



## **Paul Gertner Presents 20 Trade Show Secrets from 40 Years in Business Generate MORE Sale Leads & Profits from your next show.**

### **#1. Know the TRUE VALUE of Your Trade Show Leads.**

The reason you go to trade shows is to market your company to potential customers. It's all about visibility, waving the flag and getting the word out about your products and services. But how do you measure the success of the shows you attend? For most companies measuring the success of a trade show is based on two things: How busy did their exhibit look and feel during the show? And how many sales leads were generated at the show. The quantity (not always the quality) of those leads becomes the main factor used to determine if the show was successful or not. The number of trade show leads generated at a show will be used to measure it against other shows and in reports to management as proof that we had great attendance and that this show is important and management should continue to budget marketing money for that show and others. Essentially a large number of leads generated from a trade show justifies attending the show and creates "job security" for exhibit managers and their staff.

However there is another way to approach this other than just using the total number of sales leads generated, it involves turning those numbers into dollars and cents. Management values dollars, profits and the bottom line more than the number of people that walked by your booth, dropped a business card in a fish bowl or signed up for your iPad drawing. Many companies also use the tried and true format of ranking leads from "hot" to "cold" or A, B & C. This is a great starting point, but today the smarter exhibit managers are adding another method of measurement to the mix by also adding possible sales potential to the trade show leads. By adding an estimated dollar amount if the sale lead would move through the sales cycle and close, your trade show leads become more valuable.

Yes it will take some work and effort and in reality some serious guesswork is necessary but it can pay off. Why? The language of dollars and cents... that is a language that management (who controls your budgets and your job) can really understand. Demonstrating that trade show leads have both **marketing** and **measurable sales** value and it will pay off for you and your career in the long run.



## #2. How to get MORE trade show leads.

Over the last 40 years I've watched companies in every industry try everything from game shows to giveaways to increase the quantity and quality of their trade show leads. And there is one idea that I have seen used and have also taught to many companies that I think works the best. It's an idea that will cost you nothing, it is easy to do, but it's so simple that many companies overlook it. But if you use this trick at every show you do I guarantee it has the potential to dramatically increase the number leads you are generating at your shows.

Here's the Secret. The biggest mistake most companies make is that they neglect to set ANY goals for the booth staff working the exhibit. And if you are like most companies your exhibit staff consists mostly of sales people who live by sales goals. Sales people can also be difficult to motivate at a trade show because they would much rather be out in the field selling instead of standing in a trade show exhibit. But sales people are also competitive by nature... they like to win. So you take advantage of their competitive nature and here is what you do. YOU don't set the goals for the show... you let them set the goals for the show. And when they are the ones setting the goals they are hard-wired to meet and exceed them.

First every morning of the show you schedule a Pre-Show Meeting for every person who will be working the exhibit. This is a mandatory meeting if they are working in your exhibit they must attend. This 15-minute meeting is held one hour before the start of the show, each day the show is open. It's important to do this everyday because your exhibit staff will change day to day. During this meeting you cover any details you need to go over about working in the booth and then at the end of the meeting you say: "There are 25,000 registered attendees registered at this convention, we are in a great location, we have a great looking booth and we are here to gather quality sales leads."

Then you turn to the top salesperson (or the most aggressive salesperson of the group) and you say: "John or Judy if we have good traffic walking by our exhibit today, how many sales leads do you think you can get in one hour?" Here's what will happen. When you put a top sales person on the spot in front of the entire sales team, because of their competitive nature he or she will give you a number much higher than you would ever give them. They will say: "I can get 8, 10, 12 leads per hour."



And you say: “Let’s shoot for... six leads an hour (or 5, or 4 whatever will help you hit your goal). That’s one lead every 10 minutes. Does that sound reasonable?” And you get everyone’s buy in on that number. “Six leads an hour... we can do that!” Then you say: “We have 10 people staffing the booth, so if everyone gets at least six leads an hour we should generate 60 leads each hour. The show is open from 10-5 that’s seven hours so that means our goal today is 420 leads.” Now they have a goal to shoot for.

At the end of the day, as soon as the show closes you have a brief Post Show Review Meeting where you announce how many leads were collected and because you have everyone sign or attach their name to every lead you announce the sales representative who generated the most leads that day. If you want to take it to the next level, (it will cost you a little, but you can expense it) reach into your wallet and hand the winner a \$100 bill. Then watch what happens the next day. I guarantee you they will be competing for the prospects walking past your exhibit instead of talking football, drinking coffee and checking their email.

### **#3. Giveaways and how to use them Effectively.**

Get your FREE T-shirts, Bags Pens, Gadgets, USB drives! Giveaways have always been a staple on the trade show floor. But if you are going to give something it’s best to make sure it relates your industry or to a sales point or benefit about your product or service, something that you want to reinforce in the mind of a spectator. It makes sense for pharmaceutical companies to give away customized pens because doctors use pens to write prescriptions. And a tech storage company giving away USB drives again reinforces the message of storage. I one created a two-piece puzzle that was frustrating to solve at first but then once you discovered the secret it the solution was very easy to see. We used this with the company’s product ID on it for a drug that helped patients with arthritis. The sales rep would hand it to the doctor in the exhibit and ask them to put the two pieces together to form a pyramid. While the doctor struggled to solve the puzzle, the sales rep gave the pitch. “Doctor this is the kind of frustration your patients with arthritis feel when they are trying to perform a simple task like turning a door knob. But our new drug \_\_\_\_\_, provides a solution that relieves the finger pain faster and helps their fingers do what they want to do.” They then gave the doctor a hint “Doctor try looking at the puzzle from the top” and when the puzzle was solved they said. “\_\_\_\_\_ will help your patient look at their arthritis from a new perspective.” A



good marketing person can be very helpful in finding the right giveaway to demonstrate your message or the concept of cost savings, speed or increased productivity creating a relationship between that message and your company's solutions. And if that promotional item is one that ends up sitting on your customer's desk... you and your solutions will be top of mind anytime they glance at it.

But while the promotional items at trade shows change depending on trends and technology the method of giving the stuff away for the most part has remained the same. You should also give some thought to "how" you are going to distribute your "stuff" at the show. Too often you will see companies just standing on the edge of the booth handing their "stuff" out to anyone walking by their exhibit. The message they are sending is: "Take this crap please! I ordered way too much of it" It's quite common to see "customers" trolling the exhibit floor on the last day of a show with bags filled with stuff asking "what are you giving away?" And in response you hear the phrase "Take a bunch, I don't want to have to ship them back." And they proceed to shovel "stuff" into the overstuffed bags. One medical show I performed at was always in mid November and many booths gave away samples of skin treatment creams and I'm pretty sure some of the physicians attending used the "stuff" as holiday gifts for their office staff. We used to refer to that one as a "four-bag show."

I always like to make the attendee do "something" in order to get the giveaway. That something might be sit and watch a presentation, fill out a registration form, answer a qualifying question, or even something as simple as "cross from the aisle into our exhibit and walk up to a sales person" that is handing out the giveaway. Get something for what you are giving... even if it just scanning their name badge in return for the promotional item. The key is when you are giving them something they are obligated at that moment because they are on the receiving end. You could train your exhibit staff so that if they are handing out T-shirts, they don't just hand out a rolled up T-shirt but they shake it open as if to display it to the spectator and they refold it with the 2 second T-Shirt fold: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=An0mFZ3enhM> and hand it to the spectator. During the unfolding and the folding of the T-shirt they can ask 2-3 qualifying questions of the prospect. If they get a response that needs follow up they can then proceed down that road. It takes the idea of just handing out the T-shirt and turns it into a sales opportunity.



## #4. The “Funnel Technique” for Trade Show Giveaways.

If you use a live presentation in your exhibit where you gather a crowd and you are handing out a giveaway then you might want to consider what I call The Funnel Technique. I call it that because it literally funnels the entire audience from your performance area and moves them through a passageway and right into the main part of your exhibit.

In order to use the Funnel Technique the company must be distributing some type of gift or giveaway at the end the live presentation. Any kind of giveaway will work but the key is it has to be something that you can hold up and show the audience and get them excited about receiving one right now.

At the end of the show when you have your largest crowd assembled you show the giveaway item that is a gift for stopping to see your show. The presenter explains you have one for everyone here and then you use the Funnel Technique to move the assembled audience right into your exhibit.

*“We have one T-Shirt for everyone. Please just step right this way and Harold and Geoff will make sure everyone gets one of the T-Shirts. Everyone on this side, please walk right through here and get your T-Shirt from Harold. Everyone on this side please walk right through here and Geoff will make sure you get a T-shirt. Keep moving forward and you can also take a look around the exhibit. If you have any questions our sales representatives are ready to assist you.”*

The key is to position Harold and Geoff or whoever is passing out the T-Shirts inside the exhibit so that in order for people in the audience to get their T-Shirt they must (do something) in this case walk into the exhibit and up to a sales rep. If they don't want to do that then...”No T-Shirt for YOU!” Be sure to have an open pathway so that as they people are handed their T-Shirt they are funneled from the aisle into the exhibit. If you set it up correctly the flow of the crowd coming from behind forces the crowd in the front to keep moving deeper into the exhibit instead of simply picking up their T-Shirt turning around and walking right back out. The other sales representatives working in the booth should also be ready to take advantage of this influx of potential customers by meeting



them, welcoming them to the booth and engaging them with their opening question. See Secret #14.

You have to make sure that your helpers that are handing out the T-Shirts DO NOT walk forward and go into the aisle to hand them out (there will be a strong temptation to do that) or you will lose the benefit of the technique. I have been using this method of moving audiences with great success for many years and I know it will also work for you. Good Luck!

## #5 The Trade Show Dress Code

A recent trend in trade shows is to have everyone on the sales staff adhere to a trade show dress code with everyone wearing the same color shirt and slacks or similar outfit. Most companies choose to go with a specific colored Polo shirt with company logo and the same color slacks that create a nice casual but professional look. I was at the International Machine Tool Show in Chicago recently and everyone in one exhibit was wearing a bright yellow blazer, matching color of the company logo and each Blazer was custom fitted and the booth staff looked great. It was also great advertising, they were like walking billboards for the company as they strolled around the convention center and to and from the show everyday. Prospects walking into the booth had no trouble knowing who was from the company and as soon as I walked into the exhibit I was greeted with a friendly staff person. They must have done some training on how to work in the exhibit as well.

If you are going to thing to go with a company dress code, doing some type of exhibit staff training is probably a good idea also. When everyone in your booth is wearing the same outfit your exhibit staff is very visible to anyone walking down the aisle. They have to be on their best behavior, no eating in the booth sitting around reading newspapers or checking email. Most importantly you need to make sure everyone knows not to cluster in groups. A group of 4-5 company people all wearing the same outfit clustered in a group will make even the most interested prospect walk right by. People will not approach a group and a group all in the same outfit... it could look like an important meeting is taking place... even if they are only talking about Monday Night Football. So a company outfit may be just the ticket to add a great look at your exhibit just be aware that the increased visibility means you have to be on top of your game.



## #6 Location, Location, Location

Choosing a booth location can be a stress filled experience especially when you are selecting a space a year in advance. But here are three tips to consider that will help make your job a little easier.

### **First in Line:**

There seems to be a believe that at a trade show the most desired exhibit is the first one you see as you walk into the exhibit hall, and many shows charge a premium if you want to be in one of these front row locations. The theory is that your exhibit is more visible because every time someone enters the exhibit hall your exhibit is the first thing they see. However keep in mind that very few people come into a trade show hall stop and spend quality time at the very first exhibit they come to. Sometimes the ONLY time a prospect is in that front of the exhibit hall is when they are entering the hall (and have an agenda or somewhere to go) or when they are leaving the hall (and are on their way out). Take a look at exhibits at the front of the hall and you will notice they are not always as active as the rest of the show floor. For my money the sweet spot on the show floor is a space that is a number of rows into the exhibit hall, adjacent or near the larger exhibits, and on the main (widest) traffic aisle of the show. Even a small exhibit in that location will do very well.

### **Traffic Flow:**

All trade shows have actual traffic patterns that develop on the show floor. Have you ever noticed how a higher percentage of people will walk by your exhibit from one direction more than the other? Some will be up aisles and some will be down aisles something to consider when selecting your next booth location. Some patterns can be obvious when looking at a floor plan others are just a guess. Take a look at where the main entrance is. When people enter an exhibit at American shows if they have no set destination they tend to go to the right. Once they get as far as they can they will begin to snake up and down the aisles of the show and continue this pattern unless something catches their attention. If the floor plan of the show reveals an obvious traffic pattern you can use this to your advantage. Knowing what direction the crowd will approach your booth can be helpful when deciding which direction your displays should face in order to make sure your exhibit is visible and accessible to the greatest number of visitors as they walk by.



### **The Aisle to Nowhere:**

When a floor plan has irregular aisles and no clear traffic pattern be careful not to locate your exhibit on an off-aisle, or as I call it the Aisle to Nowhere. This is one that no one can get to without walking through another exhibit; there is no chance of it having any serious traffic because there is no logical way to get to it. Aisles to Nowhere normally affect island exhibits and usually only on one side, but it's something to be aware of. Any display or products featured on the side with the Aisle to Nowhere will have very little traffic throughout the entire show and leave the staff in that area of the booth very bored and with little traffic and nothing to do.

## **#7 Stand Tall and Be Heard**

Are you doing a live presentation of any kind in your exhibit? No matter if you are using a professional presenter, speaker, or corporate magician or someone from your company visibility is the key. Most companies could double the size of their audience at their presentation with adding a simple 6-10" platform and a sound system that projects into the aisle. By adding a platform for your presenter to stand on they become more visible, they can build a larger crowd and it also creates importance to people walking down the aisle. Someone standing on the show floor looks like someone from the company, but someone standing on a platform looks much more professional and catches the attention of more people. At trade shows people attract people and if they see a large crowd they are more likely to stop than if there are only 5 or 10 people sitting watching the show. The more visible your presenter the bigger your crowds you will have.

The other element is sound. A good clear sound system will do more to build your crowd than anything else. In a trade show a good headset (I like the Countryman Brand, low profile and lightweight) is imperative. The ambient sound of the show floor means the microphone has to be right near the mouth of the presenter for good sound quality. Also if possible get the speakers up off the floor. Small speakers mounted above are better than larger speakers on the ground. Of course you still have to abide by trade show rules when it comes to sound. Make sure your sound is only heard at the edge of your exhibit or a little into the aisle, but it should not interfere with or bother the exhibit across the aisle. If it does show management will come and let you know to turn it down or turn it off, so be a good neighbor and abide by the show rules.



## #8 To sit or not to sit.

One other question that will come up when using a live presentation is the subject of chairs. Do you want your audience standing or seated. This one is a fairly easy call...it depends on who is doing the presentation. If one of your company people will be doing the presentation then definitely have chairs for your audience. But you don't need a lot of them just enough to create the idea that a presentation is happening here. Depending on the size of the exhibit 6-12 chairs or spaces will probably be sufficient. The chairs make it easier to begin the show even if you only have a few of them filled at the start. If the presentation is interesting and the presenter is a good speaker chances are you will stop more people than you have chairs but at most shows people are willing to stand and watch a short presentation if they have an interest in the topic.

On the other hand if you are having a professional performer in your exhibit and space is tight consider eliminating the chairs and stop your audience standing up. I personally prefer to work without chairs at a trade show since I can pack 50-100 people in a tighter space if they are all standing instead of seated. I just keep moving them in tighter, requesting everyone to take a step forward so the people behind you can see also. Sometime I use a little psychological persuasion telling the crowd that show management will shut me down if I block the aisle, so I need your help... "Please take a few steps into the exhibit." Of course that is not really an actual concern but it sure makes them move into the exhibit when I say that. If you do plan to have a standing audience try and position the audience area so that some are inside the booth and some are on the aisle, it will let you build a bigger audience. You can then use Secret #4 The Funnel Technique and walk them out of the aisle and into your exhibit at the end of the show. It works like magic.

## #9 Packing It In...Early.

We have all seen this happen; in fact we are all guilty of doing it at least once. The show wraps at 4:00, it's the last day, the aisles are not very busy and by 2:00 some exhibitors are already packing it in. They are ripping down their booths, packing literature and ignoring prospects walking down the aisle. The message they are sending is I'm tired of this show and I'm getting out of here now!



The best advice I can give you is. Don't do it. Packing it in Early is a bad idea for a number of reasons. First it's against the show rules. If the show runs to 4:00 people can still buy a show pass and they have a right to explore the exhibits, ALL the exhibits till 4:00 that's what they have paid for. Also if show management sees you ripping down early you will be penalized in some way, like losing points when it comes to next years booth selection, or and I've seen this happen they exhibit management might come by and tell you to set your exhibit back up.

Aside from just a bad idea Packing it in Early can be bad for your business. I can't tell you how many times on the last day of a show someone comes walking by in the last hour and ends up in a very serious sales conversation with a sales rep in the exhibit. I've watched sales reps in a booth end up getting one of their most promising leads in their last hour of a show. Often a decision maker (usually the President of a small local company) finally fits the last two hours of the closing day of the show into their busy schedule and they are ready to make a buying decision. If your exhibit is already coming down your message is "I don't need your business" and that motivated buyer is going to pass you by and stop at your competition. Stay motivated keep selling till the last minute. I guarantee it will pay off big time at a show in the future. You just don't know which one.

## #10 The Importance of a Pre-Show Meeting.

One of the most important things you can do to make a show successful is to have a Pre-Show meeting the morning of the show. It not only demonstrates you are serious about the show but it gives you a chance to set goals and lay out some ground rules for the staff working the show. Most sales people have not spent a lot of time in a trade show booth and it can be very helpful for you to tell them what to expect and what is expected of them. A short 15-minute meeting one-hour before the show opens will set the tone for a successful show. Some of the things that should be covered in this meeting include: 1. How to collect the sales leads. Teach them how to work the scanner or what ever system you are using to gather the customer information. 2: What the various badges colors mean, and the color code system. What colors are we looking for and which ones are we ignoring (like other exhibitors) 3. Setting sales goals for the show (see Secret #2 on how to do that.) 4. Showing them where things are in the exhibit, giveaways, storage areas, etc. 5. Do a quick overview of exhibit etiquette (see Secret #11 below.)



## #11 Trade show booth Etiquette.

During your pre-show meeting be sure to cover some standard trade show booth etiquette. Items to cover include: 1. No eating in the exhibit, and if you want to have a bottle of water somewhere stash it out of sight instead of leaving it sit around on the tables or countertops. 2. Avoid clustering in groups. A group of exhibitor in a booth all clustered together in a single spot in the exhibit will make a prospect walk right by. Booth staff should stay in their assigned area and welcome or invite people into the exhibit or to begin a conversation especially during the high traffic times of the show. 3. Avoid talking on the phone and checking your email while in the exhibit. Actions like that again make the prospect walk by since they don't want to bother your or disturb you. 4. If you are in a larger exhibit do a pre-show walk of the exhibit and know what products are in what area. 5. If you need to direct a visitor to another area of the exhibit walk over and guide them to the other exhibit area or introduce them to the person they are looking for. 6. On the last day don't bring suitcases into the exhibit (unless you have a large hidden storage area) Suggest they use the luggage checking service provided at most convention centers.

## #12 Approach, Engage, Invite.

The most important thing your booth staff can do is to learn to approach anyone they see walking in or by the exhibit. Be friendly and open and invite them in. Most people walking the aisle at a show are a bit hesitant to stop at an exhibit even if they see something interesting, a friendly smile and hello will go a long way toward starting a conversation. If your exhibit staff is made up of all salespeople engaging prospects will come naturally because this is what they do. However many exhibits also have technical people staffing the booth, and this idea of approaching and engaging is a bit more difficult for them. You might want to team up a technical person and salesperson working the same area of the exhibit as a team to help address this concern. One of the best ways to engage a trade show prospect is to have a planned opening question. See Secret #13 below.



## #13. The Opening Question.

Everyone staffing your booth should have one or two opening questions that they have ready to use to engage a visitor to the booth. The best opening questions start with who, what, where, when, why, and how. Asking questions that begin with these words will automatically lead to more detailed answers than you would get with questions that result in a Yes or No.

“Hi John (yes you know his name... that’s what name badges are for) what brings you to the show?” “So what do you do at MW Widgets?” “Where is MW Widgets located?” “How familiar are you with our products.” Ideally the opening question should be something that gets them talking about themselves, their company, their experience with your products, a problem they have, why they are at this show etc. The answers to these questions will also provide you with information that you can use to quickly qualify the prospect and determine if they might be a sales opportunity.

Selling at a trade show is quite different than selling in the field because of the volume of people you will be speaking to. When selling in the field you might engage 3, 4, maybe even 6 people on an average day. But selling at a trade show is more like soliciting on the phone, you are going to engage, 50, 75, 100 people or more in one day. Just like a actor performing in a Broadway show you need to have an opening line, you need to rehearse it and you need to use it every time. You will use your opening line so many times that you will get tired of hearing it but remember every person you meet is hearing it for the very first time so just like a good actor keep it fresh and stay excited. Engage the prospect, get the lead then move on to the next one... there is no time to waste.

Avoid falling into the habit of small talk asking, 'How are you?' 'Can I help you?' and, 'Are you enjoying the show?' Attendees would not be approaching your booth if you could not help them, and they probably wouldn't be there if they were not enjoying the show. By engaging the prospect with the a good opening question you will have more conversations, gather more information and as a result generate a high quantity and quality of great sales leads.



## **#14 Wear Your Badge on the Right Side.**

I know this idea of wearing our trade show name badge on the right side is so old it has become a cliché of exhibit staff training, but it is also a great idea because... IT WORKS! At every show you go to you will see two people meeting, shaking hands and inevitably both people will crane their heads to the right trying to look across the other persons body to read what their name badge says. The solution is to pin or attach your name badge to the right side of your coat or outfit instead of on the left side. Why is the right side a better idea? Since we shake hands with our right hand if you are wearing your badge on your right side the other person does not have to crane their neck to the right to read who you are. With your name badge on your right side it is very easy for the prospect to read because it is presented to them along with your extended hand. A classy touch that makes you look like an experienced trade show pro.

## **#15 The Exhibit Appointment.**

If you know your customers are going to be attending the show, why not call and set up an appointment right in your trade show booth. Setting up “Exhibit Appointments” with customers and prospects is a great tool that is not used enough. With Twitter and email and texting you can send them a reminder that you are, “Looking forward to meeting with you at 2:30 we are in booth number 6288 in the West Hall.” By scheduling an appointment with a customer at a specific time in the your exhibit you are getting them to commit to visiting your booth and it creates the idea that you and your products are in demand. Exhibit Appointments are even more helpful if you have a more time-consuming product demonstration that you would like them to see. They can be set up in advance or even while the show is going on and are a nice touch that show your customers or a new prospect that you value their time.



## #16 Hiring a live Presenter.

A live marketing presentation in your exhibit can help you accomplish many things. It can make your exhibit more visible, attract thousands of prospects to your booth and help you deliver your corporate message. But if you decide to go the route of hiring a live presenter, speaker, corporate magician or actors in your booth remember one thing. The performer in your exhibit will be representing your company. They will also be the most visible person in your exhibit. That is why it is critical that you select a professional who trade show experience. The magician you just saw at the local restaurant who had every one laughing and having a good time is not the person you want to put in your trade show exhibit. A professional trade show performer also has to have the ability to write a script, incorporate your message and build a crowd on the trade show floor. Those are unique skills that are not easy to do and they only come with years of experience on the trade show floor. A few things to ask before you sign hire a professional presenter are: How many years have you been working at trade shows? How many shows do you do a year? Can you provide a demo video of yourself in action at a recent trade show? Can you give me an example of how you would market my product or service? If the answers to any of these questions fall short then you should pass them by and keep on searching. Your exhibit is not the place for amateurs or someone breaking into the business. Hire an experienced professional you will get the results you are looking for.

## #17 Progressive Exhibits.

This is an off the wall marketing idea but for the right trade show it can be very effective. A progressive display is one that changes over the course of the show. Each day something a little different is happening in the booth and the curiosity to see what will happen next and what is going on today in your exhibit brings people back multiple times to your booth.

A few examples of progressive exhibits: One company had huge pile of sand in the center of their booth. During the course of the four-day show a very skilled sand sculpture transformed the sand into a sand sculpture with number of children's faces, a mother and a doctor complete with a three dimensional logo of the company and the product (a pediatric product) they were featuring at the show. I made it a point (as I'm sure many other did) to walk by that exhibit 3-4 times a day just to see what changes had



occurred in the past few hours. The company was also giving out small statues of the finished sculpture to the doctors that I'm sure would end up sitting on the doctors desk.

Another memorable progressive exhibit I saw was during the early computer days. A company that had a product that would speed up your computer so you were not sitting around waiting for your data. There was a sign that said, "Are you getting tired of waiting on your Data?" This show was in October so they tied into a Halloween theme. Each day the show opened there was an attractive looking young woman (a mannequin) sitting at a computer screen (terminal in those days) waiting on the data. Each hour as the show went by the small changes happened, but you never saw the exhibit people making the changes. The woman at the computer looked a little more tired. Her eyes were starting close. Small cobwebs started to appear between the keyboard and the computer. The woman started to slump in her chairs. The woman started to look older and older. The mannequins features changed, became older, more cobwebs appeared between the computer and the woman's fingers. The computer started to rust and the screen developed a crack. Eventually during the last hours of the show the woman had obviously died and was nothing but a skeleton of bones slumped over her computer... Still waiting on her data. It was a very effective display (won best booth of the show) and had people coming back again and again to see what changes had taken place in the last hour or so. Depending on your product or message a progressive exhibit that changes over time might be something to keep in mind.

## #18 Sales Lead Management.

The first step in effective lead management is to make sure every person staffing the booth assigns a priority code to the leads they collect. The old A, B, C is fine but it will really help to know which ones are priority (A's and B's) that need to be followed up first. Making sure every lead is coded by the person collecting the lead is the first step. Also if there is additional information that would be helpful to someone following up on it that should be entered on the lead form too.

Now days many trade show lead retrieval system are paperless and just based on scanning the name badge of the prospect. But if they give you the option to print out a paper lead slip use it, because a sales rep can make notes on the paper lead slip. It is also important that the sales rep signs the lead slip it so we can contact them if more information about that specific lead is needed.



At the end of each day you should go through the leads and separate them by priority A, B, C. And then review all the A-High Priority during your post-show meeting. At that time you might ask John who signed the lead, “Did they mention a time frame?” or “What are they currently using now” This is information he might still remember from but did not write down on the lead form when talking with the prospect.

## **#19 Follow Up on The Leads...ASAP.**

The following story is true. I have a number of clients that use my services in one big show a year. Often I have them build me a performance table with a locked compartment where I store and secure my magic props between shows. One year when I was setting up for the show I opened the locked doors to my table I found a stack of sales leads safely locked away. The problem was they were from last year's show, about 450 paper sales leads (probably a few million dollars in potential business) that had been sitting there for the last 12 month never touched. When I showed them to the exhibit manager his face turned white and he said, “Oh, my God, so that's where they were, in the magicians table. I never thought to look there.” Apparently on the last day of the show someone put them in there during the tear down, someone else not knowing they were there then locked the table packed it up for next year and they were sitting in there for the past year.

So my second to last trade show secret is to one keep track of your leads and two, to follow up on them ASAP, the sooner the better. Many studies have shown that right after a show the leads are HOT. That is the time to make a call and move them to the next step. If you wait a few weeks other exhibitors who talked to the same prospect will beat you to the business. So have a system in place and follow up on all sales leads within a week of the show and you will see a much better return on your trade show investment.

## **#20 Take a break and enjoy the city you are in.**

My final Trade Show Secret is that sometime during your stay you should take a break and enjoy the city you are in. See a ballgame, catch a play, hit a great restaurant, visit a landmark or meet and an old friend. Your trade show career will take you to some of the most exciting cities in the world, and those cities have a lot to offer. Make sure that you see more than the inside of a taxi, a hotel and a convention center. You deserve it!