



Does the hair on the back of your neck ever stand up when you are reading something that you know is wrong? This just happened to me and I am still trying to get my blood pressure back under control!

I was just reading a case study in a trade show industry publication on how an exhibitor had show attendees drop off their business cards in a fishbowl to win a prize ... and how effective and wonderful it was to get so many more leads using this gimmick. I hate to be the one to break the bad news to the exhibitor who did this, but what they have are not leads. They have a fishbowl full of hopeful contestants.

There is nothing wrong with collecting business cards if your objective is to populate a database, for example, for a general industry mailing list, and you mark the business card bucket with a sign that says, "Want to be added to our mailing list? Insert card here??" You are on the right track and meeting your objective.

But if you are working with your sales force to get them accurate, complete qualifying information that they can use to contact prospects after the show and turn those prospects into customers, just gathering business cards is downright counterproductive. In their eyes, it brings down the value of all the leads you present them. You have now polluted your entire lead pool.

What is different about a qualified lead? Have you taken the time to ask your sales staff what information they want and need to turn a trade show contact into a warm post-show call worth making? The information they really want includes:

- Accurate contact information
- Which product(s) or service(s) the prospect is interested in
- The prospect's decision-making role in the purchasing process
- An expressed need for your solution to solve their specific problem
- The timeframe when the prospect needs your solution
- The budget for acquiring your solution
- A desire for a specific post-show follow-up with a timeframe attached

I cannot remember the last time I saw ANY of this information pre-printed on a business card. It is not on my card. How about yours?

So, I guess there is a difference between a business card and a qualified lead.

And, if you are really serious about sorting out your true prospects from your "trick or treaters", add an 8th question to your lead form. "I am only here for the giveaway. No follow-up required. Yes No". This will cull out the 30 percent of the "bag people" who have no real interest in your product. And most people will be truthful when they answer it. Then head straight to the circular file with those who checked "Yes"! Your sales force will love you for it!

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