Freeman

Deliver a commanding performance

How to cast your booth staff for a smash-hit exhibit

At a trade show, your exhibit acts as your brand's stage. And each team member plays a part in your brand's story.

To create a story that truly hooks attendees, you need the right players and a well-thought-out script to achieve the best performance. From a solo staffer working a 10'x10' to a large group navigating a double-decker, it's important to organize an enthusiastic group who will work hard to make your brand the star of the show.

Try these tips for assembling a standout exhibit team and learn how to set them up for success at your next event.

Cast the right players

With all the exhibit prep and planning involved, it's easy to gloss over a staffing strategy and simply tap your sales group. But building an energetic team of prime-time players holds the key to successful engagement, so aim to expand your booth group horizons.

Choose an ensemble

Take your time to assemble a mix of expertise across the organization, and make sure their talents align with the booth objectives. Given the wide spectrum of attendees and their interests, your team composition should mirror this diversity. Take personality and previous exhibit experience into account. Opt for positive, motivated, and enthusiastic types who have the gift of gab, can energize the booth, and are comfortable with the unique selling environment of trade shows.

Not everyone has to be a seasoned booth rep (more on training in a bit), but every person should understand how to interact with attendees and what's expected during the show.

> A healthy mix of sales, marketing, product development, and customer service = better conversations and connections on the floor.

Casting call

A smart way to manage expectations is assigning specific staff roles. Remain flexible as plans can change on-site, but having specific functions in place helps every team member know where they need to be and what they need to do.

Consider breaking your team into these groups:

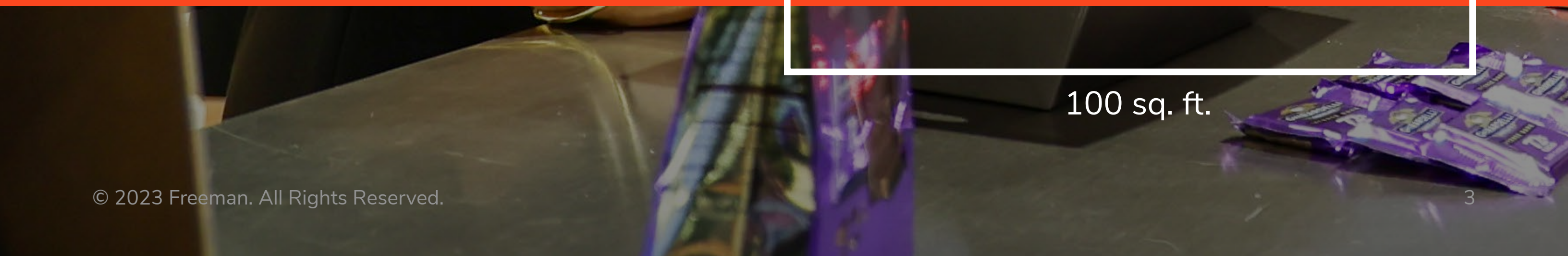
- **Greeters:** Choose your cheeriest reps to work the information desk. Have them scan badges and direct visitors to specific areas and/or experts. They can also stand near the aisles to engage passersby.
- **Transition/qualifiers:** These team members qualify attendees and move them toward an appropriate staff person or product area.
- **Experts:** Seasoned salespeople and specialists who are knowledgeable about your organization's offerings and can direct product areas or demos.
- **Floaters:** This flexible crew serves as backup and can help wherever needed.

Booth size matters

Wondering about how many team members?

- Start with the booth size to determine appropriate coverage. Consider people in relation to space so there's a good mix of mingling and open area.
- A good rule of thumb is one staff member per 100 square feet of open/working space.
- This quick calculation allows everyone to interact, with some elbow room for visitors, staff, and products.

100 sq. ft.



Prepare the script

With your team and roles in place, it's time to train and inform. There's a lot of information to relay, so prepare materials with all necessary (and helpful) information about the show.

Several weeks before the event, compile a detailed packet (think who, what, when, where, why) to hand out or send virtually.

Key info may include:

- An overview of the event with links to resources on the event site
- Registration details
- Designated roles and responsibilities
- Staff schedule
- Purpose for exhibiting and booth objectives, along with any key facts/figures related to your objectives
- Booth number, location, and expo hall map
- Booth theme and layout
- Safety protocols for the booth and overall show
- Details on demos, activations, and presentations
- Client list of potential visitors and/or scheduled meetings

Meet and greet

Schedule team meetings before the show, and provide a basic elevator speech with key messages. Encourage staffers to personalize it and practice, practice, practice. Because a trade show is an unusual selling environment, provide training that covers specific booth activities as well as engagement tips and exhibit etiquette.

These meetings (or calls) help the team feel comfortable and keep everyone up to date.

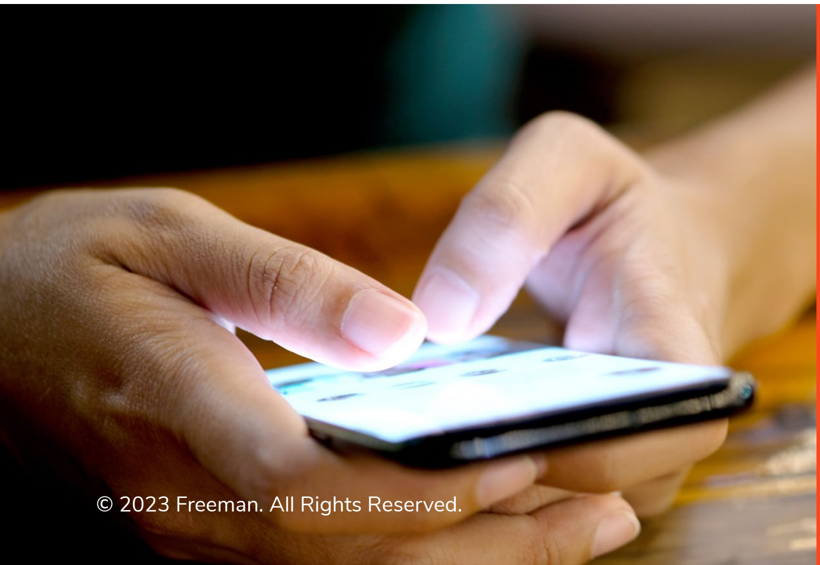
If possible, hold a team lunch or outside activity to encourage bonding, which benefits the in-booth energy.

Value your VIPs

Provide a list of key clients who may be attending, along with contact names. Determine a welcome protocol for high-profile visitors. If a top client's CEO arrives, send your most senior staffer to greet the visitor personally.

Exhibit etiquette

- Be approachable: use open and casual body language.
- Make eye contact and then greet each visitor with a welcoming hello.
- Offer a handshake (or respectable fist bump), but be alert to each person's comfort level.
- Practice active and reflective listening.
- Carry breath mints and stay hydrated!



Head's up on technology:
Remember that if your head's down (focused on your phone), you'll not only miss opportunities to connect and make a sale but also send a message that you're checked out.

Set the scene

Once you're on-site, schedule a booth tour (including training for product demos and interactive/immersive activations) to familiarize staffers with the layout and flow. On the day before the show, host a kickoff meeting in a private space to review the details and get everyone pumped to hit the floor.

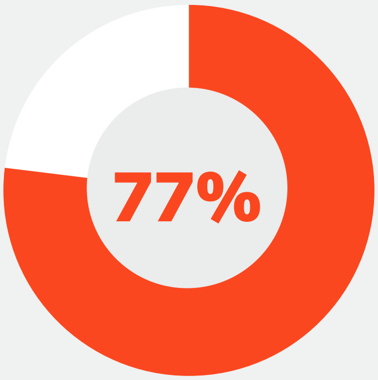
Move past the monologue

Attendees know a sales pitch when they hear one. Avoid canned introductions and start a genuine conversation. Engaging and productive booth interactions occur between you and the visitor.

After a quick hello, ask open-ended questions to learn more:

- What do they do?
- What's their role at their company?
- What are they looking for?
- What's a key challenge they need to solve?

Because your interactions while on-site matter.



of consumers say their trust in a brand increased following an interaction with that brand at a live event.

Discover why live events are pivotal for brands in our Freeman Trust Report →

Tip: Avoid yes or no questions like "Are you having a good show?"

Qualifying attendees

Qualifying attendees is an important part of the dialogue. But be respectful and apply this rule: engage first, qualify second.

Plan with the end in mind

Make sure your team knows what success looks like. And be clear about how you plan to measure results once the show doors close.

Every element of the booth and the people you've chosen to represent your organization all play a part in meeting your booth objectives, which can vary from show to show.

Determine what you want to accomplish:

- Gather as many leads as possible
- Increase brand awareness
- Launch a new product or service
- Book productive meetings

Score your results based on these success metrics.

Reward their efforts

You've chosen an enthusiastic and energetic team, but even motivated people need incentives. A dash of healthy competition makes the hours go by faster and energizes people to achieve goals.

Create fun activities or gamification with daily prizes and perks for:

- First hot lead of the day
- Most qualified leads collected
- Biggest deal closed on the floor
- Post-show follow-up and closed deals

Read the reviews

If gathering leads is the goal, determine HOW you plan to capture them.

It doesn't matter if you go analog (business cards in a fishbowl, badge scanner) or high-tech (beacons, RFID, interactive displays), but be clear about how they'll be collected, handled, and vetted to avoid post-show follow-up confusion or missed opportunities.

Tip: Encourage booth team members to compile key details about qualified visitors while the info is still fresh. Provide a pocket log before the show so the team can easily jot down notes.

Curtain call

Use the data from your lead collection strategy to create customized post-event outreach — prepare templates ahead of time so it's easier to execute when you get back to work.

Send info based on attendee preference(s), not a generalized list of products/services. Personal, targeted follow-up lets prospects know that you understand their needs and have a genuine interest in helping them find solutions.

Tip: One way to track progress is to check outreach results at various intervals. The cadence will depend on the length of your sales cycle. Example: two weeks, two months, and six months; or after three months, six months, and one year.

Cue the applause

Putting in the time and training to build this stellar cast ensures a successful trade show experience for your booth and your brand. And as the credits (leads!) roll, take a much-deserved bow and applaud your team!

Freeman

Ready to get smarter with a more engaging exhibit?

Let's talk

Check out our Ultimate Guide to Exhibiting for step-by-step advice and resources.

Get your copy