

## HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF A CONFERENCE/TRADE SHOW

by Dr. Allen Konopacki

According to Dr. Allen Konopacki, a trade show consultant at INCOMM Research, fewer browsers are attending trade shows. They are being replaced by more serious shoppers. Because of time poverty people don't have time to just browse, they visit show with agendas or problems they want exhibitors to help with. Trade show attendees are more focused, desiring immediate answers and higher quality information. It has become increasingly important to adapt trade show marketing strategies to these changes. Konopacki's recommendations for successful trade show marketing include the following:

1. **Provide a one-page fact sheet at the show instead of a brochure.** The most serious prospects prefer not to wait for information to be sent following the show. With these prospects strike when the decision process is hot. A one-page fact sheet gives them the information needed to discuss the products with others during the show.
2. **Increase pre-show promotions.** 33% of people who visit an exhibit are influenced by pre-show mailings. Direct mail gives prospects an incentive to plan to visit to your booth. Pre-show promotion primes the pump and adds one third more visitors to your booth.
3. **Identify other people with whom booth visitors will share information.** 60% of visitors will share the information with at least two other decision-makers within their company after the show. Obtain the names of these other influencers to boost your follow-up impact.
4. **Customer intimacy is in.** Design your booth layout to create a warm, friendly discussion area. Remove barriers between you and those visiting your booth. Create a side-by-side discussion zone. Success Tip: Small round counter-high discussion tables increase sales interaction, and get prospects to stop and talk about their needs.
5. **Dress should be bright and business casual.** Long sleeve shirts with company logos have replaced business suits which look more intimidating. Avoid golf shirts. Research shows they are too casual and reduce credibility.
6. **You'll meet the most serious prospects late in the day.** Serious buyers run out of time, and cram in the most urgent needs just before they are forced to leave. Don't discount the last few visitors as tire-kickers. They often have real needs they are trying to fulfill, and turn into high quality leads or orders. The booth staff's energy and enthusiasm should be high for these late shoppers and golden opportunities.

Allen Konopacki is president of the Chicago-based Incomm International; a trade show research and sales training centre.

Reproduced with permission by Dan Joyce.

Copyright 2000 CAEM (Canadian Association of Exposition Managers).