

Five Tips to Make the Most of a “Slow Show”

by Robyn Davis, When I Need Help

As an event hostess, I participate in a number of trade shows, conventions, and other events. Recently, I was contracted for an event that was miserably slow. On the plus side, this gave me an opportunity to observe how different company representatives will act when they think no one is watching... let's just say it's not always positive. Hopefully, these tips will help you to make the most of your next miserably slow event or even just those last few trying hours of any event.

1. Put your best self forward.

When I was younger my musical theater group was in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade and every year, we would hear the same speech from our director (paraphrasing a little): “Thanksgiving morning will be cold and we will all be tired, but you'll regret it if you don't look your best when the cameras come on... So, make yourself look like you do when you feel your best – put your shoulders back, raise your eyebrows, and smile with a big toothy grin.” I am sure your company feels the same way about this trade show that our director did about the parade. Regardless of how you feel (stressed, tired, overworked...) when the show opens each morning, it is essential that you make yourself look like you do when you feel your best. Once you look like you are excited to be exhibiting at the event, you will start to feel that way too.

2. Literally, make the most of it.

Engage every single attendee who walks past you, taking advantage of every second you have on the show floor to create positive interactions and promote your company's products/services. If the passersby are not your target consumer, they probably know someone who is (your marketing department did select this particular event for a reason, right?) or at the very least, they are giving you another opportunity to improve yourself. Work on your approach, practice variations on your full pitch, and solidify your best “elevator speech” summary. If another exhibitor walks by, be polite and ask how their show is going. Talking to anyone and everyone helps you to build momentum – once you have one visitor, more will follow.

3. Count the no's.

A very popular cold calling book talks about a company that rewarded their salespeople when they could check 250 boxes (one symbolizing each rejected call). This company knew that within those first 250 no's, a salesperson would encounter at least one positive response. Take an hour and count how many “Sorry, not interested,” “I'm

a vendor too,” and “I’m running late for a session” statements you have to hear before an attendee takes your information, lets you scan their badge, or offers a business card. Try to improve that average in the next hour or, if that seems out of reach, use your number to maintain your motivation because you know when you hear the 249th “no” that the next “yes” is right around the corner.

4. Find the take away points.

Look around at the other booths. First, observe those that appear to be the most successful. What are they doing differently? Check out their staff (attire, body language, energy level), their display (equipment, seating, décor), and overall presentation (premiums/pamphlets/give-aways, booth organization, and other special additives). Would any of those items enhance your booth? Next, observe the elements of those that are less successful. Which specific attributes are contributing to their poor performance? If you were managing their booth what would you change? Finally, take an objective look at your own booth as well – list your own pros and cons. Mentally compare and contrast all three categories so that you can make recommendations (or changes, if you are the person who does that at your company) for the next conference.

5. Be on your best behavior.

When a show is slow, that is when you are taking time to observe others, so it is logical to assume someone may be watching you too. Especially in this digital age where almost every cell phone has a camera and anything less than satisfactory is being tweeted about as it happens, you want to make sure that your company maintains the positive image you are attending this event to portray. So, ignore the pain in your toes and the text message from your associate a few steps away (not to mention the yummy appetizers and tempting beverages the servers are carrying past you) and remember those be-a-good-booth-staffer tips you were not only trained on, but have also read about in every other trade show article.

BONUS: If you have “extra” staff (or a competent hostess who was hired for the express purpose of working in your booth during event hours), rotate representatives through a series of five minute mini-breaks. Sometimes, taking a moment to read a few e-mails, taste one of those appetizers, or just zone out, can be all you need to come back feeling refreshed and ready to finish the day. If your situation permits a longer period of time away from the booth, this can be a great opportunity to allow your staff to sit in on a session, meet up with prospective clients, or check in with the office for any matters that should be taken care of immediately.

These five tips will equip any exhibitor to make the most of their next show, no matter how miserable it seems. If you happen to have additional resources at your disposal, that bonus tip is for you. Regardless, make sure that your company looks its best even when you think no one is watching so, maybe next time, the successful company others are learning from will be yours.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Robyn Davis is an accomplished event hostess and experienced marketing consultant... she is here when you need help! Robyn has more than ten years of leadership experience and a well rounded background. Offering on-site sales and marketing support to exhibitors and pre-/post-event consulting services, Robyn is definitely not just a stereotypical "Booth Bunny."

Learn more about Robyn Davis and When I Need Help by visiting her website (<http://www.whenineedhelp.com>) today.

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