

# CATALYST

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Business Strategy | Marketing Communications

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## Post Tradeshow Sales/Marketing Checklist

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Ideally, have your tradeshow marketing and sales follow-up systems in place before the event. That way you can implement this checklist as soon as the event is over. Having a solid structure of follow-up activities to get your teams into effective action immediately gives everyone the peace of mind to be totally present for each prospect meeting at the show. This added confidence might be just the edge that makes a difference.

Basically, there are five steps. Step 1 and 2 needs to happen within five days of the close of the show. Steps 3 and 4 should happen simultaneously within two weeks after the show. Step 5 can happen once your results are in, but should be completed and disseminated to your teams within 60-90 days after the event.

1. Literature Follow-up
2. Prospect Feedback Survey
3. Internal Feedback Survey
4. Inquiry Qualification
5. Determining ROI

### ***Literature Follow-up***

A follow-up letter with requested product information should be sent no later than five working days after the end of the event.

Studies have shown that less than 43% of companies send follow-up correspondence within two weeks of a tradeshow. Every day that goes by without any kind of customer/prospect follow-up is an opportunity for your competitors.

### ***Prospect Feedback Survey***

This is the perfect opportunity to get feedback from prospects. Send a survey with your follow-up mailing with questions such as:

1. How informed were our sale people at the exhibit?

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2. How promptly and professionally were you approached?
3. Were you given the freedom to browse the exhibit?
4. Did you get the product information that you needed?
5. Was our exhibit easy to find?
6. Was our exhibit located in the most logical location for its product category?
7. How did you like the way our booth and graphics were designed?
8. Do you have any recommendations for improvement of our exhibit or staffing?

This survey can be done by mail, fax or on-line and sent out within five days after the end of the event. If you have the resources, telesales is a fast and effective method, since you can use the time to ask questions that will help qualify the lead. Improve your response rate by offering an incentive, such as coupon, or if mailed, a five-dollar bill. Incentives are not always necessary, but they can improve your return rate.

For a copy of the prospect survey we use, please write [therndon@themarxgrp.com](mailto:therndon@themarxgrp.com) for a copy.

### ***Internal Feedback Survey***

Are you learning from your mistakes? Year after year, we have seen the same tradeshow related breakdowns occur. It's all about communications. Bring together key team members promptly after each tradeshow and ask specific questions, such as:

1. What worked? What didn't?
2. Did traffic flow?
3. Were products displayed well (functional as well as attractive)?
4. Did we have lots of traffic? Was the traffic of a high quality?
5. Did we have enough staff? Too many?
6. Were the right people present? Who was missing? Who didn't need to be there?
7. Were there distractions (such as spouses or outside activities) that impinged on the sales process?
8. If a tradeshow has different halls, was the choice to be in one hall the best use of resources, or is it necessary to have a physical presence in more than one hall?

For a successful learning experience it is important to have this meeting within two weeks after the end of the event and to make sure the right people attend. We recommend you include your exhibit designer and PR and advertising agencies, as well as your marketing, sales and customer service directors. Document the results of the internal feedback survey and assign someone in the company to be accountable for next year's tradeshow.

### ***Inquiry Qualification***

Are sales associates following up? We acknowledge how overloaded a sales person can be after a major tradeshow. Generally the focus goes to the most important leads – those with the biggest sales opportunity. Unfortunately, too often this means that the smaller leads don't get any attention. Sometimes several smaller leads can equal one larger lead -- with less hassle and time to close. By assigning smaller leads to a dedicated sales person (perhaps someone focused on telesales), these important leads won't get cold. All leads, big or small, should be contacted within two weeks after the end of the event.

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The key issue here is the lack of a consistent inquiry qualification process. The category "inquiry" is very general, and the results depend on what tool you use. For example, an inquiry from a trade ad will give you much less information than a website response page or inquiry from an email campaign.

Here is a simple guide for determining how to move an Inquiry to a Lead to a Prospect and finally to an Opportunity:

### ***Inquiry***

You have only general information about the company and contact, often just a business card.

### ***Lead***

Here you've captured all of the pertinent information—the qualitative and quantitative data that helps move the lead closer to being a prospect. You can also use this level to disqualify the lead, based on your specific criteria.

### ***Prospect***

All necessary information has been gathered, you've determined there is a possible fit, and the contact wants a meeting with your sales team.

### ***Opportunity***

The prospect has expressed an interest to buy, entering into conversations about budget, timelines, applications and proposals.

By qualifying the inquiries, you can determine where the sales team spends their time.

*NOTE: The Inquiry Qualification section above is very truncated. For a more comprehensive guide on how to effectively manage inquiries, refer to our chapter on Inquiry Management, on page 81 in our book [\*\*\*Marketing Sucks! \(And Sales, Too!\)\*\*\*](#), or write us a note and we'll send a copy of this chapter: [therndon@themarxgrp.com](mailto:therndon@themarxgrp.com).*

## ***Determining ROI***

ROI usually cannot be calculated before 60-90 days after a show. By that time you'll have a good sense of the value of your investment, both in financial and human capital.

Tighter marketing budgets mean carefully assessing the value of each tradeshow – often the single largest line item in the typical marketing budget. In a recent meeting with a new client, we were given a spreadsheet with budget allocations for the following year's marketing activities. The major annual tradeshow was over 40% of the overall marketing budget. Our initial assessment was that this was WAY too high of an investment in comparison to the other year-round marketing activities. Or, this tradeshow better darn well generate at least 40% of all new business brought in during the year.

Though we agree that tradeshows are important in many other marketing domains, including awareness, loyalty, product launches, acknowledging customers, media opportunities, and more, we also believe that tradeshows need to be evaluated from the same criteria as other marketing activities.

*By using this follow-up system outlined above, we are confident that you will find the results of your tradeshow program – now and in the future – to be more productive and consistent.*

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