

Show, Don't Tell: Promoting Customer Service at Trade Shows

As a fairly new and small company in our niche B2B marketplace, we were faced with a challenge at our first ever conference: displaying our biggest differentiator — customer service.

Many companies talk about how great their customer service is until they're blue in the face but to potential customers, hearing about great service and experiencing it are two very different things. How would we show, rather than tell, that our customer service really was what we said?

Our answer to this challenging problem was to provide actual customer service to conference attendees in a tangible way, right there on the exhibit hall floor. Trade shows and conferences can be long and tiring, so we asked ourselves what we could offer to make attendees' experiences better. Some ideas are already out there: providing phone charging stations, massage services and the like, but we wanted to expand on the idea further.

The five-day conference had most of its 1,500 attendees spending their days running between educational sessions and taking breaks in the exhibit hall. It would be a mistake to assume everyone's needs would be the same with such a large and diverse group, so we decided to provide as many amenities as possible, covering virtually anything someone might need during the conference.

As most attendees had tight schedules, we lent branded power banks to anyone who needed to recharge their devices on the go, in addition to having the standard charging stations. Along with 46 other amenities, including items such as miniature lip balms, tissue packages and lens cleaners, this made our informal motto of "everything from batteries to Band-aids" catch on.

Soon, attendees knew they could turn to us for virtually anything. While it was not practical to brand every amenity, the goal was to provide continual positive associations and interactions.

Along with inviting café-style tables with charging stations, product samples and branded giveaways, we included thoughtfully displayed amenities which attracted curious

attendees. Staff was trained to look for opportunities to help attendees whenever possible. We were even able to assist fellow exhibitors, many of whom were also potential customers. I knew we were getting somewhere when one attendee came up to the booth and asked, "Okay 'people who have everything,' do you have a highlighter?" Yes, yes, we did.

While the show itself was successful and we received much positive feedback, the important question is: did this get us anything? Going above and beyond with just one attendee who made use of the power banks earned us a sales meeting. He happened to be an executive at a large company and definitely responded to our service and message by hosting us in front of 14 project managers from his office.

Creating this service-oriented environment helped us realize our goal to truly connect with our potential clients. These efforts were noticed by many employees of the conference host, who unofficially named us best-of-conference. Our "show, don't tell" philosophy helped us earn the respect and attention of the conference host, colleagues and above all, future clients.

Source: Show, Don't Tell: Promoting Customer Service at Trade Shows, Robyn Capella, Compass Remediation Chemicals