

How to Keep Booth Staff Energy High During a Long Show

By *Jefferson Davis, Competitive Edge*

Whether we like it or not, trade show attendees who visit your booth will make judgments about your company and your products and services based on their interactions with your staff.

If your booth staff is inattentive, passive or appears bored and tired, this will leave a bad impression in your visitor's minds. Your company could be overlooked and unnoticed.

It's important to understand that working a tradeshow booth is a physically and mentally demanding challenge. Chances are your booth staff flew to the show site, may be in a different time zone, is sleeping in a strange bed, probably eating different meals, and may be burning the candle a little too brightly. Any of these factors will impact your booth staff's energy level and performance.

Ideally, you want your booth staff to be as good on the opening morning of the show as they are at 4:30 PM on the second or third day of the show.

Here are 5 best practices to help you make sure your booth staff has the physical energy to put your company's best foot forward regardless of the day or time. Please be sure to share these practices with your booth staff in your preshow communications and meetings.

1. **HYDRATION:** Even subtle dehydration slows down the speed at which the synapses in the human brain fire. When you're in a booth talking to a visitor is not what you know it's what you think of in time that counts. Booth staffers should begin hydrating on the plane flight to the show. The recommendation is at least one cup of water per hour of flight. Upon arising in the morning, many people go straight to coffee which is a diuretic. Instead consuming a cup of water first, ideally with a squeeze of fresh lemon is a great way to begin hydration for the day. If possible have bottled water in the booth and available for staffers.
2. **SCHEDULING:** Most booth staffers physical performance wanes dramatically after three hours in the booth. I recommend if at all possible using the split shifts strategy of having one team work the a.m. shift and another team work to p.m. shift. And also having at least a 15 minute dedicated break during their booth shifts. If that is not possible due to staffing limitations and be sure this schedule a solid 15 minute AM break, a one hour lunch break and a 15 minute PM break.
3. **PURPOSE:** Another key to keeping your booth staff's energy up is to have clearly defined goals and booth staff roles. When your booth staff is focused on executing a set number of interactions per hour and capturing a set number of leads during their shift, their focus will be high and the time will pass very quickly.
4. **RECOGNITION/REWARDS:** The old adage "what gets recognized, gets improved" is true. In my staff training programs, we do in-booth coaching where we observe booth staffers over the course of the day and select an MVP or most valuable staffer. We do a quick recap meeting at the end of the day and acknowledge who our MVP was and do something unique to reward them.
5. **NUTRITION:** Diet is the number two thief of physical energy. One of the worst things a company can do is have their preshow staff meeting at an expensive steakhouse and over tax their team's digestive systems. I recommend eating lighter and more carbs on the front end of the show and eating heavier on the back end of the show. It's also a great idea to have protein and/or energy bars in the booth. Your allotted staff badges include a voucher to use at any of the kiosks inside the convention center for lunch! Pick up these vouchers at registration near the attendee bag pick up.

- 6. REST:** Because working in exhibit burns so much energy and the tendency is to stay out later than they normally do, it's critically important that booth staffers strive to get 7 to 8 solid hours of sleep a night. In my early days of shows I used to tease that I turn into a pumpkin at midnight. Now when I'm on booth staff duty I turn into a pumpkin at 10 PM.

Apply as many of these practices as you can to your exhibit program and watch the difference it makes in your booth staff's energy, performance and results.

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