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“SMART” Trade Shows

Ways To Successfully Use Social Media And Related Technologies At CONEXPO-CON/AGG

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For most companies, trade shows are the best opportunity to meet a lot of new and existing customers face-to-face. Why not combine these personal interactions with social media to keep the conversations going long after the show is over? Companies that are already involved in social media can easily continue using it to implement some of the ideas below. Those of you that haven't jumped into social media yet might want to take this opportunity to get an excellent start with whatever technology you chose. CONEXPO-CON/AGG, or any large trade show for that matter, offers a unique meeting ground to get a large customer base following you in a very short period of time. Using social media and some of the other related technology ideas below now could help save a lot of time and money trying to reach these same people later.

Ideas You Can Use To Maximize Your Trade Show Experience:

- Post photos daily from the show floor to Flickr, Facebook and/or your company website.
- Post videos daily from the show floor to YouTube and/or your company website. Good videos could include: new announcements from top management, interviews with satisfied customers or the daily activity at the booth.
- Send text messages to people at the show alerting them of where your booth is located, special promotions taking place, special guests, etc. This requires that you obtain customer phone numbers and approval to text them prior to the show. While going through this process can be difficult, keep in mind that 97% of all text messages are opened and read. It's hard to find a better way to get your message to customers. If you can't get approval prior to the show, the show is also a great place to get texting approval for future marketing programs.
- Offer prizes/discounts to people who sign up to follow your company on Facebook, Twitter or YouTube. A trade show is the best opportunity you will have to reach a large number of new and potential customers that can quickly grow your fan base on social networking sites.
- Send tweets throughout the day keeping people up-to-date on the exciting things taking place at your booth. At the end of each tweet, be sure to put the show "hashtag" so customers can easily find your tweets in a twitter search (Example of a hashtag: #CONEXPO).

- Create a landing page for your website to promote your presence at CONEXPO-CON/AGG. You can post info on new products, photos, videos or anything else you want from the show.
- Take surveys and post the results live to your company's website. Trade show attendees can participate via text message or even in the booth if you have internet access.
- Allow attendees to "Like" your company Facebook page immediately at the show via text message. This must be set up by your company before the show.
- Transmit live video streams from your booth using a site such as www.ustream.tv, www.qik.com, or www.livestream.com.
- Use QR Codes to provide smart phone users with a quick link to your company website, Facebook page and anything on the Internet your company is promoting.
- Use an iPad in your booth to show off your company's products, photos, videos, blogs, etc. Be sure to thoroughly plan how you will use it, as there may or may not be good options—or good reception—for connecting to the Internet with it.

No matter what your exact strategy is going into a trade show, it is imperative to have a good game plan. Clearly define who is in charge of each responsibility (tweeting, posting photos and video, texting customers, etc.). Determine how you will follow up with customers after the show. Start thinking about how you will continue social media initiatives started at the show once it is over. It's great to get these interactive technologies working so you attract maximum exposure at the trade show, but all of your hard work will be left behind if you don't have a plan to continue using them afterward.

Do you have any other ideas not mentioned here? Let us know at facebook.com/growwithbmg or twitter.com/growwithbmg.