

## Benton County Fair Marketing Tips

Participating in county fairs offers significant opportunities for gaining new customers, making key contacts, and exposure to potential vendors and distributors. The key to great exhibiting includes being prepared, having a marketing plan, and making sure your booth is represented in the best way. The following tips will help your experience at The Benton County Fair be a great one. These tips for exhibiting at fairs are provided by tradeshow expert Susan Friedmann. (Courtesy of [www.sideroad.com/trade\\_shows/trade\\_show\\_marketing\\_mistakes.html](http://www.sideroad.com/trade_shows/trade_show_marketing_mistakes.html))

- **Have a Proper Trade Show Marketing Plan**
  - Have a strategic exhibit marketing and tactical plan of action
  - Make sure there is total alignment between the strategic marketing and your exhibit marketing plan.
  - Know and understand exactly what you wish to achieve.
- **Have a Well-Defined Promotional Plan**
  - Pre-show, at-show and post-show. Most exhibitors fail to have a plan that encompasses all three areas.
  - Developing a meaningful theme or message that ties into your strategic marketing plan will then help to guide promotional decisions.
  - Know whom you want to target and then consider having different promotional programs aimed at the different groups you are interested in attracting.
  - Include direct mail, broadcast faxes, advertising, PR, sponsorship, and the Internet as possible ways to reach your target audience.
- **Give Visitors An Incentive To Visit Your Booth**
  - Give visitors a reason to come and visit you. With a hall overflowing with fascinating products/services, combined with time constraints, people need an incentive to come and visit your booth.
  - First and foremost their primary interest is in "what's new!" Even if you don't have a new product/service to introduce, think about a new angle to promote your offerings.
- **Use The Booth As An Effective Marketing Tool**
  - Make sure your booth reflects who your company or organization is, what you do and how you do it.
  - The purpose of your exhibit is to attract visitors so that you can achieve your marketing objectives.
  - In addition to it being an open, welcoming and friendly, there needs to be a focal point and a strong key message that communicates a significant benefit to your exhibit visitor.
  - Pictures paint a thousand words; very few exhibitors will take the time to read. Your presentations or demonstrations are a critical part of your exhibit marketing.
  - Create an experience that allows visitors to use as many of their senses as possible. This will help to create a "memory".

- **Have Giveaways That Work**
  - Tied into giving visitors an incentive to visit your booth is the opportunity to offer a premium item that will entice them.
  - Your giveaway items should be designed to increase your memorability, communicate, motivate, promote or increase recognition of your organization. Developing a dynamite giveaway takes thought and creativity. Consider what your target audience wants, what will help them do their job better; what they can't get elsewhere, what is product/service related and educational.
  - Think about having different gifts for different types of visitors. Kids are a huge part of the fair.
  - Giveaways should be used as a reward or token of appreciation for visitors participating in a demonstration, presentation or contest, or as a thank-you for qualifying information about specific needs etc.
- **Use Press Relations Effectively**
  - Don't forget to promote to your existing customers that you will be at the Benton County Fair. Offer specials or incentives for them to come visit your booth and encourage them to bring friends and family.
- **Differentiate Your Products/Services**
  - The Benton County Fair attracts many exhibitors and tens of thousands visitors so it is important to create a display that "stands out from the crowd." Since memorability is an integral part of a visitors' show experience, you should be looking at what makes you different and why a prospect should visit your exhibit.
- **Realize That Your People Are Your Marketing Team**
  - Your people are your ambassadors. They represent everything your organization stands for, so choose them well. Brief them beforehand and make sure that they know: *why you are exhibiting; what you are exhibiting and what you expect from them.* **Make sure to brief them what not to do: be on their phone, computer, or distracted and unaware of potential customers. Focus on fair attendees.**
  - Trade show training is essential for a unified and professional image. Make sure that they don't try to do too much; understand visitor needs; don't spend too much time; and know how to close the interaction with a commitment to follow-up. Avoid overcrowding in the booth with company employees.
- **Follow-Up Promptly**
  - Starting a mailing list will allow you to keep in touch with people who expressed interest in your business or organization. The key to your trade show success is wrapped up in the lead-management process. The best time to plan for follow-up is before the trade show. Trade show leads often take second place to other management activities that occur after being out of the office for several days. The longer leads are left unattended, the colder and more mediocre they become. It is to your advantage to develop an organized, systematic approach to follow-up. Establish a lead handling system, set time lines for follow-up.