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Before the Show— Print Do's And Don'ts

By Margit Weisgal, CME

The Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR) reports that exhibitors who run the equivalent of six pages of trade advertising before an event get 56% more booth traffic. This may be because they are better known, but a small outfit, using smart, targeted ads, can do as well.

The key to effective print advertising is the copy writing—or actually the lack of copy. Far too often, print ads placed prior to a trade show are the same ads placed the rest of the year—with one variation: a star burst is added in a corner with copy along the lines of “Don’t forget to visit our booth at the XYZ Show next month.” At that point there is no reason for a current customer or prospect to drop by, because all the specs of your product are in the ad.

The concept you should try to get across in all your media, but especially in print, is that you have the answers—not all the answers, but those your product helps solve. Read the list of seminars being presented at the show. You will discover the immediate and timely concerns of the attendees. Position your booth as the place to find the solutions.

If you use a phrase such as, “Learn how XYZ can save you . . .” you target and define your audience by speaking to those whose problems you really are able to solve with your product or service.

Choices for Advertising

The most important ad is the free listing in the show guide. Most shows print preliminary directories that are distributed in advance, along with registration information. This is a perfect place to begin your campaign. Those 50 to 75 words—or whatever you are allowed—are your first opportunity to reach prospects and customers and are a good opening salvo to hit your targets. The description should not be a

simple list of product offerings. Use it to reiterate what participants can learn or how they can benefit by visiting you at the show.

Show editions of trade journals or industry publications provide additional opportunities in that you can augment your ad with an article or letter to the editor reinforcing your benefits if the publication offers such opportunities. Show dailies—newspapers put out with show updates during the event—are vehicles through which you can generate additional coverage, especially with ads or special contest giveaways in your booth. Sending editors of these publications press releases or pre-written articles about new products as proven solutions may help you get more ink.

Depending on the type of show and the number of attendees, consider buying space in hotel magazines. Many delegates spend time leafing through these publications, especially during quiet times—times when these ads have more impact.

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About TSEA

Since 1967, TSEA has been providing knowledge to marketing and management professionals who use exhibits, events and face-to-face marketing to promote and sell their products, as well as to those who supply them with products and services. Members benefit from access to education, networking, resources, advocacy and member-only discounts on products and services that all exhibit and event professionals use. TSEA is headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. For more information, please visit www.tsea.org. This article was excerpted with permission.

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