Maximizing Your Investment!

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Are you coming to the Conference & Expo this fall in Boston?

If so, are you preparing to maximize your investment? The cost to be there, airfare, hotel, registration, and, as importantly, the time you’re spending to be there, are investments, not expenses. Believe it or not, attending this event can become somewhat ritualistic and many attendees, including Exhibitors, take a very complacent approach to attending this event. It’s time for a review of some of the basics that contribute to having a successful and fulfilling event in Boston.

In his heyday, Jack Nicklaus, still the greatest golfer of all time, started each new season with lessons from his long time teacher. And each new year they started with the basics; grip, stance, alignment, etc. You’d think a player at his level could forgo the basics and work on fine tuning certain aspects of play. But all top professionals, including business professionals, regularly require a review of the basics to keep their game on track. What follows applies to both Attendees and Exhibitors.

Do you have a game plan when you walk into the Exhibit Hall?

While a plan to “just walk around and see what’s here” is technically a “plan”, it realistically isn’t a very good one if you want to maximize your time and cost to be there. While ours is not an exceptionally large show, and we provide over 10 exclusive hours of exhibit time, there are over 150 Exhibitors who have also invested time and money to be there. That equates to about 4 minutes per Exhibitor, and while you certainly won’t want or need to visit with every one of them, a simple plan where you jot down the priority visits and time allocation will give you a quick indication of how quickly your agenda will be filled.

Factors to consider are how much time to allocate to your primary suppliers/partners, especially considering how much time you spend with them throughout the year. If they are a significant partner, you probably already have their time and attention in your office or another venue specifically devoted to the relationship. Perhaps the Expo is the time to look at what alternatives and/or additional supplier opportunities exists that benefit your strategic business plan. If not a current significant supplier of yours, you probably have little contact with the management team, more likely with just the local sales representative. Now is your opportunity to meet them and take measure of the organization beyond what you see from their literature and local sales rep.

The Expo is also the time to see “who’s new” to our industry. Beyond our wealth of long standing suppliers who exhibit each year are a considerable number of companies that, though “newcomers”, are stable businesses looking to become dedicated channel partners to our distributors/dealers. They may not currently be represented locally by one of your familiar sales agencies, and may offer product solutions and/or business opportunities of which you were quite unaware. Allocate some time in your plan to see not just what’s new, but who’s new as well.

Another small detail, bring business cards! You’d be surprised how many and how often Attendees “forgot their cards” and everyone scrambles to find something to write on! While many Exhibitors will utilize an Electronic Lead Retrieval System and simply swipe
the card provided you at registration, that captured information is surprisingly not always immediately acted upon after they return to the office and a new batch of problems/opportunities awaits them. If you’re standing there talking about mutually beneficial business opportunities with a new prospective supplier, at least be prepared to give them a card to contact you after the Show is over. Basic, but often forgotten.

Exhibitors often just show up and expect great results at a Show and are often disappointed even when attendance was very high. You are competing with at least 150 other companies for the short time and attention of Attendees! What have you done to differentiate yourself from the others and attract potential leads? Or better yet, what have you done to insure that when they are planning their time on the Floor, they will allocate time specifically for you? Pre-event promotion is a critical element to maximize your return on investment to be there with your display and products. VIP invitations, contests and promotions are all options to make Attendees commit to coming to see YOU! Do you know who is planning to attend the event beforehand and have you reached out to them? That information is available to you so take advantage and give yourself an advantage.

Professional “boothmanship” is becoming a lost art. I’m not talking about someone standing in the aisle “hooking them in” or pretty, scantily dressed girls handing out literature or tokens. Professional appearance, if not any longer coat and tie, is certainly logo’d attire. Eating and drinking in the booth is verboten!

A warm, inviting look to the booth with a welcoming demeanor of the booth staff will insure those Attendees walking the Floor will stop in and see what’s new.

The essence of the event we hold three days each year is the opportunity to interact directly with the people with whom we do business the other 362 days. Face to face, not by phone, fax, e-mail, or text messaging! A good old-fashioned handshake and look them in the eyes! Maximize not only your investment to be there, but also this opportunity.