

Presenting a Presence - Benefiting From Tradeshow

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Tradeshows, Tradeshows, Tradeshows! I must confess, I love them! There is the build up: *"What do I really have to sell?" "How will I arrange my booth?" "Will I risk spending a small fortune?" "Will I create something outstanding?"* There are the people: some new and some that I see only at these events. And then there is post show analysis: *"Did I perform to the best of my ability?" "Were connections made?" "Did I break even or make a profit?"*

Perhaps it is because I just love fairs and carnivals, but I must confess that over the past 3 years I have been in over 20 tradeshow/fair events. Some have been small community events, and some have been very grand. In some, I have represented my own products and in others, I have worked for a cousin to represent his products! The grand question is: *"Why bother at all?"* The answer is simple: You can exceed your expectations since client exposure is worth its weight in booth price.

The first event I worked was in Edmonton in the fall of 1996. As a novice, I was worried about the volume of product sales. *"Would I sell anything?" "Am I worthy?" "Would I ever sell enough to make it worthwhile?" My booth was \$400. "Would I recover my expenses?"*

Luckily, my husband was supporting me as I braved my first event wondering if anyone knew that I was experiencing major anxieties. As it turned out, this small event in West Edmonton Mall needed major organizational improvements, to say the least! After part of the first day, I realized that my booth and several others were out of the main line of traffic. I realized that something needed to be done immediately and quickly, so I became the *'general manager of trade show orchestration!'* Yours truly had arrived! Oh, by the way...I managed to match costs plus...and then took my husband out for a wonderful evening at a classy restaurant! Well...thanking your partner has great rewards as I'm sure most of you realize!

From my experiences I would like to share the following tips:

- 1) Trade shows are an excellent way to generate a presence in the community for your products or services because people can ask direct questions and sample your products.
- 2) Sharing a booth is an excellent way to cut down on costs or to increase the size of your booth.
- 3) Other exhibitors can be an excellent source of support, contacts and knowledge.
- 4) I have found that these events motivate, inspire and clarify the next

steps to expand my business.

5) My events have been an excellent source of leads and referrals for future business.

6) I have found these events to be a great source of great ideas and innovative practices.

Additional tips to avoid:

1) Not being prepared with a clear goal and expectations.

2) Not having high enough energy to meet and greet a few hundred people.

3) Not having a positive way to create leads or referrals.

4) Forgetting to be friendly.

5) Not following up on leads.

6) Not having a professional-looking booth, enough materials or enough staff to work the show.

So, what is the take-away? After all these events, I have gained an unsinkable feeling of confidence and a set of excellent networking skills. More importantly, I have learned how to improve upon and take advantage of unexpected scenarios which typically occur whenever you risk putting yourself in the limelight and joining a group of entrepreneurs.

The advantage of tradeshow is they attract potential clients in person. The bottom line is that if you are prepared, trade shows and like events are an excellent, inexpensive tool to publicize your business compared to the other options of television, radio or print advertising. The best way to promote your business is to advertise consistently. By repeatedly attending trade shows, your business presence within the community will increase and may extend beyond your expectations.

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