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10 Ways to use Social Media to Win Attention at Tradeshows

Here are some nuggets that you can start implementing today.

1. Pick The Right Team - Make sure to select people from your company that enjoy using social media tools. You will need to choose people as booth staff who are comfortable using real-time tools (like Twitter) to follow show hashtags and connect with other attendees. Also remember that you will want someone as a remote admin to help you pull everything together and stay engaged with social networks and pages while you are busy on the floor.
2. Tune Into the Proper Stations - It's important to do your homework and find the official social stations that the show will be using. Oftentimes, these stations can be found on Twitter hashtags, open Facebook Groups and Pages. Make it a point to set up and staff a listening practice for each of the different show channels.
3. Collect Your Audience - With social media as a tool base, we all have the power to be curators of humans. Find the humans that are relevant to your exhibiting strategy, and use things like Facebook Groups and Pages, LinkedIn Groups or even group texting sites to collect them in one spot making it easier to stay in constant communication at your event.
4. Choose the Right Weapons - A big part of creating media is choosing the right tools. Just about everyone is familiar with the popular Flip Video cameras, but there's a whole world of equipment beyond the Flip that can make a big difference in your content production abilities for photo and video.
5. Build Your Stage - If your tradeshow efforts - booth, staff and sponsorships - are part of a brand production, then your production needs an online stage. Blogs make a great stage for showing and sharing content, whereas networks like Facebook are excellent at building dialog within a community. The question is this: what does your company already have in place that you can use in your trade show efforts?
6. Tell Interesting Stories - Know what? Your product and services are just not that interesting. Sorry. Even in an environment like a trade show (that's designed to market your stuff), simply marketing your stuff will not break through the noise on social media. When using a blog or Facebook to build an audience for your show, try introducing your people and sharing information about them. You'd be surprised what a little introduction will do in terms of building new relationships.

7. Quit Selling Stuff - Really. Please quit trying to sell your stuff on social media sites. I promise, we will tune you out completely. You know as well as I do that a trade show is not really the place to sell your stuff either. Trade shows and social media are about building relationships. Sales happen in boardrooms and on the phones. Take that to heart.

8. Buy More Face Time - The web has been inhabited by human beings, and markets are now conversations. Use social media to find interesting people who might also make good customers for your business. Then invite them to meet you IRL (in real life). You might be surprised just how easy it is to make new friends when you've spent some time tweeting or Facebooking with them first.

9. Always Be Mobile - Laptops are a pain in the butt in a trade show booth. Yes, there are things we need them for, but using social media at trade shows is much friendlier on a mobile device. Make sure that your team first has internet-ready smartphones or tablets that are set up with the right applications for social media use. You might even want apps that mirror what's on your desktop. HootSuite, TweetDeck and Seismic are good for that.

10. Don't Be a Robot - While automating content distribution on social networks, so that its spread evenly over the day is a good practice, but be sparing with using automation at trade shows. Trade shows are live events with things happening on the floor in real time. To be the most relevant, pay attention to your surroundings and share content (both your own and that of other exhibitors) as it happens on the floor.

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