



Does your company have a description for a full-time job that says "Stand in the booth and hand out brochures"?

Doubt it.

"Working the booth" often falls to the person closest to the show site, or part of a sales team. So, staffing for trade shows might be haphazard, considered a reward for sales performance, or based on corporate marketing criteria.

Then the question becomes how many people in a booth? These are the basics the exhibit, sales and marketing managers should use for the most effective presence at each show.

## 1. Staffing

Allocate space for two staff for each 10' x 10' area. This decreases when you have conference areas, demonstrations, theatre, large equipment, storage and other space-eating situations. Know the floor plan when selecting staff.

## 2. Armed with Floor Plan

Make sure everyone has a copy of the floor plan for the show. It should be marked with:

- Location of your booth
- Locations of competitors
- Locations of partners
- Locations of prospective clients
- Booth floor plan clearly showing locations of storage, literature, conference area, demonstration, technical equipment, etc.

Also, add a list of people responsible for keys for storage, scheduling the conference area, etc. Most important, who is responsible for technical equipment? To make sure it's in the booth, operating properly and who to call if it isn't working.

And, finally, spell out very plainly any rules and regulations affecting how the show space can be used. These should be from show management and your corporate policies. Think of all the unknowns and cover everything from disposing of trash to liquor in the booth, from balloons to swearing, from use of cell phones to dismantling before the end of the show.

## 3. Scheduling

Understand the schedule of the trade show and the surrounding events. You may need fewer people at certain times and a larger staff during peak times. For example, if the luncheon is on the show floor, there will be traffic, thus you'll need more people. And conversely, if the show floor is open during The Awards Luncheon, you may need less staff. Past experience and corporate expectations are required when you set the staff schedule.

## 4. Appointments

Know when appointments are scheduled. You need some flexibility in your staff scheduling. People will come by early, late and unexpectedly.



## 5. Coverage

Not everybody needs to be IN the booth, but may be required to be nearby to handle a surge in visitors, such as a buying group, or to cover when appointments run late. This extra staff can be reached via beeper and should be used to gather market intelligence -- talking with competitors, partners and general networking -- while waiting to be called.

## 6. Visibility

Staff needs to be aware that they are three-dimensional. They have a front, a back and a side. Actually, two sides plus a top and a bottom. So, there are lots of ways that people can view us.

We've all had staff who look like they're wearing blinders -- who think they're only responsible for the space directly in front of them. They aren't conscious -- or don't care -- or don't know that they should care -- about what's going on around them.

There's a great tendency to assume that people only see us from the front, as when we look at them and shake hands. Not true. Visitors usually see us first from the side, and then decide to approach us.

So stand up straight. Smile. And get ready for business.

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