

Tradeshow Tips ~ Tips to Review 2008 and Look Forward to 2009

It's 2009: time to wrap up the business of 2008 and decide on strategies for 2009. Let's take stock and see how well you did.

1. Crunch the numbers for the 2008 trade shows.

Meet with the sales department for a year-end conference and strategy session. Get the sales figures from them before the meeting. You can't evaluate your success without knowing what happened after you passed your leads along to them.

Which shows were best in the following categories:

- Best return on investment?
- Worst return on investment?
- Largest number of leads?
- Highest percentage of leads that led to sales?
- Highest visibility?

2. Give praise where praise is due.

Especially in tough economic times, it's easy to focus on worries and failures, rather than successes and innovation. Yet employees need recognition for their efforts, especially when so many people are jittery about keeping their jobs. They will put forth their greatest efforts for someone who pays attention to their contributions. And you will need loyal, enthusiastic employees.

3. Examine the failures and learn from them.

When Thomas Edison was working on the light bulb, he tried thousands of different designs. When a visitor commiserated with him over his enormous rate of failure, he replied, "These aren't failures. I have learned thousands of things that don't work."

List the things that don't work, and try to figure out why. Was the message too complicated? Were you targeting the wrong market? Brainstorm with your team about ways to improve your outreach.

Plan for 2009 ~ Expect success.

One of the real risks right now is of giving up. You can't ride out rough times by hiding in a cellar until they blow over. By then nobody will remember your company. Now is the time to make clear, bold choices. Let your competitors discover that hibernating is a poor strategy. Yes, you will probably need to trim expenses. Everyone knows that the economy is going through a rough patch. Taking a proactive stance on unnecessary expenses is one step—but not the only or most important one—to making 2009 profitable. Use your budget wisely, and remember that trade shows are an investment in the future.

Information courtesy of Susan Friedmann, CSP, The Tradeshow Coach.

