

Your Mid-Year Business Check-Up Rx

Four Strategies To Assess Your Trade Show Game Plan

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No matter where you are in your year-cycle, now is a good time to pull out your Master Plan for this year and see how you're doing. If you haven't created it, this is the second appropriate time to do so.

There are many areas to look at when assessing your business goals. Some goals can be simply to get more exposure: to your company, to your current products and services, or to something new that you have rolled out. Another goal can be more traffic to your website, or even updating your website to more accurately reflect your current company status. The bottom line is: what are you doing on a planned, consistent basis, to get more company exposure, increase your market share and increase your net operating income?

In this second article of the Your Mid-Year Business Check-Up Rx series, we will discuss trade shows.

Do you expend precious time at trade shows but feel that your business is not gaining the maximum benefits for the time expended? Your participation at trade shows should be an integral part of your overall business plan. Now is a good time to step back and assess how your trade show game plan integrates into your strategy for reaching your year-end goals.

Follow These Strategies to Assess Your Trade Show Game Plan

1. Every year you should review the list of trade shows at which you will be either exhibiting or attending. Do you have an action plan for each trade show, and do you share it with your staff? This plan should include:

- * Purpose for attending: Make new contacts? Renew relationships with 'forgotten' contacts? Have you scheduled appointments with people, or are you just going to hope for the best? When you and your staff attend these trade shows, do you always stay together, or do you make it a point to have everyone meet new vendors and attendees to help spread your company's benefits?

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- Purpose for exhibiting: Showcase new products or services? Maintain your presence? Introduce yourself to new prospects? Do you take valuable 'booth time' to get caught up with your colleagues, or are you focused strictly on your purpose?

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Does everyone know how you will reach your objectives? Will everyone give the same basic information about your company? Promote your benefits and not the features? Basic features are the same, it's the benefits that your clientele receives that will set you apart.

2. Have you looked at your booth's appearance? Studies show that the average passer-by decides in less than five seconds whether to stop at a booth or not. Does anything need to be replaced or updated? Your booth should have a fresh look every few years, but continuing to maintain your brand and your image. What do those that staff your booth wear? Does it reflect your company image?

3. Are your promotional materials in line with your company's image and purpose? The best return on your investment is any item that is practical, that will be useful in your target market's environment and remind them of you, not to provide them information about your company. The top promotional product categories, calendars and writing instruments provided the most value for the money spent. Number three was desk / office / business accessories. Do you give your promotional items out to everyone that passes your booth, or do you selectively hand them to those people that may become your clients? The answer to this goes back to your purpose for attending the trade show or convention. Does your promotional product reflect the products or services that you offer? Whether your brand is 'high quality' or 'a fun place to be', your promotional product must send the same message.

4. How did you do at last year's trade show or convention? Did you meet your goals? What did you vow to do differently? Changing the tactics that did not work well is one of the best things you can do to make a difference this year.

Getting the most out of your participation at trade shows requires planning and clear communication with; people within your company, colleagues, existing clients, and most importantly potential new clients. By following these assessment strategies, you can fine tune your company's trade show game plan and maximize the benefits you derive from your participation.

In this series, Your Mid-Year Business Check-Up Rx, we have covered four areas that you should consider when assessing your company's status at the mid-point in your business year. In those articles we looked at your company's financial status and what you need to evaluate and act upon now. We considered your people and what are you doing to keep and attract new talent? We asked what you should scrutinize about your marketing plan to achieve your year-end targets. And finally we examined your trade show game plan. As the year speeds to a close, it is easy to get caught up in daily challenges to the point that you don't stop to consider your current status in relation to your master plan. Now is the time to diagnose your business, prescribe needed remedies, and administer that Rx so that you can finish the year in top condition.

Shari Frisinger, the founder and President of CornerStone Strategies, L.L.C., received her Master's degree in Aeronautical Science from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University. She has nearly 20 years experience in training and facilitating, and has created courses and workshops in Leadership, Communication, Management and Professional Development for many corporations, organizations and academic institutions, such as Mountain State University's Aviation Department and the National Business Aviation Association. Shari is a much sought after Keynote Speaker, who is a Zig Ziglar Certified Trainer, a Dale Carnegie Instructor, a member of the National Speaker's Association both at the National level and the Houston Chapter. She serves on boards of many professional organizations.