



## **Trade Shows are the Bedrock**

### ***Thriving in Hard Times***

History has proven that companies who stay on course with their marketing programs during down times and execute winning strategies come out much further ahead than their competitors who retreat into their shells

In marketing, the pure mathematics of frequency and quality of exposure to prospects and customers can create great gains in winning market share and establishing the essence of the brand. Marketing through integrated programs, using trade shows and special events, has proven to be extremely effective during lean times.

The statistics have clearly validated that trade shows are the most cost effective way for buyers and sellers to meet and do business. The cost of a lead and contact at trade shows is a fraction of that of a traditional sales call. Strategically planned and well executed trade show programs have helped companies:

- Firmly establish their brands;
- Gain market share and entice customers away from their competitors;
- Retain their own customers;
- Conduct valuable market research;
- Recruit some of the best personnel that become available during down times.

### ***Making the Market Work for You***

#### **Learn from the Past:**

Research has shown that even though show attendance drops during down turns, purchasing power at shows does not go down proportionally. Companies may send fewer personnel to shows, but the personnel who go are empowered to do research or help with purchasing for more departments. Call your customers and learn what they are doing.

#### **Steps to Take:**

- I. Resist the urge to scale back across the board. Align your efforts with the goals and potential of the show. Your strategic goals should be to advance your company or to prevent erosion. If you need to get conservative, save on items that are not big contributors and invest even more in the things that make a difference.



- II. Creating a winning strategy is your priority. Getting on an attendee's agenda should be a company's main focus. This can be done with a well thought out pre-show campaign using advertising in the show / trade journal, direct mail, and personal phone calls, with the goal being to set up appointments for the show. The message must be targeted, informative, pertinent, and create both urgency and priority to visit your exhibit.

### **Evaluate and Conserve / Do Not Slash and Drop:**

- I. Invest in the quality of your exhibit graphics, messages, or face-to-face presentations, but save on the giveaways.
- II. If you need to cut the number of personnel to send to the show, make sure you send the best team appropriate to the targeted audience. *Note:* as mentioned earlier, the attendees may be pulling double or triple duty for other departments in their company. Your exhibit personnel will need to be able to educate and convince these attendees about products or services which may not be their primary interest or job for their company.

### **Boothmanship:**

- I. Make sure to capture complete information, especially that of the key people who may not be at the show but with whom you'll need to follow up after the show.
- II. Train exhibit personnel to be positive about the company and the market place, and equip them with success stories that are pertinent to your market and products. Encourage them not to engage in negative conversation where everyone talks about the poor economy or market.
- III. Understand the challenges that your customers and prospective clients are facing due to present conditions. Look for creative ways to help them and make yourself indispensable. Elevate yourself to the status of partner, not just a vendor.

### **Market Conditions:**

- I. Look for consolidation in your market. Research strategic alliances and collaborative opportunities. Some of the best alliances in the corporate world have been forged during tough times.
- II. Posture yourself to be able to recruit for your key positions. You will be pleasantly surprised at the talent that may be available. Research proves that companies who



invest by adding more people during downturns actually financially outperform those that downsize.

## **Synopsis**

Trade shows are a unique, efficient, and under-utilized marketing medium. Some key features are:

1. Ranking the highest in their ability to cost-effectively meet your prospects and demonstrate your products and services to them.
2. Giving a personal touch and conveying all the intangible aspects of your brand.
3. Being able to influence decision making with the competition being just a few fee away.

Trade shows and conventions play a major role in our global world during good times. Their cost effectiveness definitely makes them a great tool during lean times ...

... If Done Well!

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## **About Configurations:**

At Configurations, we don't just build booths. We are in the business of creating a competitive advantage for your organization.

As one of the country's premiere Branding and Marketing firms, Configurations specializes in providing winning solutions which successfully bring together the diverse and often complex elements that make up the entire exhibit environment.

Our comprehensive, integrated approach to the unique trade show medium sets us apart from mere exhibit builders. As seasoned marketing experts, our strength lies in our ability to blend strategy with architectural and mechanical design, then create high impact, compelling visuals. We call this *The Art of Creative Integration* -- and we are one of the best at it.