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BUSINESS BUILDING IDEAS

Top Ten Things That Drive Trade Show Visitors Nuts

In Jay Conrad Levinson's recent book, "Guerilla Trade Show Selling," he reports on surveys he has done during live training sessions. The list below is based on those results. These are all the things you and your trade show staff will want to avoid. Here's what annoys trade show visitors most, roughly in the order of importance...

- 1. Being ignored.** This ranges from staffers talking among themselves to staff unwilling to break away from some nonsales activity, to long-winded conversations with other visitors that prevent your staff from acknowledging the new visitor is there. Sitting, reading, and any activity other than being ready to serve visitors can lead to lost sales.
- 2. A staff that doesn't know the products.** Visitors are underwhelmed when they're looking for answers and all they get is, "I don't know." Make certain your staff is trained on what you sell. If you have to bring in temporary staffers, make sure they have a basic knowledge of what you do and can refer the visitor to the right person for more details.
- 3. Eating in the exhibit.** When you lunch in your exhibit, you'll drive away most visitors. This sends the message that your food is more important than making a sale, and most people are too polite to interrupt your meal.
- 4. Being interrupted.** Let visitors talk! Men are the worst offenders when speaking to women, frequently interrupting the conversation. Let your visitors complete what they're saying and don't try to second guess what they'll say next. If you jump ahead of your visitor, you'll



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miss important information—details that could mean the difference between you making a sale and your competition getting the business. This is tough to do when you've heard the same question again and again and already knew the answer. Start every conversation as though you have no idea what your visitor wants, as if you need to hear everything that is said to do business—and you do!

5. Hands in pockets. Make the mental picture of a salesman, hands in his pockets, jingling change, rocking back and forth on his heels. He doesn't appear very sincere, does he? Empty your pockets of keys, change, and other items. That way you're not clanking as you speak with your visitor. When you stick your hands into your empty pockets, you'll find nothing's in there and take your hands back out.

6. Being kept around when they're ready to move on. When they've seen and heard enough, they'll either be interested or want to move on. Keeping visitors who are not interested is a waste of your time, and it leaves them feeling uncomfortable about your company.

7. Excessive touching. Exhibit staffers who want to touch their visitors really put off a large number of people. Current customs permit you to shake hands, but other touching, unless that is a major part of your business, is off limits.

8. Gum. It's hard to speak clearly with gum in your mouth, and it is an annoyance to most visitors.

9. Continuous throat-clearing. Some people have a habit of clearing their throat while others are speaking or just before they speak. This is very distracting, and some people think it's rude. Ask your colleagues if you frequently clear your throat, or listen for throat-clearing when you speak to visitors.

10. Bad breath. Go figure. This one is basically self explanatory. Keep your teeth clean and pop a mint or two following coffee or lunch breaks.

**If you have any questions or need advice, feel free to send us your questions.
Comments are also welcome!**

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