



Use F&B to Attract Trade Show

By David
Salzman

Offering some kind of food or beverage at a trade show is one of the best ways to attract and keep attendees in your booth. But in order to maximize your investment in a food & beverage promotion you've got to have a strategy. Ideally, you don't want to serve just "anyone." Here are some ideas to make sure that your hospitality will be appreciated by those who are most likely to buy from you.

POSTCARDS. These are billboards you send through the mail. Postcards are powerful communication tools because they don't have to be opened to be effective. A casual glance can drive home your message.

Mail a series of postcards over several weeks. The most effective schedule is: Six weeks, two weeks, and one week before the show. Use First Class postage to make sure your messages arrive on time. Place a map showing the location of your booth on the back of the postcard, along with a description of what you will be serving. Ask visitors to bring the card as a qualification for your hospitality. The address on the back of the postcard also helps break the ice by introducing the visitor to your sales staff.

ENCOURAGE REPEAT VISITS

To encourage qualified visitors to return to your booth the next day, give them a "next day" coupon. Give your staff stamps or stickers they can place on the back of business cards they give to select, high potential visitors.

E-MAIL. Send a series of e-mails, with printable coupons attached, to prospects and customers. Be sure you include a subject line emphasizing that the e-mail contains an invitation for hospitality. Again, a series of e-mails works much better than just one. The e-mails should become increasingly detailed, but all should describe why the recipients will want to visit your booth, what they'll enjoy or experience when they

do, and how to find you.

NEWSLETTERS AND WEB

SITES. Promote your hospitality in your newsletters and on your Web site before the show. Use printable coupons on your Web site or insert coupons in your newsletter. Also include a map and directions to your exhibit booth.

LETTERS AND CALLS.

Encourage your sales staff to send personalized invitations to their individual mailing lists. Provide them with sample letters and e-mail copy, and encourage them to check in by phone with key clients shortly before the show.

MARKETING PARTNERS. Ask your marketing partners to promote your exhibit hospitality in materials



Help Assn. Leaders Be Meetings Leaders

By Peggy L. McNamara

Those of us who have attended a lot of association meetings realize that there is a vast difference between a meeting that excites attendees and one that puts them to sleep. If one of your meeting goals is to retain or gain members for your organization, a crucial question you must candidly ask yourself—and honestly answer—is, “Which type of meeting have the chapter leaders of my organization been leading?”

Members of any organization look to the group's leadership to inspire and excite them—not just stand at the podium and ask for more volunteers, but to remind members why they joined the organization and what it stands for. Encourage chapter leaders to share the organization's mission statement at the opening of every single meeting.

A second factor to be aware of is the “presence” that your leaders bring to the meeting. I have seen more association chapter presidents who appear worn-out and pessimistic than I care to remember. I am baffled at how many chosen leaders of organizations can allow themselves to become a dispiriting voice rather than one of enthusiasm for attaining worthy chapter goals.

Do your leaders stand by the entrance and welcome members and visitors with a firm handshake and a sincere smile? Are they gracious with and attentive to your members, or are they forever running around trying to conquer last-minute details? When was the last time your lead-

ers stood in front of the group and sincerely thanked your members for everything that they do? Granted, chapter leaders have additional responsibilities to attend to, but members want to see and feel that they are a valued part of the organization's success, and a leader's sincerity will go a long way toward conveying that.

A third aspect of running an effective meeting is to keep it on a tight timeline. I understand this is easier said than done, but members appreciate punctuality and brevity. Respect the time crunch that bedevils everyone these days, and do whatever you can to keep things moving along. Don't be afraid of being aggressive about this. Members will appreciate their

leadership taking charge of a meeting and running it efficiently. There is nothing worse than having a meeting drag on longer than necessary due to 20 minutes of idle chit-chat that interests only a few people. Have chapter leaders prepare their remarks in advance. Share only what

is needed from the platform.

Every meeting that you conduct is an opportunity for retaining members, inspiring enthusiasm for growth through new members, and, above everything else, making people feel good about the time and energy they expend with your organization.

Peggy L. McNamara is a professional speaker and author, who works with associations that want to increase dues income and with association executives who want to create more non-dues income. For information or to register for her monthly e-zine, contact her at www.peggylmcnamara.com

Traffic

they either mail to their customers before the show or distribute at the event itself.

SHOW ADVERTISING. Add invitations and coupons to any advertising you run in the trade show program or daily newsletters. Consider promoting your booth hospitality on hotel room door hangers or in information packages that convention services often distribute to the hotel rooms of trade show attendees.

EXHIBIT COUPONS. Use coupons to qualify those who enjoy your hospitality. Coupons and tickets provide an easy way to track response. Coding your coupons permits you to identify the source of your visitors. Knowing who visited your exhibit permits your staff to follow up with them after the show. And, next year, you can send personalized e-mails to those who visited your exhibit the previous year.

David Salzman is the president and founder of Espresso Dave's premium hot and cold beverage service. For information visit www.espressoave.com, or call (800) 221-9209.

WAVE THE FLAG

Have a banner or poster made, with your “purpose” on it, then take it along and display it in a prominent place wherever and whenever your group meets.