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LEADS ARE JUST AS VALUABLE AS SALES!

10 steps to ensuring you are getting the right results and maximising your return on investment.

Today, privacy laws and ‘do not contact’ requests prevent businesses from communicating with many prime leads, so your presence at a forum where you can generate leads from prime prospects is a very valuable asset to your business – and a major benefit of an exhibition that is not taken advantage of enough.

What’s worse, research of those who do collect a database shows that just under 90% don’t actually follow up in a timely or effective manner!

What a golden opportunity you have – if you plan and allocate the resources to take advantage of leads, you are in the box seat to capture huge dollars of unrealised business, and it’s not that difficult!

I know what you’re thinking – you have been at a show for a week, with staff, and as soon as you’re back at the office, you want to catch-up on the emails, telephone calls and appointments that the exhibition interrupted. Remember, you were at that exhibition to make sales, not only at the event, but also over the year ahead, so let’s plan for it. Also, I am not a fan of the old ‘fish bowl’ where passers-by drop in their business card, they’re really not qualified or useful leads!

Here are 10 steps you can put in place to make the whole process of capturing and processing leads more efficient and deliver you more effective results.

1. What kind of leads do you want? There is no point gathering random lists of people, they need to be those that are relevant to your product/service, and have an influence over the decision of buying.
2. Define what a lead is and what it isn’t. Business card collecting is not a lead, nor is just swiping a card at a trade show. A qualified lead means you have spoken to the contact and qualified them, you have asked questions to model what their future needs may be, and agreed to what you will do next. All of this needs to be documented and captured.

3. Set a target. This process should have an objective and therefore you should have a documented target. As a guide, you can apply the following formula: Show hours x number of staff, then take this total and multiply by how many interactions staff can have per hour. Finally, divide the total interactions by the number of staff and that leaves you the lead target. For example:
   24 (hours) x 4 (staff) = 96 (staff hours)
   96 (staff hours) x 12 (interactions per hour) = 1,152 (total)
   1,152 (total) x .25 = 288 (qualified leads)
4. Share the target. I have mentioned it many times before – staff are your number one factor to success. It's important they know before the event what you want to achieve as a target and the type of information to gather from visitors.
5. Be clear what is essential. Determine what is it you want to capture – name, title, decision making, email address, mailing address, when they intend to buy, preferences of products/services, past issues/objections, etc
6. Rate them. A key to leads is weighting their importance – you need do this so that if you collect far more leads than you planned, you can focus on the hot-rated ones first, then work through the rest of the list.
7. What system to use. The options you have to capture the information will depend whether it's a trade or consumer show. Trade shows generally have scanners that allow you to swipe cards and contact details (you need to qualify what, when and how) and there is nothing wrong with a paper system that you complete as you talk to them. (As a bonus this month please find the lead processing template that can be expanded or reduced depending on your needs.) I have also seen companies using tablet devices where visitors complete their details and answer some questions – this is normally linked to a competition to ensure they complete it correctly.
8. Make someone responsible. Allocate the lead role to an individual who will be at the event with the team and then can oversee the process when it's over. This person can ensure the right information is being captured, through random checks, and that the target is on track and staff are fully focussed.
9. The post show resource. Allocate the staff and resources to follow up. 10. Report and track. Make sure that you track the leads and be aware of the results – these leads will add to your total review of the success of the show.

IN A NUT SHELL:

The ONE golden rule in lead generation is to do what you say you would do.

Your return on investment from exhibiting can be greatly influenced by leads and what you do with them. Being clear on the purpose of the leads and ensuring they are nurtured and used properly will change your results and greatly add to the overall success of your business.

See you on the floor.