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10 Lead Generation Tactics for Exhibitors

Gain the highest ROI possible for marketing dollars spent

By: *Dr. Leslie Garrett*

Lead generation tactics can range from spur of the moment safety-net initiatives thought-up out of necessity to well-planned and strategic initiatives that require preparation and pre-event marketing months in advance of the event. Regardless of the tactic, getting prospects to the booth is one aspect, having a well-trained booth staff who can engage them in conversation or a demonstration is another.

Hitendra Patil, Chief Operating Officer of [Pransform, Inc.](http://Pransform.com) explained how his booth staff changed their approach which resulted in a more successful interaction with prospects while working the booth, "We used to talk about features and what our technology provides, but now we begin every conversation by sharing the benefits our customers have shared with us which seems to resonate with attendees quickly."

The following list represents lead generation tactics -- some new ideas and some tried and true.

1. **Value-added collateral (i.e. White Paper or survey results).** Giving away value-added collateral is a great way to showcase thought-leadership in an industry. If leveraged well, much like the badge scanner, it becomes a great tool that allows the sales team to conduct a more targeted follow-up. Ideally your marketing person will know how to leverage collateral as a lead capture tool used to gather prospect data which will allow for more intelligent follow-up.
2. **Seating area.** Seating in the exhibit hall area can be difficult to come by which is intentional. Event organizers want to encourage attendees to keep moving through the exhibit hall. You can take advantage of this by creating a seating area. Rent an additional booth space and encourage attendees to be seated to watch a demo.
3. **Pre-event postcard mailer.** Pre-event mailers should ask the recipient to stop by the booth, provide the booth number, and perhaps some incentive to visit the booth. Mailers can be expensive; there are ways to minimize costs.

Michael Giardina, CEO of [Office Tools Pro](http://OfficeToolsPro.com) shared his cost-saving approach to mailers, "Even though we may only do a mailer for a group of 300 at one time, we print 5000 postcards. We leave a space to print the booth number for an event which allows us to customize the mailer for each event. Our cost savings are in the printing." As for effectiveness of the postcard mailer, Giardina commented about several attendees producing their post card mailer when they approached his booth.

4. **Give-a-Ways.** Giving away pens, gadgets and widgets does entice attendees to walk by your booth, however leaving the merchandise out where it can be easily scooped up without a conversation will not result in leads.

A tactic when using give-a-ways is to have the item deeper in the booth space, or have booth staff hold on to the item and offer it to passers-by while making the effort to engage them in a brief conversation. Francesca Zelasko, Channel Marketing and Program



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Manager at [SurePayroll](#) commented, "Year-after-year the attendees come looking for SurePayroll's booth to discover what new goodies we have, it works well for us. We always try to offer something that would be of value to the prospect as well as help promote the SurePayroll name," said Zelasko.

5. Food and/or beverage

- **Candy.** Catering to attendees' sweet tooth is a surefire way to get people to walk up to your booth; however, keeping them at the booth beyond a one-second snatch-and-grab is the key to this being successful. At a recent event [PayChex](#) handled this well. They used a shelving unit in their booth with "fill-your-own-bag" self-service area for attendees. This setup required attendees to spend time at the shelving unit and scoop their selections into a bag. This tactic gave the booth staff time to swoop in for a conversation.
- **Popcorn or ice cream.** The smell of fresh popcorn will draw a crowd. If you are exhibiting the [Midwest Accounting and Finance Showcase](#) in August 2013, there is a good chance the ILCPA will have their popcorn machine going and you will find a long line of attendees standing around waiting for their popcorn. A savvy exhibitor could take advantage of this by offering free bottled water -- or smarter yet -- a coupon redeemable at your booth for free bottled water. Much like popcorn, attendees will stand in line for free ice cream

6. **Games.** The purpose of a game is to attract and keep attendees at the booth long enough to engage them in conversation. If you use a game your booth staff should be out in the walkway recruiting prospects to play the game.
7. **Register to Win.** Drawings will attract attendees. Requiring a business card as their entry to win will ensure you have correct contact information. For the booth staff at Office Tools Pro, getting the attendee's business card is only the beginning of their lead capture process. They have refined their tactics and efficiently collect qualifying information while conversing with attendees -- writing coded notes on each business card -- which enables their sales team to make more pointed follow-up calls immediately after a show.
8. **Booth attraction (i.e. Luggage tag laminator, photo booth, massage chair).** Shorten the sales cycle by promoting your booth attraction to your existing database of prospects.
9. **Professional photographer.** Offer a professional head shot to prospects and clients. Market to your top prospects well in advance of the event to ensure they secure a photo shoot time and arrive dressed for their picture.
10. **Badge Scanner.** This technology cannot be beaten in terms of efficiently capturing data on booth attendees. Badge scanners are exceptionally valuable when you to identify personalized qualifiers that enable your sales team to conduct a more targeted follow-up.

Discuss Your Plan B

Despite your efforts in planning lead generation initiatives that [gain the highest ROI possible for marketing dollars spent](#), there is always a chance you will be forced to go with Plan B, improvising as a result of some unplanned factor such as collateral or a booth not arriving. If this happens to you, consider renting a 6x6 screen and projector, or a large flat-panel monitor and try to make the best of the situation. Be prepared for unplanned event setbacks; discuss Plan B with your team.

About the Author

Dr. Leslie Garrett serves Edge Marketing, Inc. as a marketing optimization analyst with expertise in marketing, public relations, and management. She is instrumental in leading Edge's corporate consulting and Search Engine Optimization website analytics services.



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