



How To Create An Interactive Trade Show Booth

A 7-STEP GUIDE

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Introduction:

How Important are Trade Shows?

Did you know the #1 reason prospects attend trade shows is to learn about new products? Did you know that 81% of all trade show attendees come with buying authority? And further, did you know that 72% of all exhibitors are focused on capturing leads, while 65% attend to mainly interact with their current clients?

Consider those facts for just a minute. Now, ask yourself: Why, if attendees are there to see YOUR offerings, do trade shows still seem so elusive as a way to get your products and/or services in the hands of prospects and to develop new business relationships?

If your events aren't generating ROI the way they used to, or the way you'd like them to, rest assured, you aren't alone. According to market research, less than 6% of all marketers believe their company is converting trade shows leads, adding contacts, and creating conversations into customer business very well.

Don't second guess yourself. You know your products and/or services are valuable and that your audience visits your booth to learn about your business and start relationships. But what may not be clear is the means by which you can build on this exchange of value at a trade show.

Using this practical guide, you'll learn how to plan and implement a highly successful, top-down approach to creating a high-impact, interactive trade show booth to achieve business success. You'll learn several useful out-of-the-box trade show marketing strategies and ideas and new ways of connecting with your target audience using interactive technology and content.



Step 1

Getting Started: Establish Your ‘Why’

Each year, as you turn the page on your business calendar, you may find yourself flying through all of the various marketing campaigns and initiatives slated for the year. You are doing your best to stay ahead of things. Absolutely.

Suddenly, you’re staring at a trade show reminder. You’re blindsided. It’s an event that seems to always come up too quickly. You’re faced with the grand expectation of delivering an unprecedented event experience with little time to prepare, and to boot, you may have very few net new trade show ideas. How do you handle it? We have an idea...

Even if you’re fortunate enough to have ample time on your side, you’re still challenged with figuring out a trade show strategy that will advance the needle on your objectives while going up against strong competition. There is an optimal way to deal with it. Rather than allowing yourself to be swept away by the urgency of your deadline, challenge yourself to slow down and ask this question: Why?

Why are we attending this trade show? Most likely, the reason is to launch a new product, grow brand awareness, connect with customers, generate leads, or possibly other goals.

By first establishing the “Why,” you force yourself to become intentional at your event. You’re aligning your marketing resources with their best possible use. Far too often, companies get so bogged down in their other business and marketing initiatives that they end up just “showing up.” They arrive at the trade show without a clear strategy or a picture of success. Don’t you fall into that trap. Before you do anything, know your goals.

Define Your Business and Marketing Goals

Establishing your “Why” is all about being intentional with your actions. You can get started by bringing together the key stakeholders of your company. That way, everyone gets to be on the same page. Depending on the size of your company, your participants might be your CEO, sales director, marketing managers, and/or product specialists. Invite them all to a roundtable discussion in an open forum around the business initiatives for the upcoming year, which will inform your trade show strategy.

Topics to cover:

- Increase top-line revenue
- Improve profit margins
- Launch a new product or service
- Grow brand awareness
- Grow a reseller channel
- Improve end user sales



You can move the needle on all these initiatives if you are intentional with your planning. That's why, at Whyze Interactive, we begin each initiative by determining goals around a theme that we call SMART—Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, Timebound. We use this approach with all our customer engagements to ensure we get the most out of each activation.

Here is an example of SMART planning in action for one of our customer's trade shows. They established these goals:

Specific

Gain new qualified leads from ideal customers who are interested in purchasing or reselling your new cybersecurity products

Measurable

We want to increase leads by 40% from last year at this same event

Attainable

Yes, this is possible if we give our prospects an exciting booth experience providing them valuable information

Realistic

Yes, last year we grew 20% without any exciting booth technology. This year we'll have trade show touchscreens

Timebound

This will be accomplished in a 3-day show with 5 team members at the event

Step 2

Develop a Winning Digital Strategy

So far, we've answered your "Why" and established your SMART goals. Great! Now, we'll advance to the meat and potatoes of the strategy. We'll start by putting the horse before the cart, not the other way around. What do we mean? We mean not jumping too far ahead. That means starting down the path of evaluating technology and booth concepts prior to the fact—first we do preliminary research and assessments. Yes, that's the "fun" part of our interactive booth building experience, and it will come soon enough, so hang tight.

Develop (or Update) Your Personas

When was the last time you created or updated the individualized personas for a trade-show event (let alone for your traditional marketing effort)? Most companies have a pretty good idea of what their customers want and expect to receive at a trade show, but often they haven't taken the time to validate these ideas or assumptions through dialogue with their customers.

We advise either updating your existing personas or creating net new personas for those attendees whom you know will be at the show and who you hope to capture in your booth. Developing these personas will help to ensure that your messaging and value proposition aligns with your prospects' expectation and goals. Be sure to start interacting with your customers before the show, so you can deliver something exciting when they show up in your booth.

Study the Competition

Who better to gain initial insights from than your competitors? You may only have a 10' x 10' or 10' x 20' booth that must compete with much larger booths and brands, but that doesn't mean you can't level the playing field. It just takes tools and strategy.

At your last event, you likely walked the trade show floor to suss out what the competition was doing to draw an audience and engage prospects. Perhaps you noticed they were leveraging new technology and content to do this. Now, it's time for YOU to take action. Create a list of each of the innovative methods your competitors are using. Then use them as a benchmark for what you can do to win the hearts and minds of your audience.



Develop Interactive Experience Zones



Once you've mapped out who you're targeting and what their needs are, next you'll begin to determine how you will engage them at the show. At this point, at Whyze Interactive, we work with our clients to develop Interactive Experience Zones. These are specific physical areas in the booth where meaningful conversations and connections can take place, strategically.

Workflows are created in the booth from the second a prospect enters and engages the first person on your team. Depending on where prospects are in their buyer's journey (e.g., awareness, consideration, decision), your team will guide them to the most appropriate Experience Zone. We suggest creating an individual Experience Zone for each stage of the buyer's journey, so as not to overwhelm or inundate your prospect with too much information.

Here is a breakdown of the different types of prospects who will visit your booth:

Awareness

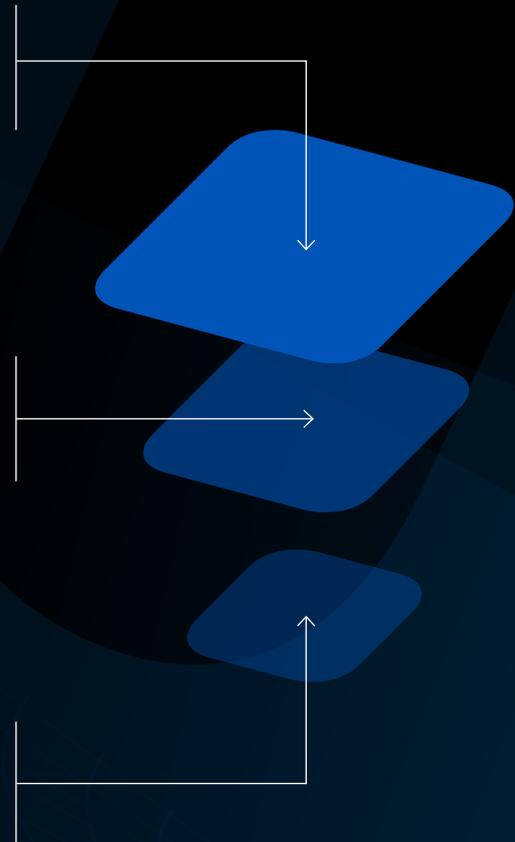
These prospects likely have zero or minimal familiarity with your brand. They need some kind of an incentive to get them into the booth. They must be warmed up a bit prior to jumping into a product demo or a sales conversation.

Consideration

These prospects might be familiar with your brand and offering, but aren't quite familiar with your unique selling proposition or how you might be able to solve their specific problems. This is a great opportunity to dive deeper into what makes your brand unique and take some time to build rapport with those prospects.

Decision

These prospects are interested in hearing how your products or services can help solve their problems. They want to move forward with more serious conversations about doing business together. With them, you should be focused on exchanging information and setting up meetings for after the show.



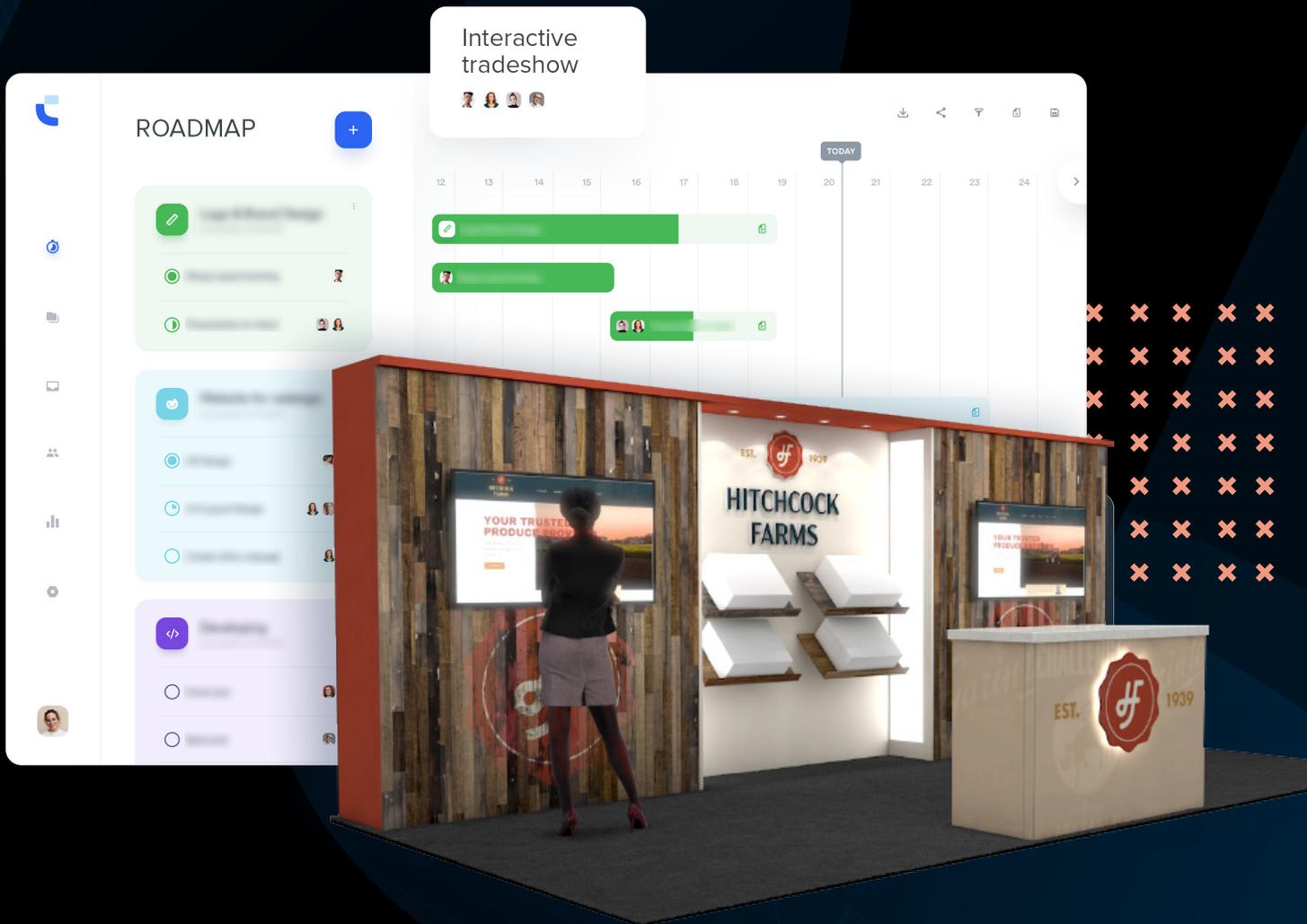
Develop an Interactive Road Map

With your Experience Zones set up to meet each prospect where they are in their buyer's journey, we can now begin to develop an Interactive Road Map.

What is an Interactive Road Map? It's a blueprint for your trade show booth that brings together the technology, content, and messaging necessary to create an effective workflow across each Experience Zone.

The Interactive Road Map is like a booth render on steroids, focusing on what you're trying to communicate and ultimately achieve in the booth. At this point in the process, we still have yet to define the content and technology portion, but we can now begin to set in motion the booth experience we hope to achieve.

This Interactive Road Map is a key deliverable for each of our projects that you can read about in more detail in [\[Our Approach \(link\)\]](#)



Step 3

Create Killer Content

So far, we've talked a lot about addressing the "Why", getting strategic, and meeting our prospects where they are in the buyer's journey. Now, it's time to really start bringing things to life. Depending on your in-house marketing capabilities, this is the point where you'll begin to align your content with your Experience Zones. We'll start by telling a story...

Tell Your Story

Hopefully, you have on your team a rockstar content strategist or an in-house copywriter to help lay out an enticing story in which to immerse your prospects. Use story as a way to get your prospects excited about the problems you are solving for them. Share relevant case studies that will resonate with your audience, so that they can see themselves in the shoes of your satisfied customers. Paint a picture of success and share meaningful data, so that your customers can begin to see what it might look like to work with you.

It's key to connect in this way. Fact: The Top 3 sales-related objectives at trade shows are related to relationship management and engagement.

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT MESSAGES DELIVERED AS STORIES CAN BE UP TO 22 TIMES MORE MEMORABLE THAN JUST FACTS.

Create Video Content

Trade show attendees spend very little time at any one booth (even if you are able to pin them down for a longer period of time). So it's critical to make sure you're communicating in the most effective, efficient way possible.

We recommend developing high-quality video content that can get your prospects to slow down and dive deeper into your brand story and product offering.

Videos can include but are not limited to

CASE STUDY VIDEOS

CUSTOMER TESTIMONIALS

PRODUCT OVERVIEWS

BRAND STORY VIDEOS

EXPLAINER VIDEOS



Research studies show that 20% of people will read text on a page, but 80% will watch a video.

Your videos can be shot full-production or animated with voice/text overs. At Whyze Interactive, we produce both types, and often recommend a combination of the two.

For many of our customers, this is an opportunity to create dual purpose content that they can use both at their show and in their day-to-day content marketing effort.

Create a Cohesive Design

Taking your sales deck and slapping it on a PowerPoint presentation to display in your booth is a surefire way to put your customers to sleep. And, it comes off as salesy. Too often, companies provide information that's too dense and too technical. This can be intimidating for prospects and negatively impact your brand.

We recommend taking your sales materials and putting them in the hands of a capable content strategist who can streamline the messaging in a succinct, engaging fashion that's suitable for a trade show. From there, a design pro should be taking that message and designing within your brand guidelines to create a ubiquitous and cohesive look and feel throughout the booth.

Step 4

Leverage Interactive Technology

Did you know that 91% of B2B buyers prefer to consume interactive and visual content?

Knowing that, it only makes sense to bait the hook to suit the fish. Passing out brochures, business cards, and random tchotchkes can be cool and all, but it doesn't make a booth "interactive." Plus, making a booth interactive is the whole reason you are reading this guide, right?!

Now, it's time to nerd out a bit and talk tech.

With a content strategy now in motion (Step 3), we can begin to look at the means by which we will showcase that content. If you've ever used a display in your booth, then the term "digital signage" may be familiar to you. But first, it's important that we go over the difference between passive and interactive digital signage.

Passive vs. Interactive Digital Signage

Passive Digital Signage is where a digital message is displayed on a screen in the hope of turning people passing by into viewers. This form of communication can be effectively used through various Experience Zones in your booth.

Interactive Digital Signage is where highly engaging content is created in the hope of turning viewers into users. Typically, touchscreens and touch tables are the hardware medium of choice.

Touch Technology and Advanced Interactive

When it comes to touch technology hardware, there are several options from which to choose in showcasing at your booth. Choosing the most appropriate technology for your booth, however, can be quite challenging.

Depending on your booth size, budget, and content strategy, you must select from several technology options. These can be broken up in two distinct categories: touchscreens and advanced interactive technology.

Touchscreens

- Tablets: iPads, Surface Pro, Android, etc.
- Small format touch screens: 22" - 32"
- Large format touch screens: 46" - 100+"
- Interactive video walls: Multi-user experience
- Touch Tables (with or without object recognition)

Advanced Interactive

- Augmented Reality
- Virtual Reality
- Gesture
- RFID

In each of these product categories, you have several different technology options and use cases. This is never something you should jump the gun on purchasing without first thinking through your entire communication strategy to make sure you know which technology medium will best serve up your content. Don't make the mistake in thinking that having something cool in the booth on its own will help convert prospects. That's a dangerous assumption to make.

If you need help choosing the right technology for your booth, please reach out to one of our interactive specialists.



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Interactive Trade Show Software

With the content now being created and the interactive hardware defined, we can begin to define the applications that will host the content on the interactive hardware. At Whyze, we use highly rated, “off-the-shelf” licensed software applications, authoring tools, and custom developed applications to ensure more robust experiences. It really just depends on your use case and budget.

Here are the best options:

Licensed software applications

Think of these like a Wix or Squarespace created website, but made specifically for digital signage. These applications serve as templates we can use to create content and build within the template, but we are more or less working with a fixed UI/UX. These applications are ideal for single user basic touchscreen experiences and are great for budget-conscious projects with relatively short timelines.

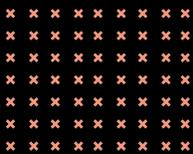
Authoring tools

These types of software applications are more advanced and offer more dynamic ways of presenting and interacting with content. If licensed applications are like a Wix or Squarespace website, then authoring tools are more like a robust WordPress site. Some customization is possible, allowing for a broader UI/UX. These tools can be used by multiple users simultaneously on large-format touch screens, interactive video walls, and touch tables.

Custom applications

When a Wix or WordPress website doesn't offer the robust UI/UX features you require in order to have the option of going fully custom, the same is the case for interactive digital signage. Some experiences demand a more robust development framework, where the sky's the limit. Custom application development is ideal for large booths or for exhibitors looking to create a one-of-a-kind interactive experience. Here you can develop custom feature sets like lead capture, object recognition, multi-user touch, custom content management, and much more.

To learn more, download a demo of an interactive touchscreen presentation we created for our production company, Hitchcock Farms. We handled all the branding, video content, messaging, and development that went along with this interactive trade show presentation.



DOWNLOAD A
FREE DEMO!

Step 5

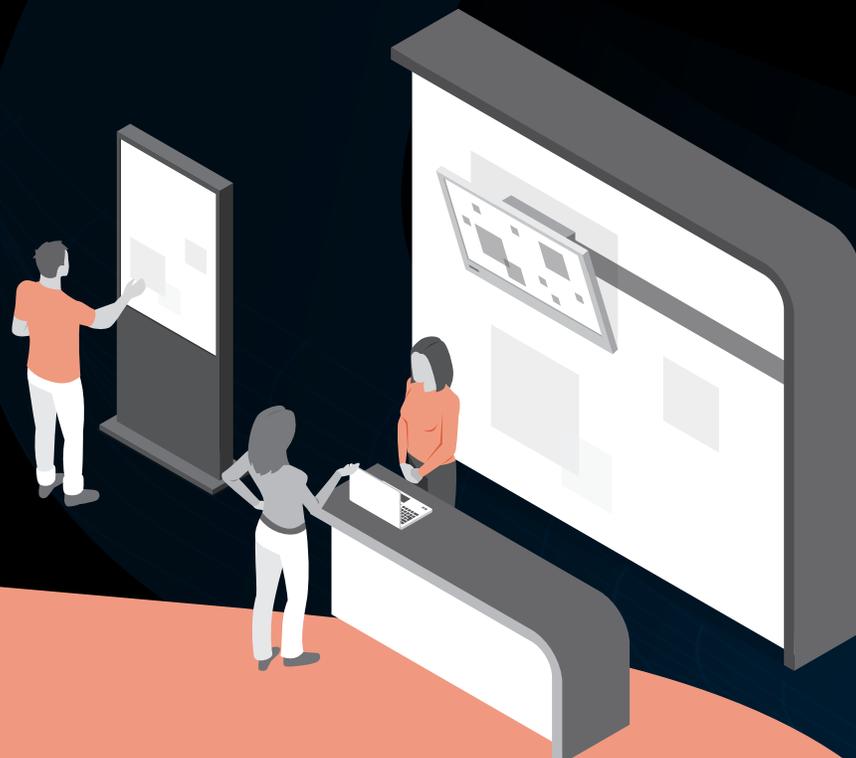
Invest in a Reliable Booth Solution

Quite often, physical booth structure is one of the first trade show items you think to research when planning for your event. But as you now know, a lot of planning must happen beforehand. If you're already happy with your booth, then this may not apply to you, but for those who are building their first booth or refreshing an old one, it's good to know a few things before making the investment.

Pop-up vs. Fixed Booth Structure

If you're working with a smaller booth space (say, 10' x 10' or smaller) and a limited budget, a pop-up booth is a viable option, but you will want to make sure that the booth structure can support the technology you'll be installing. Most touch monitors are weightier than typical consumer monitors. So, make sure your structure is weight-bearing. For example, a 46 inch touch monitor can weigh up to 60 pounds and will receive a lot of impact during the show from your prospects, so be sure to keep that in mind.

Fixed structure booths are what most of our customers use, since the strategy we laid out with them consists of several passive and interactive displays that require a sturdy weight bearing structure. This type of reinforced booth structure will allow you to not only mount monitors, but also install speakers and additional lighting, while being able to drop all your peripherals, PCs, and cabling giving each wall a clean, seamless look.



Future-Proof your Booth

Once you nail down your plan for a booth that meets your requirements, make sure you are selective with the content and design that is printed or painted throughout your booth. Far too often, we see exhibitors riddling their booth with verbiage and graphics that may need to be replaced even before the year is out. These costly changes to the booth could have been easily prevented.

We recommend sticking to your brand guidelines in terms of colors and printed hero messaging, but for the most part, keep the booth graphics minimal. This is because you now have digital signage technology to serve as the canvas for your content and graphics. It's much easier to change your content on a screen than it is on a physical booth structure. This approach will allow your booth to serve you much further into the future.

Choose a Forward-Thinking Booth Partner

Depending where you started your journey, you may already have a booth partner with whom you have worked. But if you don't, we highly recommend choosing a partner who understands interactive digital signage and all the technologies we have covered. Some of the legacy booth companies haven't quite embraced digital signage, which can often result in your entire trade show budget being consumed by just the booth structure.

A forward-thinking booth partner will take into consideration all aspects of your trade show, including the digital pieces when helping you to build out your booth. They will be comfortable handling logistics and installation of the interactive technology spec'd into your interactive booth.

If you don't already have an experienced, reliable booth partner or are looking for one, we can help. We work extensively with several trustworthy booth providers across the nation. For help finding one, contact a Whyze Interactive trade show specialist.



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Step 6

Succeeding at the Event

OK! The time has come. You've spent weeks or months working your tail off to prepare for your event. Hundreds of hours have been dedicated to strategy, concepting, developing, and implementing an amazing showcase of your products and/or services. Now, it's time for the show. It's crucial that the next few days spanning the event aren't squandered and tasks are completed efficiently.

Revisit your SMART Goals

Start off by revisiting the SMART goals you laid out with your team at the beginning of this process. These will likely include setting up key meetings, generating X amount of leads, and walking the showroom floor to meet with new, potential partners and get the pulse of what the competition is doing.

Remember, this is a trade show, which means it's supposed to be fun and full of energy—so why not throw in a morning run or workout to get the blood flowing (even though hotel gym is never quite like the one back home)? Eat a nutritious breakfast and down a few cups of your favorite brew, so that by the time you get to registration you're ready to sprint to your booth.

Stick to the Workflows

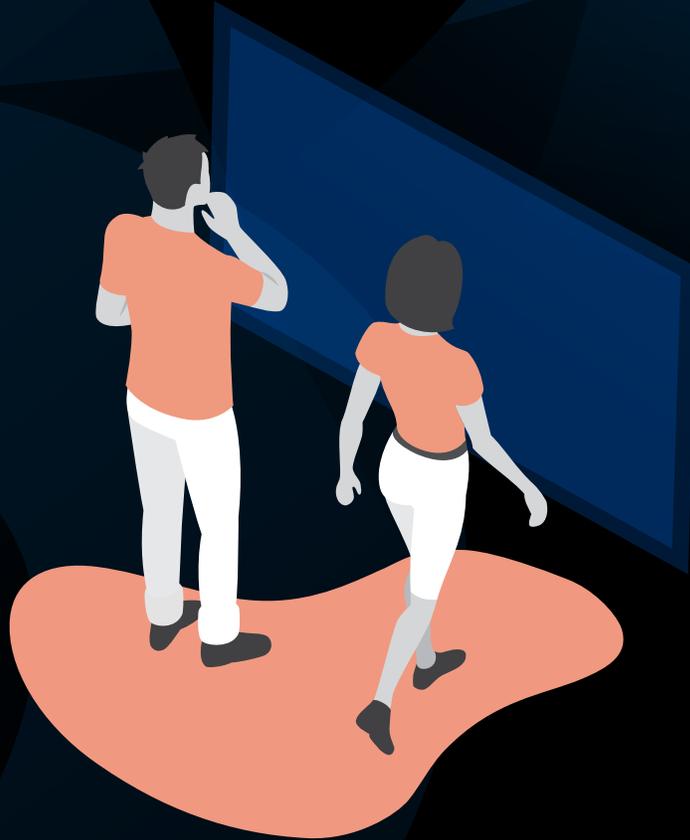
Once attendees start to show up at your booth, stick with the plan and leverage the workflows you created with strategic intent. Prospects coming by for the first time will naturally be guarded, so guide them toward a fun Experience Zone that will disarm them and allow you to capture some basic information, while at the same time building rapport.

After you've enjoyed some initial conversations and the prospect is leaning in and wanting to learn more, lead them over to an Experience Zone that educates them about your brand. This is a great opportunity that many exhibitors miss. Far too often, they are jumping straight into their products and/or services without first building the human connection and allowing the prospect to gain insights about the people and culture driving your business.

Once you have put a smile on the face of your prospect and they are more familiar with your brand, now guide them towards an Experience Zone that showcases your products and/or services. Allow them to explore the visually stunning content you have put together, and rest assured that if you thoroughly did your research in identifying the problems they are trying to solve, the positioning of your solutions will be on point.

DOING THIS IS WELL WORTH IT.

FACT: THE COST OF A FACE-TO-FACE MEETING WITH A PROSPECT AT A TRADESHOW IS \$142. THE COST OF A FACE-TO-FACE MEETING AT A PROSPECT'S OFFICE IS \$259.



Leverage Your Technology

Each Experience Zone offers a unique message and a means of connecting with your audience, so knowing how the technology works within each Zone is key. For an Experience Zone that uses passive digital signage (say, a looped explainer video), use this as an opportunity to stand beside your prospect and watch the content with them. Pay attention to how they react and provide additional insights and key points to highlight the video they're watching. This can be a great conversation starter for prospects just getting familiar with your brand.

For an Experience Zone that uses touch technology, allow your prospect to sit in the driver's seat and explore the touch-enabled content. This type of self-directed, hands-on learning creates a much more inviting and memorable experience, as opposed to forcing your prospect to sit through a dry sales deck. Since most interactive applications require a bit of a learning curve, be prepared to assist your prospect in navigating your touchscreen experience.

In a well-developed interactive Experience Zone, your prospect should be given the opportunity to take action and schedule a follow-up meeting, to request more information, or send content to themselves directly from the touchscreen. Acquiring this type of warm lead is why you have put in all this hard work so far, so be sure to guide your prospects to any and all call-to-actions that align with their interests.

Step 7

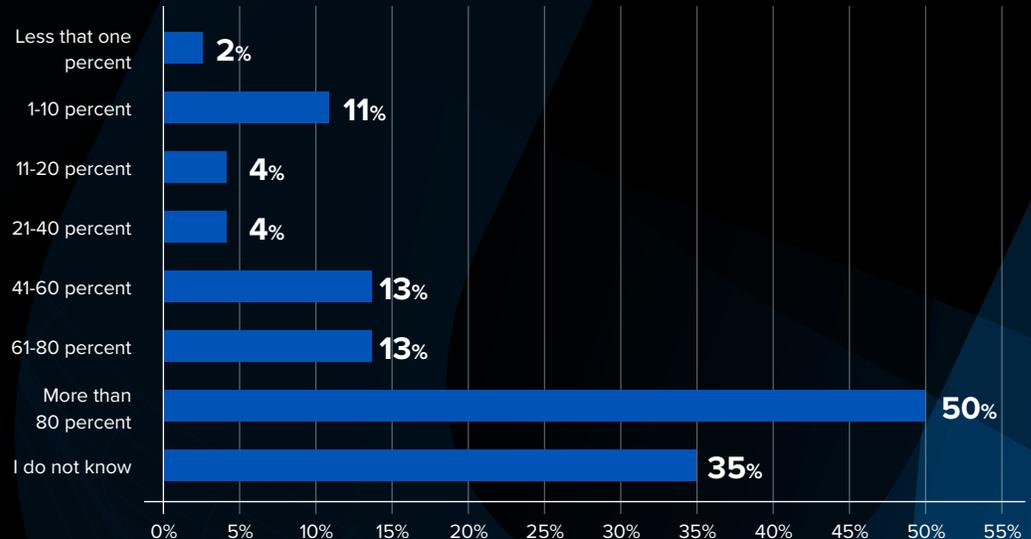
After the Event

Congrats! You did it. The show is now over. If you've stuck to the plan, there is a good chance this has been one of your best shows to date. But it's not quite over yet. With several new connections made, business cards exchanged, and warm leads sitting in a pretty little spreadsheet thanks to your interactive booth, you now need to follow up.

Be Prompt in Your Follow Up

We recommend that, immediately after your event, you review the contacts you gathered and start to document where they were in their buyer's journey, so you can begin to segment them with your marketing automation tools. You'd be surprised to learn how many exhibitors completely drop the ball here. So, please, don't be another one of those kinds of statistics.

ON AVERAGE WHAT PERCENT OF LEADS COLLECTED AT TRADE SHOWS RECEIVE ANY SORT OF POST-SHOW FOLLOW-UP?



For lukewarm leads that are still in the information gathering phase, you might consider putting them in an email-nurture sequence that further identifies the problems they are facing, then demonstrate how your solutions can help solve them.

Other leads might be more sales ready and wanting to schedule a demo or follow-up consultation. Get those into your CRM and assigned to your sales team right away. And to reiterate, it's crucial that all leads are tracked in either your marketing automation systems or CRM, so you can close the feedback loop and start to assign ROI where it is happening.

Do a Thorough Post-Mortem

Just because this may have been your best trade show so far, it doesn't mean it's your last. Therefore, look at all the data and insights you've gathered from the show as a way to make the next event that much better. During our post show review with our clients, we prepare a report for the key stakeholders (usually CEO and head of sales) which reviews the following:

- Sales: Lead Report
- Press/Media Results
- Exhibit Effectiveness
- Promotions and Exhibit Activities
- Booth Staff Feedback
- Competitive Analysis
- Budget

Carefully evaluating this data will provide a clear and definitive ROI for your event and help justify any additional investment necessary to continuously improve the booth. What better way to get your CEO or head of sales excited and willing to invest in your next event!

To summarize, the strategy and implementation that goes into building an interactive booth means much more than just adding a few touchscreens. A truly interactive booth is one that was made possible by creating SMART goals, developing audience profiles (e.g., personas), creating relevant and exciting content, leveraging bleeding-edge technology, and motivating your team to leverage the booth in the smartest way possible at your event.

We hope this guide has been of use to you and wish you the very best with your next show.

Are you interested in creating an interactive trade show booth for your next show? For guidance and detailed information, please contact a Whzye Interactive strategist. Schedule a free consultation now.



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