



Walking the floor at a recent tradeshow, I knew there was something wrong with some of the exhibitors. There was something that really put me off -- a certain quality that made me uneasy, reluctant to approach the exhibit and engage with the booth staff.

At first I couldn't figure it out. I knew there was an issue, but it took me time to put my finger on it. Then I realized that fingers -- and more specifically hands -- were the cause of concern.

Watch your staffers. Do they engage in any of the following behaviors:

- Continually fidgeting with pens, lead gathering devices, or other items?
- Assume the 'fig leaf' position, with hands crossed over their crotch?
- Rooting in the pockets -- for change, keys, or goodness knows what?
- Playing juggler -- tossing giveaway items, brochures, or other items in the air?

These behaviors, which may be unconscious, all communicate a message to attendees. The message being 'hand-delivered' may not be the one you want your team to share. Why? Because these hands are saying:

- I'm bored.
- I don't want to be at this show.
- I'm nervous and don't want to talk to anyone.

This message certainly does not endear or attract people to your booth, let alone help sell your products and services. On the contrary, it plays a subliminal role in driving likely prospects AWAY from your exhibit.

Even if a prospect does stop, these non-verbal cues can subtly influence their buying decisions.

Remember that according to tradeshow research, 85% of a visitor's impression about your exhibit is determined by your team's attitude and behavior and 80% of a final buying decision CAN BE influenced by the booth interaction.

What can you do? The magic formula lies in the three P's: **Plan, Prop, Practice.**

P: Plan

Realize that your booth staffers may be engaged in this behavior completely unconsciously. Create awareness. Act proactively and provide an alternative to keep their hands busy.

P: Prop

Give your team something to hold onto. Clipboards holding surveys, lead cards, giveaway items, brochures -- anything to keep those paws out of the pockets!

P: Practice

During your pre-show meeting and role-playing exercises go over suggestions of what to do with their hands. The most comfortable position and the one least likely to get staff into trouble is known as "the military stance." Here you stand with your legs hip-width apart and hands comfortably positioned behind your back. Have the team practice so that this feels comfortable and natural. Practice makes perfect!

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