



The Value of Professional Exhibit Tours

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Q: Due to the number of products I am required to exhibit in my tradeshow booth, attendees often find it difficult to navigate. How can I solve this?

A: You should explore implementing a Professional Exhibit Tour to help attendees connect with the solutions they need.

To achieve important business goals at tradeshow events, exhibitors must communicate a strong brand image and a clear product message. However, tradeshow events are loud, visually cluttered places where communication is challenging.

The solution is straightforward; develop messages that are clear and easy-to-understand, and feature only a few products. This minimizes communication obstacles, and maximizes attendee connections.

For some companies, though, this is easier said than done.

By the very nature of their business model, or due to their broad range of offerings, they are challenged with delivering robust messaging about a wide range of products and services, often encompassing multiple divisions. As veteran tradeshow professionals attest, it's tough to cut through the clutter on a tradeshow floor with lengthy complex messaging; the moment an attendee finds it difficult to 1) understand what a company does, and 2) find the products that can help them, they will quickly leave to seek out greener carpeting.

This situation is not confined to companies with large exhibits ... small to mid-range companies with complex product and service portfolios experience it as well.

The solution many companies turn to is The Exhibit Tour.

What is an Exhibit Tour?

Exhibit architecture
does not generate
leads; engagement
& communication
does.

Imagine being on vacation, and you're visiting a city that's filled with unique locations, historical monuments, and lots of interesting things to do. To maximize your limited vacation time, what do you do? If you're like most people, you take a City Tour.

On this tour, a Guide greets you and takes you on a high-level exploration of the city and its environs, pointing out areas of interest while communicating interesting facts and observations. Good Tour Guides bring the city to life and make the experience dynamic and memorable.

When the tour is finished, you use the information you learned to return to the areas of the City that interest you most. This maximizes your time and travel investment.

These are exactly the benefits delivered by an Exhibit Tour.

Exhibit Tours guide attendees through an exhibit, point out product or service areas of interest, deliver high-level messaging about what these products do and what they can do for them, and then release the now-educated attendees to return to the area that interests them the most.

It's a Win/Win situation; attendee time is maximized, and exhibitors know that their disparate messaging has been delivered in a compelling, logical, and intelligent manner.

Let's explore some Exhibit Tour best practices.

The Tour Guide

At the center of any Exhibit Tour must be a powerful, energetic leader. This person should be a Professional Business Communicator who is trained and experienced in engaging attendees on a show floor. They are charismatic, and will deliver a pre-approved script throughout the day consistently and persuasively. Think back to that City Tour again ... did the Tour Guide just wing it, or did they work from an approved, well-thought-out script that was engaging and educational at the same time? It was the latter, to be sure.

Communication Technology

As mentioned, tradeshow floors as noisy places, and to ensure that the Tour Guide is heard and understood, attendees could be given wireless earphones or earbuds, and the Tour Guide could wear a wireless headset mic. This ensures that attendee's remain fully engaged and focused on the tour, and they hear all of the messaging loud and clear. In fact, the earbuds could become an inexpensive giveaway.

The Messaging Starts Here

For any Tour to be successful, there must be a well-defined starting point where attendees are engaged and organized into a small group. This starting point could be identified with signage or video monitors, and are normally located adjacent to a Reg Desk or on the booth's most heavily-trafficked aisle. It's also a good idea to have Professional Engagers manage the task of crowd-gathering because they are highly trained to intercept attendees in the aisles and qualify them to see if the Tour would be of value to them. As the crowd forms, the Tour Guide is greeting them and delivering high-level brand messaging that builds interest in the experience to come.

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The Tour

As detailed above, the messaging begins as the group is being assembled, but when the Tour formally begins, the Guide should greet the group and immediately communicate the value of what they are about to see.

This initial overview should take less than a minute, and then continue as the Guide moves the group to the first stop.

At each stop, two things should happen:

The Tour Guide delivers pertinent information about the featured product(s), framed in a “challenge/solution” framework. This is not the time to explore the finer points or “how-to” of the product; rather, this is the time to hit on “hot button” challenges, and how the product or service solves it.

The Guide should introduce the sales rep(s) stationed at that exhibit. This simple introduction can break down communication barriers when attendees reach out to connect later on.

Next Steps

You would think this section would be titled “The Tour Conclusion,” but indeed, this is the opposite of what you want attendees to think is happening.

Best Practices dictate that when the Tour is done, attendees should be urged to return to the area of the booth that interests them to connect with reps (to whom they have already been introduced, if you recall), for additional exploration.

This return trip can be incented with a small booth giveaway that may only be claimed when attendees return to a product area. This arms the rep with a nice conversation starter.

To be sure, some attendees may choose to leave the exhibit when the tour is done, despite the offer of the thank you gift. This is fine; they were either uninterested in your product or service, or, they were pressed for time. Either way, you win; the former weren't your targets, and the latter are more likely to connect in the future when they have more time.

There are several other engagement tools that could be integrated into an Exhibit Tour:

- Interactive touchscreen tablets
- Handheld Audience Response Systems
- Interactive quizzes

These have all proven successful in the past, and their inclusion is dictated by your specific messaging, logistical, and budget parameters.

Conclusion

An Exhibit Tour is an effective tool that unifies disparate product messaging, and continually energizes your booth.

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Neuromarketing makes getting inside your customers head easier than ever.

Passersby will see energized groups of people being engaged and educated, which, in turn, reflects positively on your brand.

And as always, crowds attract crowds.

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If you have been tasked with communicating diverse, disparate product and brand messaging at your next tradeshow, you should consider implementing an Exhibit Tour.

The results may surprise you.