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Gaylord Texan Resort, Dallas Texas

Booth Premiums and Give-Aways that Work

The strategic use of booth premiums and give-aways can be an excellent way to draw qualified visitors to your booth. They can also be used to gather important information that will move the sales process forward.

Successfully leveraging premiums and give-aways is much more than ordering the usual pens, pencils, and key chains with your logo. By integrating such a program into your overall marketing strategy, you can truly increase your return on investment.

To be successful, your marketing team needs to answer some key questions:

Who are you targeting? Your program should reflect your show strategy by making sure your premium reflects your targeted buyer. The senior decision makers you are trying to attract may require a different quality gift than others in their organization. You may even want to consider having different gifts for key customers, prospects, etc. Be sure to review statutes and regulations regarding gifts to government employees.

What are you trying to achieve? A give-away should reflect your objectives. Increasing name recognition, communicating a message or motivating an action can be just some of the goals you may have. It's also important to have your marketing message on your item. You want them to remember more than just your company name.

Who receives the give-away? Visitors could be required to participate in a demonstration or presentation, complete a short qualification survey or form about their needs.

Providing a give-away to everyone who walks by your booth is expensive and does not gain you any qualifying information. Scanning their badge or getting their business card in exchange for a give-away does not get you a lead you know is qualified.

Should give-aways be included in pre-show marketing? This can be very effective. Depending on your program, you should include details about your premium in your pre-show promotion. If possible, require your prospect to bring the mailed or emailed pre-show promotion with them to your booth to claim the give-away.

This requirement forces your prospect to retain your pre-show promotion, reminding them of your marketing message and the reason to visit your booth when they arrive at the show. It also enables you to gauge the success of your pre-show promotion by counting how many of your prospects come to your booth with your marketing.

One very important exception: If a prospect shows up without the pre-show promotion to claim their premium, accommodate them. You've achieved your objective and you don't want to anger them.

Can a fishbowl drawing be effective? Generally, this only gets you a bowl of cards from attendees, not prospects with any information that moves the sales process forward.

If collecting names is one of your goals, a drawing could be effective but your prize should reflect your target audience. Offering an LCD television or other high value prize will result in business cards from unqualified visitors. Target your prize to your buyers; you may get fewer cards, but they're more likely to be qualified prospects.

What should be avoided?

Avoid giving away a cheap pen or other "specialty item" that the visitor will throw away when they return to their office. It devalues your company and does not reflect the quality of your products or your good reputation. These type of items are often found throughout the show floor and your message (and investment) will only get lost in the crowd.

Avoid setting up a candy bowl which leads to visitors sneaking up, taking a piece of candy and making a fast retreat, avoiding eye contact. Engage them and they'll only walk away faster. It doesn't bring you the right visitors and it takes up valuable space in your booth.

Avoid popcorn or other edible items. You'll only draw unqualified visitors who just want popcorn. Even if the bag is branded, it will go in the trash as soon as they are done. You'll soon be forgotten and have gathered no information. Even if you get their business card or scan their badge, you will have no qualifying information for your sales team.

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