

Common reasons for exhibiting include:

- Generating sales leads
- Generating actual sales at the show
- Enhancing your image and visibility
- Reaching a specific audience
- Establishing a presence in the marketplace
- Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of your marketing efforts
- Personally meeting your customers, competitors, and suppliers
- Prospecting for new customers
- Introducing new products and services
- Demonstrating your product in ways not possible using other marketing channels
- Recruiting distributors or dealers
- Educating your target audience

Tradeshow Marketing

Trade shows are designed to let entrepreneurs meet many potential customers inexpensively and face-to-face in a brief period of time. According to the Trade Show Bureau, more than 4,300 were held nationwide in 1994, attracting 85 million visitors.

"A trade show can significantly help your business," comments Barbara Kimmelman of Sellit Inc., marketing and trade show consulting firm in Santa Monica, California. "Qualified buyers in your category are congregated in that city for a few days. Not only can you make an impression, but you can captivate them."

Trade shows help level the playing field for smaller firms, since booth space is generally inexpensive (\$13 per square foot on average, with the typical small booth covering 100 square feet), and even small companies can usually afford attractive displays. With creative marketing and booth design, small businesses can actually appear as substantial as much larger corporations.

The Trade Show Bureau reports that of the firms exhibiting at business-to-business shows, 44% have fewer than 50 employees. Sophisticated exhibitors do well at trade shows no matter what their size, while the naive and inexperienced can waste thousands of dollars and countless hours - and possibly do more harm than good. Using trade shows effectively takes only a little effort and planning.

Trade Show Benefits

As trade shows generally take place at a single location, have short runs (usually one to three days), and bring together thousands of exhibitors and potential customers, they are a very powerful marketing medium. The Trade Show Bureau claims that the average total cost of closing a sale in the field is \$1,080, while the cost of closing a sale to a qualified trade show prospect is \$419.

As business-to-business shows typically do not allow selling on the show floor, generating sales leads is the most common reason exhibitors participate. Norm Hughes, president of Norda Technologies, a software firm in Newton, New Jersey, uses the computer industry's major shows as his primary marketing vehicle for introducing new products, another popular reason for exhibiting.

It is possible during the course of one trade show to personally meet most of your important clients and suppliers, making shows a good way to establish and reinforce relationships.

Content source: SBA (Small Business Administration) website, Sept 2010.