

Getting ready for the Fall Conference Season

Congratulations you have the 'honor' of being chosen by your team to represent the company at the big fall industry trade show. Booth duty. Close your eyes. You can imagine the set-up the day(s) before, the lugging of equipment and material, the long hours standing on the thinly covered cement floor which kills both your feet AND your back. Maybe you are wondering why the company does trade shows in the first place? It must work to some degree since they have been exhibiting for years. Or perhaps they feel that by not exhibiting potential clients and competitors could worry about what might be going on with the business in general. So while you think about your wardrobe for the conference (sensible shoes and all), the flight and hotel arrangements and breakfasts, lunches (many of them vertical), and dinners; what you do in the weeks or even months prior to the event can make the difference between generating quality leads to be followed up upon, versus, well the alternative which you know all too well.

Five Ways you can make the most of a conference:

- 1) Know and decide who your best target types will be and more importantly where they are likely to go both in and out of the conference hall. There are association meetings going on, breakfasts etc.; don't wait for that prospect to come sauntering up to your booth and hope your witty retort will win the day. If you see someone in the hall that you have run into and spoken with outside the floor of the conference you have an infinitely MUCH better chance to connect with them at your booth.
- 2) Compile a prospect list of the best potential booth visitors BEFORE the conference. A list of attendees and their companies is often available several weeks prior to the event. Get it. Study it. Identify who you want to meet.
- 3) Create a mail piece or (email if you do not have time but a mail piece is better) like a postcard or simple letter to the prospective visitor complete with a PURL (personal URL) that will drive them to a unique web page on your site that speaks to them exclusively. This is not as difficult as you probably think and highly effective in connecting with prospects and measuring the reach of your effort. Invite prospects to the booth to see a presentation created just for them that is pertinent to some of the challenges you feel they may be facing. You could also have a short business card DVD made to mail (or email) highlighting what will be going on at your booth at the conference and suggest setting up a meeting time.

- 4) Pay attention to who is traveling into the conference city. You could be sitting next to your new hot prospect on the plane coming in or sharing a cab with them on the way to the hotel. Opportunities come in many forms. Attitude will go a long way toward making something good happen.
- 5) Don't put your feet up when your shift in the booth is over or has not started. Set up meetings with prospects and vendors, go to the luncheons and **don't** sit with your co-workers, walk the floor and see what the competition is doing and what is new and exciting in your industry – educate yourself. Try hard to not be a 'conference snob', someone who tries so hard to not make eye contact as they walk past your booth having strategically obscured their name badge just enough to make it hard to read (and you know who you are!).

Conferences can be exhausting; emails and work keep piling up while you are out even if it is sometimes nice to have the change in scenery. But the opportunity to connect one-to-one with a new key prospect(s) is never better than at an industry conference. If you do it correctly you can end up with good trove of targeted business prospects that you can mine all year long.

About CGSM

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