Conducting an Effective Pre-Show Staff Meeting: How to Prepare Your Team for Peak Performance

By Jefferson Davis, Competitive Edge

You would be hard pressed to find a single professional sports team that does not gather their team members for a final meeting just before the start of every game. This meeting reinforces all the important information, strategies and game plans that have been prepared over the previous days and weeks. It also puts everybody "in state" and "on purpose".

In contrast to high-performing sports teams, many exhibitors do not gather their show team together for that all important final meeting before the big show. Or if they do, the meeting is informal and unorganised. This is an oversight that can seriously impact your show performance and results.

Here are six keys to conducting an effective pre-show staff meeting:

1. **Hold it the day before the show opens:** While you may have several meetings in the weeks leading up to show time, the best time for the final team meeting is the last setup day. A good time slot is 4pm to 6 or 7pm or later depending on if dinner will be served at the meeting.
2. **Make participation mandatory:** Require all exhibit staff to arrive in the convention city by 2pm at the latest, if at all possible. In your meeting invitation, stress that the meeting is mandatory and that there will be repercussions for not attending. Some of my clients tell their staff they will not be reimbursed for airfare if they miss the pre-show meeting. Of course, this would not be enforced for unforeseen travel delays, illness and so on.
3. **Have a key executive kick off the meeting:** The presence of a key executive like the President or VP of Marketing and/or Sales will help reinforce the importance of the meeting.
4. **Have a clearly defined agenda:** The agenda should at minimum cover the following topics: introduction of team members with show roles and duties, key and emergency contact information, overall show goals, schedule of show & hospitality events, booth duty schedule, review of pre and at-show marketing programs, review of VIP invitation list, discussion of staff in booth roles, review of best exhibiting skills, product messaging and FAQ's for products, booth layout and walkthrough, demonstration overview and walkthrough, literature distribution, promotional product distribution, lead capture process and lead goals, and sales offers and required paperwork.

5. **Make it fun:** You can make the fun meeting holding it at a fun venue and having contests and team events during the meeting.
6. **Carry it over to the booth**: While the pre-show meeting is the kick-off, you should also conduct brief end of shift or end of day meetings to review how the show is going, discuss problems and opportunities, and make mid show adjustments to stay on track.

Remember, an effective pre-show meeting is a critical part of successful exhibit program. Be sure to apply the relevant the ideas in this article so your team with be “in state” and “on purpose” when the doors open on your next big show.

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