



Maximizing Your Trade Show ROI with PR

If you build it, they will come. That may be true for the field of dreams and baseball fans, but it certainly doesn't hold true for trade show displays and reporters. Just exhibiting at a trade show doesn't guarantee you visits, or media coverage, by your trade press. You have to work it.

It's amazing to see a company spend hundreds of thousands of dollars (or more!) to design, build, ship, set up and staff a trade show booth ... and then do absolutely nothing to bring media to that booth.

Think about it. You have your best products on display. You have your technical experts and top executives on hand, perhaps some from overseas. You have developed your messaging. You have created a unique booth experience for your customers and prospects.

Wouldn't it be worthwhile to:

- Spend some effort and a few extra bucks to invite the press in, engage them in interviews and demonstrations, and have them help you to reinforce your message ... with stories that will appear online or in a magazine or a newspaper?
- Extend your reach and frequency of message to the thousands of customers and prospects who couldn't attend the show?
- Earn media coverage that supports and adds credibility to your advertising?
- Validate your prospects' and customers' enthusiasm for your company as they read about your products in a publication they trust and respect?

PR support at a trade show simply helps maximize your program's return on investment. And best of all, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to do it. Here are some basics:

1. Reach out to media several weeks before the show, letting them know what you'll be offering at the booth in terms of product introduction and demonstrations, technical experts and executives available for interviews, insights/perspectives on industry trends or issues your people can address;
2. Follow-up with key reporters a week or two before the show to schedule interviews or demonstration appointments
3. Prepare press materials to distribute from the booth (so you can meet reporters face-to-face);

4. Have your PR expert “troll” the exhibit floor and hallways during the show to pitch reporters on the spot (don’t encroach upon their refuge, the media center);
5. Follow-up with media after the show, making sure their questions are answered and their photo needs are handled; and
6. Watch the press coverage mount.

Trade shows can be expensive and a lot of work. And with a little extra planning on the PR front, that two- or three-day trade show can keep working for you for months. And that’s an ROI that is hard to beat!