

7 Ways to More Effectively Use Giveaways to Support Your Exhibiting Goals

By *Jefferson Davis, Competitive Edge*

A proven-effective technique to drive booth traffic is to offer some form of a giveaway. When selected carefully and distributed thoughtfully, a smart giveaway strategy could make a big difference in your booth traffic and your exhibiting results. However, the way most exhibitors use giveaways end-up costing them too much and attracting too many of the wrong people.

Here are seven best practices to help you make sure that your tradeshow giveaway program delivers value beyond cost and attracts the right people to your booth.

1. **PURPOSE:** The primary purpose of offering giveaways is to attract people who have a problem you can help them solve or an opportunity you can help them seize. That being said, you want your giveaway to be the secondary reason why someone visits your exhibit, not the primary reason.
2. **USEFUL:** On top of the desk is better than in the drawer. On the keychain is better than in the kids room. Think about who your target visitor is and what their job function is, if you can find a giveaway that they can use on a regular basis, it will stay with them and help create top of the mind awareness.
3. **UNIQUE:** Who really needs another cheap pen? Walk around the show floor and pay attention to what other exhibitors are giving away and try to find something that is different and will create a buzz.
4. **QUALITY:** Be careful about giving away cheap promotional products. The last thing you want is a cheap pen to explode in their pocket... they will definitely remember you, but not for what you want them to.
5. **SUPPORTS THEME OR MESSAGE:** If you can tie your giveaway into a message or theme it will have much more impact. For example, I market services that help clients increase customer retention. My theme is "Success is Measured by the Companies You Keep". My giveaway is a tape measure with a calculator and a small Post-it note. I have visitors use the calculator to estimate their cost of customer attrition and rated on the posted pad to make the case for my services.
6. **DISTRIBUTE THOUGHTFULLY:** Stacking giveaways on a table near the perimeter of the booth creates hit-and-run behavior and you have no idea who picked up the giveaway. I believe using giveaways as a reward for engaging in a brief conversation or a demo is much more effective.
7. **BRING ENOUGH – BUT NOT TOO MANY:** To determine how many giveaways to bring, first consider your distribution strategy. Then, calculate your Exhibit Interaction Capacity. Show Hours: 20 x Booth Staff 2 x Interactions/Hour/Staffer 4 = 160 interactions. In this example, I would plan on bringing about 175 giveaways.

BONUS: Personalized giveaways generate a very high response rate. For example, when I am targeting C level executives, I FedEx a letter of invitation with a request for a brief discovery meeting. I give them a strong benefit-focused reason to visit my booth. I send them a pen and pencil set engraved with their name on it. I include the pencil with the mailer and tell them they can pick up their pen at my booth. I have achieved as high as a 70% response on targeted preshow mailers with the strategy.

Jefferson Davis of Competitive Edge is trade show productivity expert. Since 1991, his consulting and training services have helped clients generate over \$800M in combined results. You can reach him at Jefferson@tradeshowturnaround.com