

STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR TRADE SHOW SUCCESS

**Tom Slone
Tacit Solutions, LLC
Business Development Manager**

Today, most successful companies of various sizes develop and implement some form of strategic planning in managing various corporate functional areas. Most of these are related to finance, marketing, production, goal setting, product development, branding, competition, and pricing. However, when it comes to trade shows too many companies are lacking in diligence for a strategic imperative or plan for these events. In many cases such a plan or strategy is usually intuitive, traditional, historical and often nonexistent.

Some of the many issues that are prompting exhibitors to do better planning and strategy development and implementation are: the increasing pace of change on the part of show attendees involving new buying behavioral patterns and communication methods; rising venue, travel and housing costs; new booth and lead retrieval technologies; new or renewed competition; product life cycles; as well as the management imperative for Return On Investment (ROI) analysis and justification.

One of the first and most important considerations in trade show planning is to determine why you are exhibiting at a particular trade show and what are the stated goals for accomplishment at the event. By simply stating that "we have gone to a particular show for several years" is often an insufficient reason unless objectives are met, analyzed and justified each year. Goals and specific objectives must be determined in advance for each show and exhibiting experience. Such goals should not be simply "*we need to be there*" or "*our competitors will be there*", as these reasons often lack definition and purpose.

Some examples of defined and worthy goals or objectives are as follows:

1. Corporate branding and exposure of resources and capabilities.
2. An observation and analysis of competitive strengths, weaknesses, brinkmanship and new products or technologies.
3. Meeting with industry experts and marketers to discover and discuss trends and challenges.
4. Social and customer engagement and networking.
5. Technology awareness and possible sharing.
6. Maintaining and enhancing market share through showing product differentiation or technology dominance.
7. New or renewed product introductions.
8. Secure qualified leads that will generate sales after proper follow-up.
9. Introduction of new corporate managers, sales people, distributors or reps.

There are many other items requiring attention and planning that must happen before, during and after a trade show. Covering these many functional areas is beyond the scope of this paper, but here are a few that readily come to mind:

- Booth theme, location and design cost
- Transportation and set-up details
- Employee housing
- Social activities with customers
- Booth staffing schedules
- Behavior, training, and proper presentation tactics
- Required product samples and signage
- Promoting your booth location and products BEFORE the show via personal customer contact, e-mails, direct mail pieces, Facebook and other social media
- Lead generation, capture, retention policies and follow-up responsibilities
- Optional post show surveys with attendees
- Post show analysis to support, correct or justify costs, activities, accomplishment of goals, etc. by utilizing various ROI and ROO methods.

Tacit Solutions has proven expertise and success in managing trade show functions and activities. Let us help you provide strategic “linking” and integration of diverse trade show objectives, activities and details to promote and insure a unified, coherent, successful and profitable event. Treat us as your sales opportunity generators and your problem solvers.

This white paper is offered free of charge to our existing and future clients. Contact us today by filling out the inquiry form located on the last page of our website at www.tacit-sol.com or pick up the phone and call us at 909-307-1111 for more information. A more complete discussion and elaboration of any of the topics covered in this paper is available through our consulting fee services.

Remember, ***“No Job is too Small or too Big”*** for our consulting expertise and resources.

About the Author

Tom Slone received his BS in Marketing from Loyola University Chicago and Post Graduate Degrees in Marketing and Economics from the University of Chicago's Graduate School of Business. He has taught Marketing & Economics courses at the University of Indiana, Notre Dame University, Arizona State University and UNLV. Additionally, his managerial background includes serving as VP of Sales & Marketing for Wells Electronics, a high-tech startup for designing and manufacturing IC sockets for the semiconductor marketplace. He successfully developed a network of Manufacturers Sales Reps and direct sales personnel throughout the US, Europe and Asia.

About Tacit Solutions, LLC

Tacit Solutions, LLC was formed by Richard Guy in 2005 after holding various high level sales and marketing management positions at Amkor Technology, AT&T Bell Laboratories, Integra Technologies, Lucent Technologies, NCR Corporation, Philips Corporation, and QP Semiconductor. The company provides a variety of consulting and sales representation support functions to the electronics industry, retail establishments and a wide variety of industrial component makers throughout the United States.

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Tacit Solutions | 301 Ninth Street Suite 100 | Redlands, CA 92374 | Tel: 909.307.1111 | info@tacit-sol.com