

Exhibit Sales Staff Selection, Training and Management

Who Should Work the Show?

The Sales Team

Once booth site selection and layout have been determined, you can define who will work the show. Two solid rules:

1. A small quality team better than a large one.
2. Only your very best people should represent you at an exhibition. You need the cream of your quick qualifiers and closers. These are the same people you should have selected at the beginning to help with the goal setting and objectives planning sessions.

Often, who should **not** work the booth is most important. Attendees are demanding. This is not the place for less knowledgeable people or those who do not serve in a selling capacity such as secretaries or top corporate operating officers.

If less-seasoned people will be part of your staff, a procedure should be implemented so that prospects are passed on to senior staff when needed. Teach less-experienced staff members how to qualify visitors and lead the best prospects to experienced staff members. If there are product experts not trained in selling, use them to answer questions.

If exhibiting out of town, use a solid portion of the selling staff that ordinarily serves the area in which the event is taking place.

If the event is local, resist the temptation to involve the whole staff. It is more effective to use the same small, select and talented team you would have used out of town. Why? It takes time to get used to the exposition environment, and if the team is changed frequently, sales can be reduced as much as 50 percent.

The Non-Sales Team

Engineers and market researchers, for example, sometimes need to attend a trade show to take advantage of courses offered and for competitive market research. Here are some guidelines in managing this segment of the corporate staff:

1. Assign specific people to specific exhibits. Require evidence in the form of brochures, price lists and a report tied to a marketing plan so that the company will profit from measurable results.
2. Provide a schedule of educational offerings and require written reports for distribution.
3. Build in methods for verifying accuracy and authenticity of research.