

Why Attending a Trade Show is Good for your Career.

By JoAnn R. Hines, Chief People Packager



"On, no, not another trade show to attend." Stop! You should be saying, "Great, another show opportunity!"

Whether you are a trade show rookie or a seasoned veteran, the cold hard truth is that preparing for a trade show (if you do it properly) is hard work. However, the benefits you reap make it well worth the effort. So, get your business cards (lots of them), prepare your elevator pitch, and get ready to improve your career.

Your most important asset in your career is you. As such, you need to continually ensure your assets increase in value. One of the best ways to improve your worth is through increased knowledge. At the show a fountain of knowledge drips from many sources.

You can access that knowledge

1. Work the floor, see who and what is on exhibit. Come away from the show with a full understanding of who does what in manufacturing or service.
2. Attend the seminars. Most shows have a conference track. Pack Expo has an extensive one with leading industry speakers. Be sure and include one or more conference programs in your agenda. Make a point to introduce yourself to the speaker and ask for a business card.
3. Gain knowledge from meeting colleagues and coworkers off site. This is now only a great way to catch up but it also offers the chance to network in a more informal atmosphere.

Another important fact of asset management is to improve your visibility. No one can know about you or find you if you are not in the forefront or put yourself in the spotlight. Now that you are going to the show, how can you make this work for you? It is important to plan well in advance of attending the show to maximize this opportunity.

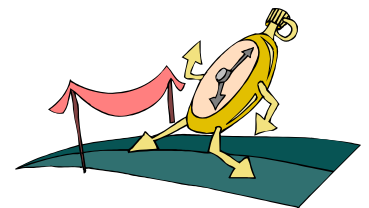
Maximize your time at the show

1. Make a list of people who you would like to see. Try to set a meeting up in advance. Do not set a rigid schedule. Trade shows tend to operate in a rather informal manner. If you are working in the booth, send out invitations to your colleagues announcing when you will be there. Email them a note asking them to meet you in the booth.

TIP: Always carry business cards and company literature with you when you are walking the show. You never know whom you might bump into.

2. When you attend the seminars, go to the room early and stay late. Make a point of meeting the presenter and engaging in a few moments of conversation. Ask if you might follow up after the show.

TIP: Big shots usually show up at the show the first business day unless they are a speaker scheduled at the end of the week.



Some Basic Dos and Don'ts

1. Don't spend a lot of time on long conversations. Introduce yourself. (Give your elevator pitch.) Exchange business cards. Write some notes on the back of their card about your conversation and move on.

TIP: Carry a small camera in your bag or pocket. If you meet someone important or someone your boss expected you to connect with, take a picture of you together. Everyone loves to have his or her picture taken and it could be a real door opener for you.



2. Make a point of stopping at the show management booth. Introduce yourself and your company. Tell them your opinion of the show and programs. Volunteer to be quoted and have a photo taken of you working the show.

3. When you return from the show it is very important to maximize the experience. Write a summary of what you accomplished. Include copies of business cards and photos. Note any insightful information you gained as a result of attending the show. Distribute copies of this summary to those who did not attend the show and your superior.

4. Write a personal press release for friends and family announcing that you attended the show.
TIP: If you were a speaker, received an award, or were showcased at the show, write a pre-show press release as well.

Checklist

- Do advance preparation.
- Be prepared to work hard and wear comfortable shoes. (Walking/jogging shoes are acceptable now.)
Have the necessary business tools, cards, literature, and camera at hand.
- Sign up for or gather as much information as you can. Sort and discard unnecessary literature you picked up.
TIP: Some companies will not hand out literature, but instead ask for your card to send you details.
- Get copies of all trade publications and fill out subscription cards.
- Notify your colleagues of your show location and schedule meetings.
- Keep good notes throughout the show.
- Write a post show report and press release.

The most important thing you should come away for the show with is contacts! Network, network, network. Capitalize on the opportunities the show presents and improve your career and your visibility. Above all, have fun at the show!

Best Regards,

JoAnn



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