

Exhibitor Success Guide

Before the show:

Every exhibitor should ask, “Why is my company exhibiting at this show?” Your reason may be to promote new products/services, to make new business contacts or to stay current in the industry. There are endless viable reasons to exhibit, but no matter your reason, it is important to develop a plan to make the most out of your experience.

- **Set goals** – Establish realistic, measurable goals. Your goals should align with your company’s mission and be both realistic and measurable. These goals may be based on number of booth visitors, meetings set-up or qualified leads obtained.
- **Train staff** – Once you have established clear goals, be sure to communicate them to your booth representatives. If any of your personnel are new to exhibiting, make sure they know what to expect on the show floor.
- **Read MICPA communications** – The best way to prepare for the show is to read the MICPA confirmation email and exhibitor packet. These documents contain valuable information to help you make the most of your exhibitor experience.
- **Promote your presence** – Don’t rely on meeting attendees finding you in the exhibit hall. Take the initiative and reach out to them prior to the meeting.
 - **Current customers** – Pre-show contact with current customers can often lead to new opportunities. Send your show information to all of your current and past customers.
 - **Prospects** – Contact your prospects and invite them to visit your booth.
 - **VIP Customers** – Send a special message to your top accounts and prospects. This should be a more personal communication that may even include a follow-on phone call.
- **Email promotion** – MICPA will send an email one week ahead of the conference to all registered participants. Ensure your company’s profile is complete and appropriately links back to your website.
- **Pre-arrange appointments** – To improve your company’s results, pre-arrange as many meetings, demonstrations and booth tours as possible with existing customers and pre-qualified prospects.
- **Indirect promotion** – Add your booth number to your company’s email signature and include it in all your print and online advertising. Also, consider creating a banner ad or special splash page on your website with your booth number and description of products/services to be exhibited.
- **Social networking** – Leverage social networking tools such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and even your own company’s blog for exhibit promotion and to set up meetings prior to the show.

During the show:

Once onsite, it’s important to keep your established goals in mind. Company representatives should be able to speak clearly and directly to attendees about your company, and how its products and/or services will benefit the attendee. Remember, what you’re really paying for when you exhibit is not the booth space, but the face-to-face time with your target market. Make this time count.

- **Be dynamic** – Booth representatives should be outgoing, vibrant people who are not afraid to speak up. The biggest mistake an exhibitor can make is to stand silently in his/her booth and look bored.
- **Booth design** – Ensure that your exhibit space is comfortable and pleasing to the eye. Consider enhancing your exhibit booth with one or more event rentals available in the exhibitor packet.
- **At-show promotion** – An effective form of at-show promotion is using some type of “attention-getting” technique. Techniques that selectively attract attendees to your exhibit space, such as product or solution-related demonstrations, work particularly well.

- **Engagement** – Once a prospect stops by your booth, you must quickly qualify them and assess:
 - Whether or not they are your target market;
 - Whether they are immediately ready to buy or need more information before they buy; and
 - If they are not a prospect now, could they be one in the future?
- **Dessert host** – Become a dessert host and drive additional traffic to your booth. The cost to add this relatively exclusive feature to your booth is just \$200 total and will include dessert trays for both days of the show.
- **Giveaway** – Developing an informational card or purchasing a promotional item and then distributing these giveaways throughout the show are good ways to remain top-of-mind following the close of the event.
- **Games and drawings** – Following are some of the games and drawings attendees will participate in throughout the day to encourage a steady flow of traffic to your exhibit booth:
 - **Bingo** – There will be a numbered stamp attached to your exhibit booth. This is for the bingo game that participants will play each day. Once a participant comes to your booth and hears about your company’s products/services, you will stamp the appropriate space on their bingo card(s). Once they earn a bingo, they will take their booklet to the MICPA game booth for a chance to win a prize.
 - **Name game** – There will be game pieces with each participant’s name pinned up in your booth. Each participant has a game piece located alphabetically in the exhibit hall starting at booth number one. Once they find their name, they will take it to either the MICPA Member Resource Center or the prize booth to be entered into a drawing to win a grand prize.
 - **Grand prize drawing** – Attached to each attendee’s lunch ticket is an entry form for a chance to win a grand prize. They must complete the form and return it to the appropriate box at the MICPA Member Resource Center or the MICPA prize booth. Grand prize drawings will be held during the last exhibit hall break on each day.
 - **Exhibitor prizes** – Exhibitors are welcome and encourage to bring their own prize to raffle off to participants. If you will be raffling a prize, we will announce what prize(s) you are raffling. We will also provide you with a bowl to collect business cards, as well as blank cards for participants to fill out. Before the grand prize drawing each day, you’ll pick a winner from the business cards you’ve collected and we will announce the winners.
- **Appointments** – Hosting one-on-one appointments with attendees in your booth or someplace quiet around the exhibit hall/conference center may be beneficial for securing future business.
- **Staff** – Depending on whether or not you elect to schedule one-on-one appointments during the tradeshow, two or three staff should be sufficient during this two-day event: one to staff appointments and two to staff the booth. (Please remember that only two lunch tickets per day/per booth are issued. If you require additional lunch tickets, separate meal passes will need to be purchased – and are available in the exhibitor packet.)
- **Don’t oversell** – Most people don’t enjoy being sold to. Instead of delivering a sales pitch, have a conversation with attendees. Find out what their current challenges are and suggest ways your company’s products and/or services may help to solve those problems.

After the show:

The real work begins after the show. Don’t let those sales leads collect dust; make sure you follow up with attendees while the event is still top-of-mind. This is also when you will want to evaluate your success.

- **Follow up** – Personalized emails are strongly encouraged to everyone you know stopped by your booth – and they are best delivered each afternoon following the close of the show. The contact will be fresh in your mind, and the personal touch may even evoke a call to action.

- **Company link** – Your company profile and a link to your website will remain active on the MICPA website for six months following the conference. Ensure your company’s profile is complete and appropriately links back to your website.
- **Reevaluate your goals and budget** – What worked? What didn’t? Use this experience to immediately plan for the next show. If you wait until next year to start planning, you’ll have forgotten many of the little details and notes from the year before. Remember, it takes at least three years of consecutive exhibiting to determine the real value of a show.

Ten Tips for Trade Show Success

1. **Have a goal.** Clearly define the objectives you hope to achieve. Write them down. It could be making contacts in the community (how many do you hope to make), taking orders (again, set a goal of how many orders you hope to get), setting appointments, shaking hands or whatever. Just make sure you have some sort of goal or objective for the show. At the very least, decide to bring back x-number of business cards.
2. **Work the booth.** Many booths are left unmanned for long periods of time. Try and have someone at your booth at all times. Don't sit at your booth. Be approachable and friendly. Create a reason for people to come up to your booth (a raffle or free promotional items).
3. **Have a healthy supply of business cards and your basic sales brochure or flyer at your booth at all times.** Collect information from the attendees (email addresses, phone numbers) – a drawing for a prize is common to collect this info.
4. **Wear comfortable shoes and try to stand as much as you can.** Rarely do people have much success sitting down while attendees (prospects) walk by. Be aggressive, but not annoying.
5. **Be happy!** Nobody wants to talk to someone who looks intimidating, bored or unfriendly, so make sure you smile at everyone. Act like you want to be there and are happy to meet them. Don't disregard someone if they are not wearing the color badge you are targeting. You never know – an attendee could be registered as one category, but also be a second category as well.
6. **Condense your message.** You cannot do your usual sales presentation in just the few seconds you will have to spend with attendees. Let them know in a nutshell what you do and how you can help them. Tell them what to do next – call, visit your website or come by your office.
7. **Acknowledge booth visitors.** Many times you will get an influx of booth visitors and it can get overwhelming to talk to everyone. Try your best not to exclude a visitor because you are already engaged in conversation with another visitor. Say "hello" to booth visitors, even if it's brief while you finish your conversation with others.
8. **If traffic slows and you get bored, find someone to engage.** Talk to the vendor next to you or the next attendee coming down the aisle. Do not sit around looking bored. Do not check your cell phone messages or make calls or play Words with Friends. Talk to somebody about your business.
9. **Tie your booth display to what you do.** The more visually you can demonstrate your business, the better. If you can give away a prize related to your company, do so. You have a small amount of space and the more you can set yourself apart, the more people will remember you.
10. **Follow up.** A trade show is only as good as the sales it generates. As you meet attendees or other prospects who give you their business cards or information, make notes on the back and then follow up via email or call them for coffee. If you have a tradeshow list or a fishbowl full of attendee's contact information, send them a postcard with a special trade show discount.