

Avoid These 5 Trade Show Blunders

Make the most of your first trade show by breezing past these 5 common blunders.

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Manning your business's trade-show booth for the first time is an exciting opportunity. But Linda Rodriguez, founder of My First Trade Show LLC, a Miami Beach, Florida, company that provides trade-show training to small businesses, says first-timers often make the following mistakes:

- 1. Not preparing for hidden costs:** Trade-show newbies often don't know about required amenities like electricity, carpeting and so on for their booths. Make sure you know all the costs upfront-ask organizers what's provided and what companies have to procure themselves.
- 2. Spending too much money on the display:** For your first trade show, says Rodriguez, buy conservatively. "Even if you have a very basic booth, you can make [up for it] with your booth staff," she says.
- 3. Improper preparation of booth staff:** Everyone should be knowledgeable about the product or service and be able to answer questions-no relaxing with food or long cell phone conversations allowed. According to Rodriguez, "[It's about] focusing on the customers and engaging them."
- 4. Asking the wrong questions:** Don't waste time asking passersby questions like: How are you doing? How's the show going? Instead, go for open-ended questions like: Why did you stop at my booth? What about the exhibit caught your eye? What are you looking for in a specific product? Take notes on lead cards.
- 5. Not setting goals ahead of time:** Define exactly what you want to accomplish with this trade show-100 hot leads, five press appointments and so on. After, evaluate whether or not you hit those goals and what you can do better next time.

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