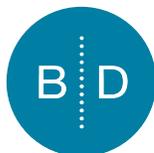




TURBOCHARGE YOUR TRADE SHOW PRESENCE

Using social media to drive
the right traffic to your booth



Brand**Directions**



TRADE SHOWS ARE A PROVEN MARKETING TACTIC FOR GETTING A COMPANY'S NAME, BRAND AND PRODUCTS/SERVICES IN FRONT OF CUSTOMERS AND PROSPECTS.

This is especially true for business-to-business (B2B) companies where marketers can devote as much as 40 percent of their marketing budget to exhibiting at trade shows.

With that much money being used on one marketing approach, the question many senior executives will ask is,

“Are you getting the greatest return possible?”

While most trade shows are good at generating foot traffic past your booth, do those feet belong to the right people? Are they your potential customers and, even more to the point, are they specifically seeking you out?

It should be a given that you're doing some promotion of your booth at a trade show:

- Emails to current customers and companies that are on your hit list
- Booth and company descriptions in the show program
- Articles in your newsletters
- News releases to relevant trade publications

But is that enough? Are the tools you're using reaching beyond your known audiences and making an impact on those who are not even on your radar screen?



This white paper is designed to help you maximize your trade show presence

with a communications strategy that educates, excites and encourages your target audience to purposely seek you out and start a conversation. It explores how social media can turbocharge your trade show presence and drive the right traffic to your booth: those who are both interested in what it is you have to offer and have a desire to become your customer.

Social Media as a trade show marketing tool

Helping B2B companies with their public relations and marketing, we have found that while many companies have social media accounts, they struggle with developing a strategy to make them an effective part of their marketing mix. They don't know how to make social media work for them.

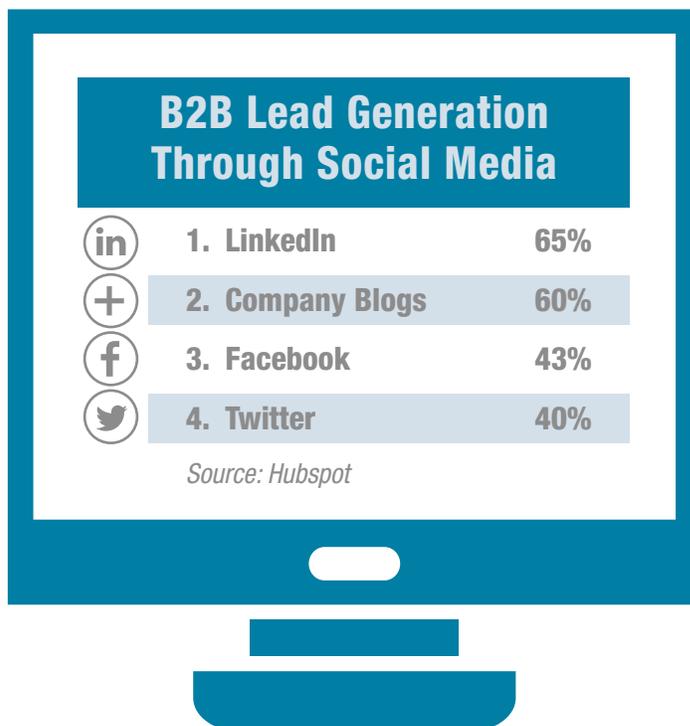


Nevertheless, social media is a major force in lead generation for B2B companies.

A recent Hubspot study found that 65 percent of B2B companies have acquired at least one new customer via a LinkedIn relationship. That was followed by company blogs at 60 percent, Facebook at 43 percent, and Twitter at 40 percent.

The common point to all of these channels (and all social media channels, for that matter) is that they encourage individuals and businesses to interact by exchanging information and ideas. It's this idea of interacting that sets social media apart from other forms of marketing.

Social media enables you to connect directly with audiences – some of whom you know and some of whom you don't – who have specific interests in your products and your messages.



By communicating directly with one another, in what is almost real time, you create a virtual relationship. When used in conjunction with trade shows, this virtual relationship often morphs into an actual relationship when you meet face to face.



The benefits of social media:

1.

Qualify your audience:

You can target your communication specifically to your intended audience by using keywords in your messages. These are words that you either know or believe prospects are using to look for new information. These keywords both qualify you as a potential source of information for them, and them as a potential customer for you.

2.

Expand your audience:

You can find new prospects who are interested in your products or services by using the keywords they are searching under.

3.

Drive traffic to your booth:

Once you have people's attention, you can excite them about products or services you have that will solve their problems.

4.

Generate strong leads:

When you can connect with people who are looking for solutions to their problems, and you have those solutions, then you have an outstanding lead.

5.

Expand your reach:

You can create relationships with people who are interested in your products or services, but are not at the trade show, as they often follow social media discussions. This can also lead to sales.

How keywords work

Using keywords in social media is very similar to using keywords on company websites (Search Engine Optimization or SEO). A keyword is simply a word or short phrase that people use to search for something. To select keywords, think about common words that people might use to describe your company or product/service. You then incorporate these words into your messages.

Even if your social media following is not large when you begin your trade show campaign, this can be the jumpstart you are looking for to build your following.

The trade show creates a forum for people to exchange information, and by being active in the social media discussions surrounding it, you will attract attention and expose yourself to new followers.

Trade Show audience types

Most trade show attendees fall into four groups:

- 1. The Warrior:**  These people typically use trade shows as an important source of information, particularly for current market developments. They are highly communicative with exhibitors and engage in serious networking. They will often complete a sales transaction during the show.
- 2. The Planner:**  These people are well prepared to attend the show. They know which booths they want to visit and are looking for specific products or services.
- 3. The Stroller:**  These people use trade shows primarily to observe the market and gather information. They have little contact with the exhibitors and no intention of buying.
- 4. The Trick-or-Treater:**  These people do not have specific goals for attending. They are passive about finding out more about your product or service, but like to pick up the giveaways at each booth.

Obviously your goal is to connect with the people who have a need for your product or service – the Warriors and the Planners – and then engage with them. The good news is that these are the same people who are looking for information. They want to find you too!

To accomplish this you need to go where many of these people are looking. With 300 million people actively using Twitter, 380 million connecting on LinkedIn, and 1.5 billion checking out Facebook regularly, there's an outstanding chance your audience is there as well. All this takes is a solid, coordinated messaging campaign that starts well before the show, delivers during the show, and ends long after the show wraps up.

Content marketing

Content marketing is another excellent tool for making you stand out in the eyes of your prospects. It is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content with the intention of educating your audiences and showcasing your own expertise. Instead of pitching your products or services, you are delivering information that makes your buyers more intelligent. And by offering this type of relationship to your prospects, they may reward you with their business and loyalty. This strategy complements the trade show attendee market well because it prequalifies many of your visitors and augments your lead generation.

This white paper is an example of content marketing. We're giving you information that can help you Turbocharge Your Trade Show Presence, and not asking for anything in return. Other examples of content marketing tools are blogs, videos and social media posts.

Before the show

Promoting your participation in an upcoming trade show should begin 2-3 months before the show starts. The purpose of your communication at this time is to announce your participation. **Think “Awareness!”**

Ways to accomplish this are:

Webpage

Put the show's logo (with a hyperlink) on your company's homepage. If your participation warrants it, consider adding an entire page dedicated to the show that highlights your participation.

Email signatures

Add a line to appropriate employees' email signatures highlighting your company's participation, including the show's name, date and location, along with your booth number. Make sure your company's social media icons (with hyperlinks) are also part of employees' signatures.

Social media channels

The content you put on your social media channels should focus on your participation in the show.

Some ideas include:

- Take pictures of your display – or unique or engaging portions of it. Post these to your social media channels, encouraging people to come see “the rest of the display” at the show.
- Announce special promotions, contests or giveaways you'll be having. Consider having a secret code, word or phrase that attendees must give you at your booth in exchange for a prize or entry into a contest.
- Promote your news releases related to the show.
- Tease new products or other announcements that will be made at the show with photos (or cropped photos of products to add some suspense).
- Join the show's mobile networking app or online community.
- Follow/Like/Friend the show's professional speakers, and engage in the conversations they are a part of that are related to the show.

Each social media channel has its own benefits and opportunities.

Here are some ideas on how to make the most of the major ones:



Twitter

- Follow relevant groups and hashtags. This allows you to see and, if appropriate, take part in the discussions.
- “Follow” people and companies who are important or relevant to your business. You can often find them based on the hashtags they use in their tweets. Many will choose to “Follow” you back, which grows your social media sphere.
- Post pictures. Pictures are worth a thousand words and often catch people’s attention better than words.
- Announce special promotions.
- Hold a “Retweet to Win” contest. If people retweet your post, they are eligible for a prize.



Facebook

- Introduce the team that will be at the show with a photo and names.
- Set up an events page. Use this page to get conversations going about what customers want to see from you at the show.
- Post/link to the show’s map to show your booth location.
- Post pictures.
- Announce special promotions.



LinkedIn

- Connect with other trade show exhibitors and attendees.
- Create a Community/Event or join one that already exists – and participate by joining in the online discussions.
- Invite your Connections to attend the trade show.
- Post on your/your company’s LinkedIn page your participation in the show (link your blogs, news releases, etc.).



Blogs

- Write answers to common questions you’ve received while at previous years’ shows or other shows.
- Offer show tips for your audiences.
- Write about what attendees can expect at the show.



YouTube

- Post short videos of your team preparing for the show.
- Post videos featuring the products you will be demonstrating at the show.

It’s important to recognize that not every social media channel fits every company and every event. You need to choose the ones you believe will result in the best return based on your audience, skills and time available.

What is a #hashtag?

A hashtag is a keyword with a pound (#) symbol directly in front: #hashtag. On Twitter, a hashtagged word or phrase (#GoPackGo) becomes instantly searchable. This allows you to organize content and track discussion topics based on those keywords. By clicking a hashtag you can see all the posts that mention the subject in real time. In addition to Twitter, hashtagged words and phrases are used by Facebook, Instagram, Google+, Tumblr and Pinterest.

HINTS FOR EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- Create a calendar of posts to ensure consistency in your messaging
- Post consistently and often
- Communicate in small bursts
- Show and tell when possible, using visuals to augment words

During the show

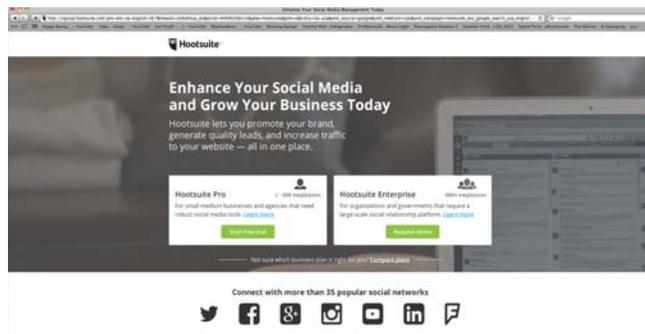
The rule of thumb for posting during a show is “post often with relevancy to your audience.” Your goal is to generate traffic!

Among your messages should be your booth’s location, your giveaways, what people will see at your booth and demonstration times you’ve scheduled.

During the show it’s best practice to devote one person who is not responsible for meeting with booth visitors to do your social media postings. This is important because you want your booth staff to be approachable and ready to help customers, and doing social media postings correctly is a full-time job. You don’t want to miss opportunities to get information posted.

You may also want to consider setting up automated postings through a program like Hootsuite and TweetDeck. This ensures your most important postings still get out, even in the most chaotic of times.

In addition to your planned and/or auto-scheduled posts, photos and videos are great supplements. A photo of an extremely busy booth says to people, “Something good is going on there. I need to find out what’s so exciting.”



If your team has a great interaction with a booth attendee, you may want to consider a short video featuring the person (use your smart phone to record it). A single question like, “What do you like most about our product?” is all you need to ask. Then, upload it to your social media channels. Be sure to share the link with the people you interview so they can share it as well on their social media accounts.

Similarly, interview your own team members about their experiences at the show and post these as well.

Blogs

Blogs are a great tool because not only do they talk to attendees at the show, but people who aren’t at the show may read them as well. Take some time each night to recap your experiences or answer common questions you received during the day from attendees. Some could also be written in advance of the show and then posted based on a pre-determined calendar. If writing is not your thing, a photo or video blog is also very effective.



Photo with the King

To generate added interest and awareness of their booth at a major trade show, one company sponsored a social media photo contest. Trade Show attendees were invited to have their photo taken with a special character who represented the company and was walking the show. Everyone who uploaded a photo, and included a specific hashtag, was eligible for a prize drawing. The character and the company generated interest and conversation amongst many of the company’s potential customers.

TIP

An ideal blog length is 300-600 words

Once the show is done, it doesn't mean your communication is done.

Now you must concentrate on keeping the conversations going so you can nurture the relationships you've started.

The content of your postings should focus on summarizing the highlights of the show. Post more photos and videos. Thank attendees. Announce contest and promotions winners. Answer some of the common questions you were asked. And, pose new questions back to your followers.

This may also be a great time to offer a webinar, either as a follow up for those who



attended the show, or as an introduction to your product for those who could not attend the show.

Finally, use the momentum you've gained by following up on all leads and staying engaged with them on social media. Consider asking them to join you on your social media group such as LinkedIn or to follow you on Twitter.

Conclusion

Trade Shows are the embodiment of face-to-face marketing. When you combine that physical presence with the virtual presence of social media, you have a marketing weapon like no other. Implementing a social media campaign in conjunction with your trade show appearance allows you to create a meaningful connection with a highly qualified audience.

Decision makers are out there and they are attending trade shows. They need solutions to their problems, and they are looking for answers. It's up to you to make the connection – and social media is a fantastic way of accomplishing that.

With established goals in mind, a knowledgeable communications partner (whether internal or external) and a solid communications strategy, you'll be well on your way to turbocharging your trade show presence in a way that educates, excites and encourages your target audience to purposely seek you out and start a conversation. From there, all you'll need to do is convert that lead into a customer.

BrandDirections

From the big picture perspective down to the smallest detail, BrandDirections has been creating public relations, social media, digital marketing and traditional marketing plans for some of America's best B2B companies. You have a great product or service. You just need to get the word out. That's where we come in. From strategic communications planning to tactical implementation, we specialize in helping B2B companies achieve their marketing and business goals. We're eager to create and tell your story for you!

We invite you to learn more about our abilities and our processes.

Contact:
Bob Bodmer at
bbodmer@brand-directions.com
Direct: 920.886.7727
Cell: 920.268.5828