

# The most costly trade show mistake you can make:

## Not following up on sales leads properly

80% of exhibitors do not follow up on sales leads they collect at trade shows. Many do not have a self-working system in place to consistently and automatically follow up with prospects and stay in touch with customers on a regular basis.

### Freeman Decorating Makes a Shocking Discovery

Freeman Decorating, a leading trade show exhibitor services company, recently tracked its rental exhibits for over 12 months, and made a shocking discovery.

More than half of the booth reception counters Freeman rented out were returned with the sales leads left inside, completely forgotten.

But wait, it gets worse. According to statistics reported in Exhibitor magazine, 80% of companies that exhibit at trade shows do not follow up on the sales leads they collect at the show<sup>1</sup>. This is mind boggling, especially when you consider the average cost of qualified trade show leads ranges from \$50 to \$300 per lead.

### Are You Losing 80% of Sales Due to Lack of Follow Up?

Unfortunately, this lack of follow up is not limited to trade show marketing, so don't feel badly if you're in the majority.

- 90% of sales people follow up just once
- 70% follow up a second time
- Only 30% follow up a third time.

But, 98% of all sales are not made on the first contact. It usually takes at least 5 contacts to close a sale. Jeffery Gittomer, a leading sales trainer and best selling author, says, "Most sales are made after the 7th no."

We've found that many companies do not have a self-working system in place to



LEE AND VANESSA LENTZ  
INFINITY PARTNERS

Trade show leads convert to sales more quickly and with a higher profit margin. The reason? It costs an average of 45% less to close a sale from a trade show than from a direct field sales call.

<sup>1</sup> *How to Improve Your Sales Success at Trade Shows*, a publication of the Center for Exhibition Industry Research

consistently and automatically follow up with prospects and stay in touch with customers on a regular basis.

**Follow Up Immediately on All Sales Leads**

Whether you exhibit at trade shows or not, it's vital to follow up immediately with prospects. The longer you wait, the less likely they will remember you. And that initial, fast contact sets you apart.

Consistent follow-up creates a predictable and profitable stream of prospects and customers that buy. Small businesses that capture leads and follow-up with them enjoy higher conversion rates and a higher percentage of referrals than those that don't.

**How Much to Spend on Post-Show Follow Up?**

Before you even go to the trade show, formulate the budget for follow up. Many exhibitors make the mistake of spending the bulk of their promotion budget on pre-show advertising, leaving very little for post-show follow up.

You've already invested a considerable amount of time and money to acquire the leads. Don't skimp on converting those prospects into customers.

Earmark about one third of your trade show budget and staffing to post-show sales follow up. We recommend budgeting as much on follow up as you do on pre-show promotion for each show where you exhibit.

**Have a Follow Up Plan in Place Ahead of Time, Before You Travel to the Show**

It is also critical to plan how you will follow up on the leads you collect. Just as someone was responsible for managing all the details of exhibiting at the show, someone should be responsible for making sure the investment in the show pays off.

One of the most important elements of trade show success is managing post-show follow up. Proper and timely execution of the follow up plan is vital.

We suggest a timed sequence of e-mails, postcards, greeting cards and telephone calls.

**PRIORITIZE TRADE SHOW LEADS**

A ranking system ensures more efficient post-show follow up with prospects. Your booth staff can assign a code to each lead that indicates the prospect's interest level for additional information or if they are ready to make a purchase immediately.

For example:

- 1 = immediate purchase need
- 2 = likely to purchase within next \_\_\_\_ months\*; wants additional information
- 3 = mildly interested; not ready to make purchase decision

\* Fill in the blank according to your average sales cycle for the target market at the show.

These can be pre-written ahead of time, before you leave for the show. We recommend your post-show follow up have a personalized greeting that uses the prospect's name. Personalizing your follow up mailing is well worth the effort.

### **Make the Commitment to Protect Your Show Investment**

It's easy to feel overwhelmed when you return home from a show. In addition to the task of following up with all the leads you collected at the show, you are faced with all the work that accumulated while you were away.

It is important to focus on important, not urgent issues. Nothing can be more important than protecting the investment you just made.

Don't allow other activities to interfere with getting the maximum return on your trade show investment. Make follow up the priority. Hire temporary help, if necessary, to make sure your follow up plan is executed quickly and correctly.

### **Schedule Time After the Show for Follow Up**

When planning your schedule for the show, block out 1-2 days on your calendar for follow up immediately after the show.

Rely on your ranking system to prioritize the follow up. It will help you quickly sort the leads and separate hot prospects from literature collectors. Focus on prospects with the most immediate need and contact them first.

### **Don't Wait Until After the Show to Follow Up**

Don't wait until you return to the office to start the follow up sequence. Send an immediate follow up e-mail the day the prospect visited your booth, thanking them for stopping by. We teach our clients a fast, easy technique to film a short video on the fly and embed the link in an e-mail.

You can download the leads from your scanner database every evening and send those prospects an e-mail. If possible, send the database to someone back in your office, not at the

### **POST-SHOW EVALUATION QUESTIONS**

- What worked at this show?
- What would I do differently next time?
- Was the booth layout functional?
- Did I need more or less booth staff?
- How good was the booth location?
- Was this the right show to reach my target market?
- Did I meet good contacts in my industry?
- What did I learn from other exhibitors?
- What did I learn about my competition ?

show, and have them send the e-mails that evening or the next morning.

You want the prospect to retain their excitement about your product and remember your conversation at the show. Immediate follow up reinforces both and gives you an edge over the competition. It proves your responsiveness and everyone wants to do business with a responsive company.

#### **The Follow Up Sequence that Turns Prospects into Customers**

1. E-mail sent while still at the show, saying, "Thanks for stopping by our booth. We know your time at the show is valuable and we appreciate the time you spent at our exhibit. We'll be back in touch shortly with the information you requested, but in the meantime, call or e-mail me if you need anything."
2. Personalized, handwritten thank you/nice to meet you note or postcard mailed from the show, so it's on your prospect's desk when they get back. This strengthens

the perception of immediate response and inspires confidence that your company is reliable and trustworthy.

3. Send the information your prospects requested within 2 days of returning from the show. If you choose to send printed literature rather than e-mail, track the package so you'll know when it arrives.
4. Phone call the day after prospect receives your information. Ask, "Did you receive all the information you requested? What did you like best about it? Where should we go from here?"
5. Initiate a series of follow up contacts to stay in touch and strengthen the relationship you've developed. Use e-mails, postcards, greeting cards, letters and telephone calls to create a series of follow up touches. Send anything they would find interesting or valuable: articles, tips, newsletters, invitations to future trade shows, and handwritten notes just to let them know you're thinking of them.

#### **ADVANTAGES OF EXHIBITING AT SMALL SHOWS**

- Booth space usually less expensive
- Usually held in smaller cities, which means lower travel expenses
- Easier logistics
- Excellent opportunity to reach a narrow niche market
- Easier to stand out from other exhibitors
- Booth requirements not as stringent; can sometimes use a tabletop exhibit

#### **DISADVANTAGES OF EXHIBITING AT SMALL SHOWS**

- Show attracts less attention from industry media, limiting your opportunities for coverage in trade publications, blogs, etc.
- Fewer attendees, which equates to fewer leads
- Fewer decision-makers in attendance
- Show management can be unorganized and not responsive to needs of exhibitors

### **Follow Up on Your Follow Up**

When you make personal contact with your prospect after the show, send a personalized, handwritten thank you note to them. We like Jay Conrad Levinson's THANKS concept:

T - Today: Write and mail the thank you note the same day you speak with the prospect.

H - Handwritten: A handwritten note stands out in today's bulk mail and it's virtually guaranteed to be opened.

A - Active: Make the note active. Don't start with, "Dear John". Instead, write, "It was great to talk with you today, John."

N - Next Step: Tell the reader what will happen next. If you already have a meeting set, use this as an opportunity to remind the prospect of the date/time.

K - Keep it Short: No need for lengthy prose. 25 to 50 words is plenty.

S - Specific: Be specific on why you're writing. "I've been thinking about what you need and I have an idea that might work. I'll call you Monday to

discuss." Chances are very good that the prospect will be eagerly awaiting your call.

### **Why Proper Trade Show Follow Up is the Best Investment**

The most valuable asset in your business is not your equipment. It's not your inventory. It's not your accounts receivable. It's not your buildings or real estate. It's not even your employees. It's your customers.

Many business owners and executives mistakenly believe the value of a business is its lease, property, furniture and fixtures, inventory or other hard assets. They don't understand that none of those things are worth much without customers. This is true whether you exhibit at trade shows or not.

### **Customer Retention is a Good Reason to Exhibit**

There are two very good reasons for exhibiting at trade shows: 1) to acquire more customers and 2) to retain current customers and keep them loyal for life.

If a current customer visits your booth at a trade show and

### **ADVANTAGES OF EXHIBITING AT LARGE SHOWS**

- Tons of potential leads, if you can get them to your booth
- Great likelihood of talking with final decision-makers
- Show management usually provides broad range of helpful resources for exhibitors
- More opportunities to gain industry visibility by speaking at event during show, attending after-hours networking events, etc.
- Industry media present and looking for stories to include in their coverage of the show

### **DISADVANTAGES OF EXHIBITING AT LARGE SHOWS**

- Cost can be extremely high
- Can be very difficult to attract people to your booth because you're competing with rows of large, expensive booths
- Complex logistics
- Difficult to stand out from other exhibits
- Number of attendees can make it difficult to reach only your target market
- Requires precision planning and execution

requests literature or help with a problem and you respond late or ignore their request, they will assume you really don't care about the business they give your company.

At that point, they will either take their business to your competition or leave you when a sales person from a competing company calls on them. That's why having a good follow up plan in place and executing it is vitally important.

### **Why Go to the Trouble and Expense of Exhibiting at Trade Shows if You Don't Follow Up and Build Relationships With Prospects?**

Trade show leads often get put on the back burner, sometimes for weeks on end. The reasons? "We don't have enough sales people to follow up on all our leads," or "We're too busy to do a lot of follow up."

The problem is not that they don't have the capacity to follow up with prospects, it's that they don't have a system in place to do it.

### **What Does a Good Follow Up System Look Like?**

A good follow up marketing system should have three attributes.

It should be systematic, meaning that the follow up process is done the same way every time. It should generate consistent, predictable results. It should require minimal physical interaction to make it run, meaning it should be able to run on autopilot.

Sounds like a dream come true for most trade show marketers, sales professionals and small business owners doesn't it? Not only can it be done, it's being done every day.

The secret to follow-up is to make it automatic so that you don't have to lift a finger, but the job still gets done.

With today's technology, following up and staying in touch is easier than ever. Automating your follow-up process gives you more time to work "on" your business rather than "in" your business.

### **INFORMATION PRODUCTS AS TRADE SHOW PREMIUMS**

We advise our clients to use a promotional give-away so desirable that it motivates their prospects to do something. Information products are the most powerful promotional item you can give, and best of all, they cost just a few pennies to produce. This is the information age.

In fact, information has become so valuable that people are making large sums of money selling information products on the Internet. The reason is information has the highest perceived value and the lowest production cost.

In our experience, the most effective trade show premiums are information products aimed squarely at your target market. They help your prospects do their jobs faster, easier or better.

Premiums like article reprints, special reports, tip sheets, audio CDs and laminated conversion charts do your work for you, because they cause qualified prospects to identify themselves. These items are of no interest to people who can't do business with you.

**The Little-Known, Secret Follow Up System that Will Revolutionize Your Trade Show Follow Up**

We came across a system called SendOutCards some time ago and were instantly intrigued by its ease of use and low cost. When we implemented it in our own business, we experienced a huge revenue surge within the first 3 months. We were so impressed with the results that we became resellers for the company.

**What is It?**

SendOutCards is an automated system that enables you to stay in touch with all your prospects, customers and referral sources by mailing them handwritten notes, postcards and greeting cards on a regular schedule.

**How to Use it to Follow Up on Trade Show Leads in 10 Minutes or Less**

Because it's Internet based, you can access the SendOut Cards system from anywhere in the world. It sends physical cards via USPS first class mail and it makes trade show follow up fast, easy and personalized.

As you are planning your post-show follow up, simply log in to your online account and create a template for your follow up postcard or greeting card.

You can write your own message and upload your own images, logo or leave space for photos from the trade show. Or, you can choose from over 13,000 pre-designed cards in the online catalog.

Each evening you're at the show, log in to your online account with SendOutCards and upload the leads that you collected that day. The system will automatically insert the recipient's first name in the message on the inside of the card or on the postcard.

The system will mail your greeting cards or postcards via USPS first class mail the next morning. This entire process takes less than 10 minutes.

Imagine your prospect's pleasant surprise when they return home to find a personal, handwritten card or note from you.

Best of all, when you get

**SOME OF THE GREATEST MARKETERS OF ALL TIME SEND OUT SINCERE CARDS AND NOTES**

"Short handwritten notes yield long results. In sales, never underestimate the importance of the personal gesture, and right at the top of the list of effective personal gestures sits the handwritten note. Always send memorable cards and personal notes when you are reminded of a person."

Harvey MacKay, Author of *"Swim with the Sharks without Being Eaten Alive"*

"Because I understood that building relationships is what selling is all about, I began early in my career to send thank you notes to people. I set a goal to send ten thank you notes every day. Guess what happened? By the end of my third year in sales, my business was 100% referrals!"

Tom Hopkins, Author of *"How to Master the Art of Selling"*

home from the show, there's no pressure because your initial follow up has already been done.

### **How Do You Feel When You Walk Out to The Mail Box and See a Greeting Card Addressed to You?**

Your prospects are no different. Only 3% of our mail is personal. Yet, personal, heartfelt greeting cards touch people's hearts and minds . . . and they leave a lasting impression.

### **SendOutCards Uses Your Own Handwriting on Postcards and Greeting Cards**

One of the most innovative features we like about SendOutCards is its ability to use your own handwriting to write your message in a postcard or greeting card.

It collects a handwriting sample from you and creates a one of a kind type font of your hand-writing. You can use your personal handwriting type font in every card you send.

### **Birthday Card Marketing 101**

We suggest sending birthday cards to your customers and prospects. People never forget when you remember their birthday. As people get older, others stop remembering and celebrating their big day. They might receive a few cards from close family members, but that's all.

If your card is one of the few they receive, it elevates your status to "close friends and family" and changes the dynamics of the relationship with that person.

### **How to Endear Yourself to Your Customers and Prospects**

To really endear yourself to customers and prospects, we recommend sending birthday cards and other special occasion cards to their children.

Normally, this strategy would be too labor-intensive and expensive to implement. But, the SendOutCards' self-activating feature automatically sends special occasion cards to your clients, prospects, associates and referral sources.

You've always wanted to do a better job sending handwritten notes, and now you can!

"Thank you notes are one of the most powerful tools in building a huge network, both professionally and socially. People with the most impressive networks are typically avid note writers. It's one of the best techniques for long-term winning without intimidation. I suggest getting into the habit of immediately sending out notes."

Bob Burg, Author of  
*"Endless Referrals"*

"Write old customers personal, handwritten notes frequently. If you run into an old customer anywhere, follow up with a handwritten note.

In this electronic communication age the handwritten note with a postage stamp gets more immediate attention than ever."

Danielle Kennedy, Author of  
*"Seven Figure Selling"*

Joe Girard, the world's greatest salesman (Guinness Book of World Records) sent over 16,000 hand-written greeting cards to past customers and clients every month.

As a result of that effort, Joe became the #1 car salesperson in the entire world for 12 years straight. Nearly every one of his sales came from referrals.

Joe Girard, Author of  
*"How to Sell Anything to Anybody"*

## TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT SENDOUTCARDS

Visit [www.sendoutcards.com/leelentz](http://www.sendoutcards.com/leelentz) and sign up for a free trial account. You'll be able to send 2 free greeting cards of your choice.

To arrange a **free 30-minute strategy session** on how to use SendOutCards in sales, trade show follow up and relationship marketing, **call Lee Lentz at (615) 333-7546.**



### ABOUT LEE AND VANESSA LENTZ

Lee and Vanessa Lentz are the authors of the top-selling book "*Crush the Competition, Dominate the Market, Count the Money*". They are among the most popular trade show marketers, lead generators and brand communicators in the United States. Their client list includes AT&T, LP, HSBC and SAS Software. Lee and Vanessa consistently deliver record-breaking results for companies across America at live marketing events such as trade shows, conferences and customer events.

[www.leelentz.com](http://www.leelentz.com)  
(615) 333-7546 / (866) 533-5368