Demand Generation: Newest Tools to Maximize your Trade Show Investment

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Q: My event teams are not driving enough traffic to our trade shows exhibits. What can they do to build awareness and generate greater demand?

A: The latest Demand Generation tools, like PURLs, IP/Mobile Targeting, & SMS Messaging, have been proven to help put your booth on the "hot list."

Recent results of a Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR) study showed that 76% of attendees arrive at a trade show or event with an agenda. They come prepared with must-see lists of exhibitors, and they've scheduled at-show appointments with many of these exhibitors weeks before the show.

As any who has experience fishing knows (or as ANYBODY knows, for that matter) fish don't just jump into your boat. Marketing-savvy exhibitors are casting their nets for qualified prospects **long before** the show begins, and reeling in qualified prospects BEFORE they arrive in the host city.

Tradeshow marketers have been courting prospects through pre-show mailings and advertising for decades. These tactics are no less important today—in fact, print mail is having a bit of a resurgence—but these tactics are not nearly enough. In conjunction with direct mail and email marketing campaigns, exhibitors are increasing relevancy and immediacy through Personalized URLs (PURL), IP Targeting and Mobile Targeting, and SMS Messaging.

Together these technologies are answering the question: How can I cut through the deafening noise of the digital environment to give prospects something they'll find meaningful (relevancy) ... and how can I reach them *right now* (immediacy)?

PURL Campaigns. In contrast to the shotgun mass-marketing model, relevance-focused technologies leverage data to make campaigns personal and pertinent for the prospect. They do

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this by focusing on the target's proven areas of interest. The more that is known about the prospect, the more relevant the campaign will be, which makes it more likely result in a positive response. PURL campaigns help capture that highly individualized data.

A PURL is a unique microsite for a campaign-specific project, personalized for the recipient. The prospect receives a physical mailer or email that includes a link to a URL with their name in it, such as AlanSmith.nameofcampaign.com. The landing page has a dual function. It gives information about the campaign or event that is relevant to the recipients while collecting information from them. This is done in various ways depending on the profile of the target audience, the specific market, and the desired outcome.

The microsite appeals to the target because it provides value, and often rewards the prospect for their time and attention. He or she may receive a chance to pre-register for the special event, schedule a demo with a rep, watch a video about a new product, download an educational white paper, enter a prize drawing, or receive a voucher for a gift to be redeemed at the show. The exhibitor can then use the prospect's information to ensure that the next campaign is even more relevant.

One-way communication is about hoping for a response. PURLs create the opportunity for two-way communication to occur, makes the experience relevant, and quickly identifies qualified leads. Open & click-through rates rise. In fact, PURLs can increase open and click-through rates up to four times those of standard emails. Perhaps the greatest benefit is that truly meaningful content on the microsite can capture more of the prospect's time and attention, reducing their need to search out your competitors. You get on their shortlist.

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Tracking. Another key advantage of PURLs is the tracking. Data is immediately available on which recipients opened the email, watched the video, completed the survey, etc. Through lead scoring analytics, a point system grades prospects using the sender's specific criteria. As a result, exhibitors receive (in REAL TIME) a quantitative record on how qualified their leads are.

Immediacy, also, plays a vital role in PURL strategies. At the moment the recipient completes their visit to a PURL site, the exhibitor receives an email alert in REAL TIME. A sales rep can then call that interested prospect in real time, at that moment, to follow up on their interest. (if the prospect has opted in for this type of contact.)

This is another ancillary benefit – PURLs build your opt-in lists faster and more efficiently.

5 PURL Guidelines. Here are the five essential components for a PURL campaign:

- **Targeted.** Start with good data. Get the most up-to-date mailing lists, allowing that roughly 4 percent of emails are outdated on even the most current lists.

- **Integrated.** Keep the look of PURL campaigns visually and thematically consistent with direct mail, banner ads, and other advertising.

- **Compelling.** Create a strong call to action for recipients. Entice them with a prize drawing, educational session, private demo, or other incentive.

- **Brief.** Reward the short attention span. Make the information scant, the survey questions few, the video brief. No more than two minutes should be required of the recipient from the time they open the email.

- **Contained.** Avoid external links, including icons for Facebooks, Twitter and LinkedIn, on the landing page. Control their attention. Keep them on your site.

IP Targeting & Mobile Targeting. Combining the relevancy of PURL campaigns with the immediacy of IP Targeting and Mobile Marketing is a powerful one-two punch. IP Targeting is the process of targeting advertising to prospects based on their Internet Protocol (IP) address.

Once the marketer knows the physical address of the prospects' workplace, IP Targeting enables her to connect with those attendees through banner ads on the websites they visit throughout the day. A prospect checking out the forecast on AccuWeather.com, for example, or catching up on the news on CNN.com, would see a banner ad inviting them to the exhibitor's booth where they can "win a Windows tablet." The message is integrated directly into their environment.

IP Targeting can be activated on any of the thousands of websites that support banner ads. It makes it possible for prospects to be reached while still creating their exhibitor must-see list or as they're preparing to leave for the show.

> IP Targeting reaches prospects as they're putting together their "must-see lists.

During the show, Mobile Targeting lets marketers extend their reach to the venue by setting up a GeoFence around the convention center and/or the hotels that feed it. Now attendees can be reached through banner ads on their laptops or smart devices while they're at the conference. An attendee killing time playing Scrabble while waiting for his colleague to work through the line at Starbucks could, for example, see a message about a must-see demo happening in Booth 801. If he finds the invitation relevant enough, he may not even wait for his colleague to get back with her latte!

Mobile Targeting allows marketers to connect with audiences where they are most likely to act on the invitation: *when they are actually at the show*. And if this connection is a reminder rather than a "first touch," the likelihood of their visiting the booth increases. Mobile Targeting is not only more cost effective than the traditional bag drop, it can capture an area as narrow as 100 meters or extend citywide.

According to Business Insider, mobile marketing ads sold through real time bidding will have grown from 6 percent in 2013 to over 43 percent in 2018, making it the undisputed growth area for the next several years.

SMS messaging. Approximately 94% of text messages are read immediately on receipt, which makes SMS (text) messaging a complementary channel for marketing immediacy. As part of PURL data collection, recipients can opt for up-to-the-minute text messages (with assurance that they won't receive them once the show closes). Busy attendees can enjoy the convenience of relying on text messages from the exhibitor to remind them about scheduled demos or appointments with reps.

Demand Generation in concert. Today an exhibitor can ensure relevancy and immediacy through a powerful fusion of demand generation marketing strategies. Direct mail and email campaigns can be integrated with PURL. The PURL-supplied information can be used to target prospects' interests with still greater relevance in subsequent campaigns. Ads with links to PURL can be placed on Facebook and LinkedIn.