Eleven Ways to Turn More Leads into Sales

1. Plan your lead-gathering and follow-up management program around your strategic goals and objectives before you work on show logistics. Set realistic, measurable objectives.

2. Discuss your lead gathering goals, questions, lead qualification criteria, follow-up timeframe and on-going sales tracking with your Business Development Team who will be managing the lead follow-up function to make sure you are gathering the best information for them to use in post-show contact.

3. Set individual lead gathering goals for each member of your exhibit staff, either by the hour or shift, so they commit to helping you to meet both your quantitative and qualitative goals (i.e. 5 “A” or “B” leads per hour”). Train every member of your staff on how to maximize the use your lead gathering system regardless of the whether you’re using hard copy forms, the show’s badge scanning system or your company’s own lead gathering system. Make sure your exhibit staff knows the importance of recording accurate information on each lead.

4. Your lead system should gather:
- Basic demographics: Name, title, company name, address, city, state, zip code, phone, fax, email address (may be scanned from business card). Ask staff to verify all this information for accuracy.
- Product(s) of interest
- Application (use) of your product
- Prospect’s purchasing authority (literature gatherer, recommender, decision-maker)
- Timeframe to purchase or to budget for the purchase
- Current supplier of product/service
- Current problems/challenges/opportunities
- Information on the type and timing of follow-up
- Comments to turn “cold calls” into “warm calls”.

5. Ask each exhibit staff member to immediately rate each lead based on your criteria using an alphabetical system, i.e. A = Hot, will buy in <30 days, budget available, prospect is decision-maker; B = Warm, will buy in <90 days, budget in process, prospect is recommender; C = Cold, no current plan to buy, research only, no budget, etc.

5. Remember that a business card is *NOT* a lead because it is missing everything but the contact information and does nothing to qualify a “suspect” into a “prospect”.

7. Don’t confuse lead *quantity* with lead *quality*. Make sure your staff knows how to quickly qualify booth visitors with open-ended questions and good listening skills.

8. If you use a giveaway as a thank-you to exhibit visitors, an additional question on the lead form can help to differentiate the true prospects from the trick-or-treaters: “I’m only here to enter the raffle/win the T-shirt, etc.” Depending on the giveaway, this question on your lead form will generally disqualify about 1/3 of exhibit visitors who only want your giveaway.

9. Treat your leads like gold. Always plan for a back-up to leads gathered. Copy hard copy leads at a local 24-hour copy shop before mailing them or passing them on for fulfillment. If you are using a lead-gathering system with a disk or CD, ask about back-ups. Don’t leave your leads unsecured in your exhibit or leave your lead machine sitting on your countertop overnight. They have been known to mysteriously disappear!

10. Make sure *personalized* lead follow-up occurs in the manner and timeframe agreed upon at the end of your staff’s in-booth conversation. Industry statistics estimate that 80% of show-generated leads are not followed up.

11. Close the loop on the sales conversion process to calculate your return on investment. Based on the number of qualified leads gathered, the value of sales made from these show leads and your final cost of exhibiting, you can calculate your cost per lead.