

TOURISM AND TRADE SHOWS



Trade shows have long been seen as an important marketing tool for a large number of industries that need to exhibit their products to a specific audience.

Since almost the beginning of time business people have known that trade shows offer merchants the opportunity to market their goods before huge crowds in a relatively short period of time.

Trade shows can also be an important tourism and economic development generator and bring thousands of dollars into the coffers of hotels, restaurants and attractions. From the tourism perspective, trade shows are more than mere platforms for marketing one's wares. These shows are an important part of the convention and meetings industry.

Tourism industry leaders are well aware of the fact that trade shows produce not only primary business (the business that takes place on the trade show floor) but also secondary business (business that is the result of servicing the trade show participants, such as hotels and restaurants) and even tertiary business (business that comes from trade show participants returning at a later time to the trade show's host community). Many tourism leaders view trade shows as "conventions with a product to sell".

From the perspective of the tourism industry trade shows then provide a number of important challenges and opportunities. For example even a small or medium size trade show may attract as many as 10,000 people from out-of-town who will fill hotel rooms and eat at local establishments. For many of the reasons mentioned above tourism professionals compete to gain trade show market share. They also realize that people who come to their community for trade shows may return at a later time for additional recreation and fun.

While there are great similarities between the classical convention and trade shows there are also major differences. Trade shows often need large amounts of convention hall space, and easy access for products and trade show booths. Because trade shows have multiple events occurring at the same time, the trade show floor must be designed to allow people to hear against a cacophony of sounds and permit private conversations in a public arena.

Tourism Tidbits suggests that those tourism communities that seek to attract trade shows consider some or all of the following:

- **Have both a pre-show plan and a during-show plan of action.** Many communities offer the trade show planners a set of show benefits, good lighting, easy access, security guards at the entrances and exits. Communities that also offer pre-show ad-ons including free nights at places of lodging, discount tickets to local attractions, and restaurant coupons have an additional advantage in attracting trade shows.
- **Provide clear and precise information about what services your local community can provide to and for trade show hosts, guests and participants.** Make sure that your community's information appears in a font size that is easy for most people to read. In a like manner provide information regarding secondary and tertiary site locations that is clear and not cluttered. To avoid these problems create "Trade show check lists" that can be reviewed with the tradeshow organizers prior to the start of the show.
- **Do not overestimate what you can handle.** Many communities "bite off" more than they can

chew. Remember that the success of a trade show is determined not only by what takes place within the show, but also by what happens off the trade show floor

- Use your security team as a selling tool to attract tradeshow and to encourage people to consider post-trade show vacations in your community. Trade shows are places where all sorts of merchandise are available and are soft target spots for pilferage. One way to win trade shows for your community is to demonstrate to potential trade show hosts that there is a total security plan and that the local police department has been trained in tourism security issues.

- Make sure that you use the fact that people are at trade show to promote your community. Think of give-away bags promoting local products and services, interesting posters and regular information updates on things to do before and after trade show hours. Make sure that your community is part of the local trade show rather than merely as passive location in which the tradeshow occurs.

- Ask yourself who is exhibiting in your community and what special needs these exhibitors have. The best way to get brilliant results in attracting trade shows is to demonstrate that you understand what the trade show hosts' needs are and that you have a plan to meet their needs. Make sure you demonstrate to the trade show host that you understand who their target audience is and the message that they are trying to get across. Take the time to ask the organizers how they will define a successful show and what part the local tourism industry can play in making sure that they meet their objectives.

- Remember that there are really two shows occurring at the same time. The first is the actual trade show in which merchants are exhibiting products. The second trade show is that your community is also on exhibit. To gain brilliant results use the personal touch and a sense of caring to distinguish your community from other communities that are also seeking to attract the trade show business.

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