Improving Lead Quality by Asking the Right Questions and Capturing More Information

By Jefferson Davis, Competitive Edge

If you want higher quality leads that convert to post show action and sales, the first thing you need to do is re-define what is and what isn't a lead. If all you do is scan the visitor's badge without any engagement or asking qualifying questions, you are missing a tremendous opportunity.

The two factors that determine lead quality are 1) they're information rich, and 2) contain a committed next action with the visitor.

One of the biggest mistakes I see companies consistently making is not investing the time to think through the questions they should be asking visitors before talking about their company, products and services, and not designing an easy-to-use lead capture device.

In my exhibit staff training programs, we teach booth staffers what I call the three Laws of Exhibit Questioning:

1. It's not what you TELL… it's what you ASK!
2. He or she who asks the questions GUIDES and CONTROLS the conversation.
3. Don't interrogate, COMMUNICATE.

There are several different types of people that will visit your exhibit. You do not want to waste your or their valuable time, talking about things they already know, or may not be interested in. Therefore, before you start talking about your products or services, you should know three things…

1. WHO you are with.
2. WHY they are visiting your exhibit.
3. WHAT you need to do, so the visitor, and your company gets value.

To learn these three things you need to develop a visitor questioning process. Here are five keys to developing and/or improving your visitor question process:

1. **Know your questions in advance**. In the time-compressed, fast-paced exhibiting environment, don't just hope the right questions magically appear in your mind. They won't. And you will end-up spending the majority of your time talking.
2. **Order question in natural flow of conversation**. The most important subject in the world to each person is themselves. By understanding this, and designing your question flow to lead with situational questions about their company, what they do with the company, what projects, plans, goals, and challenges they have with regard to your products, you will get them talking, and this will give you the understanding of what to talk about and how to talk about it in terms of what's important to them. Then, you can

ask the harder qualifying questions like buying influence, evaluation team process, budgeting and money issues, next action and timeframe.

3. **Use open-ended questions.** If you want the visitor to remember your messaging, you need to create mental space. When the visitor walks into your booth, their mind is at the point of information overload. By asking open-ended questions, those that cannot be answered with a yes or no, you get the visitor talking, demonstrate interest in them, build rapport by demonstrating good listening skills, and create mental space for them to process and retain your messaging.
4. **Ask in a non-interrogative tone.** Be careful to ask your questions in a soft and gentle manner so it does not feel like you are sizing them up, but just seeking to gain understanding.
5. **Use their name.** If you want the visitor to give you deeper more detailed answers, put their name on the front of one or two of your questions. Typically you want to do this with your most important questions.

By investing time to carefully think through your visitor questions, and organizing them into the natural flow of conversation, then customizing your lead capture device to mirror your question flow, you will rapidly improve quality of your leads, and ultimately your exhibiting ROI.

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