

11 Tips for a Great Trade Show

Exhibiting at trade shows is a great way to spread the word about your business. If you have ever exhibited at one, you've probably learned what works and what doesn't in order to have it be a success. Fresh off of several trade shows, I've compiled a checklist of things to remember when packing for the big day. Many of these things seem obvious, but trust me; they are easy to forget if you don't use a checklist! You probably have other things to include that are specific to your business, but here is a list of items most business owners will want to remember to take.

1. **Marketing materials.** Take more business cards, brochures or flyers than you think you will need. Better to have too many than not enough.
2. **Plastic card holder.** Use these for your flyers and business cards. It helps create a professional looking display and keeps you organized.
3. **A large stack of your items.** If you are selling a book, a CD or a home study kit or any product, have a lot of them on your table to display.
4. **An attractive card basket or fish bowl for collecting cards.** Create an attractive sign to place on the front of your basket explaining that by dropping a card in your basket, visitors are entered into a drawing for a product or service, and that they will also receive a complimentary subscription to your e-newsletter.
5. **Table covering.** Even if your table will be skirted, bring something colorful to put on top of your table to coordinate with the color in your branding. For example, you can purchase a few yards of fabric at your local fabric store for a few dollars a yard. If you are a wedding consultant, using tulle would be very effective.
6. **Office supplies.** Pens end up disappearing, so take plenty with you. I have also found that things like notepads, paperclips, tape, scissors, Velcro stickers, duck tape, rubber bands and so forth have come in very handy on occasion.
7. **Fresh flowers.** I find that flowers have a knack for attracting people I enjoy meeting.
8. **Risers.** Plan some elevation to your display. It's more interesting and will attract more people to your booth.

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9. **Brag book.** Take a binder filled with your press releases, your press coverage, flyers of past events, client thank you notes and other things that help to build your credibility.
10. **Portfolio.** Show off your work however you can! If you can show a video that does not require audio to be heard (trade shows tend to be loud and people can't hear very well), use your laptop. If you can showcase your work in a binder, that works just as well!
11. **Take a "Freshen Up Kit".** Here's one that may buck the system. Toss some gum, mints and a few bottles of water into your bag. Conventional wisdom says to never chew gum or drink at your booth, but anyone who has talked non-stop for two to four hours needs to do something to stay fresh and not dry out or have a sore throat the next day. It's OK to chew gum at a trade show, but make it a small piece - perhaps a half a piece - and don't blow bubbles, crack it or make it obvious. If you can sneak a small mint from time to time, that's even better.

Most business owners are experienced at exhibiting at trade shows, but reviewing these things and creating your own custom checklist will be helpful to you, even if you do shows frequently. You may find it handy to have a storage bin where you keep all of these items that you can simply pick up on your way out the door to your next expo so you don't have to worry about collecting all of these items time and time again.

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Meredith Liepelt, President of Rich Life Marketing, offers a free report called "101 Ways to Attract Ideal Clients,

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