as well as a powerful Close and Call-To-Action. (More on that later).

Major stakeholders should be included in this input process; “success” at a tradeshow means different things to different people, and it’s important to learn how every level of your company defines it.

The creation of a well-defined script (that incorporates approved input) gives the demo a consistent shape and rhythm, ensures that attendees are fully educated, and transforms a product “how-to” into a robust corporate communication program.

Professional Presenters

A Professional Presenter is the most important component of a Facilitated Demo

Professional Presenters are highly-experienced Business Communicators who are trained to effectively deliver presentations on a tradeshow floor. They are charismatic and know how to attract and hold an audience’s attention. They consistently and dynamically deliver the pre-approved script, and ensure that the entire demo experience is energetic, focused, and well-paced.

Product Expert Introduction

After delivering the pre-scripted opening, the Professional Presenter introduces the Internal Product Expert.

Product Experts prefer this process because it takes the responsibility of attracting and engaging audiences multiple times per day away from them, and lets the trained professional handle it. All that’s left for the in-house tech to do is what they do best ... talk about, and demo, the product.

This intro also positions the Product Expert as a VIP in the attendee’s eyes.

Demo Interaction

During the demo, the Professional Presenter interacts with the Product Expert to drive the action and keep the demo energized. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways:

Pre-scripted “Q&A” that address target audience FAQs and drive the demo forward. The Product Expert would, of course, be prepared in advance to answer them.

Throughout the demo, the Presenter could interject additional features and benefits that punctuate the action.

At predetermined stopping points, the Facilitator could review a real-world case study, or offer meaningful research data, to strengthen the product’s solution story and position the company as a thought-leader.

This list of interactions is not finite and would be influenced by specific demo and target audience requirements.

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Attendee Q&A

When the demo has concluded, attendees will have questions. The Professional Presenter would field these questions, repeating them on mic for everyone to hear, and then engaging the Product Expert for an answer. This process keeps the Q&A session well-paced and ensures everyone in the audience is engaged.

Close and Call to Action

This is also an important component of a Facilitated Demo.

Once the demo Q&A has been completed, you want attendees to remain in the exhibit to connect with reps, ask additional questions, engage in sales conversations, etc.

To accomplish this, the Presenter delivers a powerful Call-to-Action.

This can take many forms: pairing with a rep; signing up for a free trial; moving to another area of the booth for a hands-on demo, etc.

In this way, attendee dwell time is maximized, and reps spend the majority of their time talking with interested, educated, qualified leads.

Conclusion

Is a Facilitated Demo Program a good fit for your company? Ask yourself this (with apologies to Albert Einstein):

Do your in-booth demos deliver the results you desire?

If not, do you continue to implement them in the same way, and expect different results?

“Facilitated Demos” integrate proven engagement and communication tools and tactics to transform the humble “product how-to” into a robust communication strategy that educates attendees, connects them with reps, fills the sale funnel with qualified leads, and builds buzz on the show floor.

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