

Walk an aisle in my shoes

Are you off to Vegas?

If so, why not slip into my shoes for a look around? They're "promotion" shoes, which means you'll quickly find yourself looking for ways to advance your business and in no time you'll be asking questions like, "What can I do to get a really big boost? How do I make it to the next sales level? Where can I go to get effective, affordable marketing help? Who can I find that has the knowledge, experience and willingness to help me advance my business?"

The answers to these questions plus a lot more can be found at this year's Clean Show, but you'll have to do a little homework first and lay out a game plan if you really want to gain the maximum benefit.

Make a plan.

Don't just show up and hope for the best. The time you spend away from your home and business should be carefully outlined if you expect to profit from your stay in the nation's number one fun city. Block out a rough schedule in advance... even if you have to do it on the flight to Vegas. A simple, written strategy can make even a stressful schedule more manageable.

Allocate time for the seminars you want to attend. If there are conflicts, rank their importance to help you decide just in case you are forced to make cuts. Plug in any committee meetings or appointments you've set up. Add any special events you'd like to participate in and, of course, allow sufficient time to visit the show floor.

Keep notes

Whether you're at a seminar or having lunch with a new business contact or after each booth visit... always keep a record. Details, even important ones, are very easy to forget so write notes. I suggest you carry a small notebook. Taking notes is easy plus you can attach business cards to individual pages with paper clips or a mini-stapler. Another option is to record your contact information on a hand-held tape recorder. At the end of the show, you'll have a neat packet of information that actually means something to you instead of just so many bags of heavy literature that you'll probably never read.

Skim the treetops

Visiting the show floor works best if you do a quick walk-through, just to see what the exhibitors are offering. Pretend you're a bush pilot flying slowly above the treetops. You can see what's below but you never land... you just observe. You get a quick orientation to who is where on the show floor. Read their signs. Which ones are answering the question "what's in it for you?" Make a note of which booths you would like to spend a little more time at. The average attendee at an international trade show will visit 30 to 40 exhibitors. You should make plans to visit existing vendors to see if they have anything new and then seek out the ones you think could be potential suppliers.

The exhibitor checklist

When you arrive at the show floor, take time to go through the program exhibitor listings and put a checkmark beside your "must see" companies. Next, pencil in a small "x" over the booth space on the show floor map in your program. Finally, write the names of the companies with the booth numbers in your



notebook. As you “skim the treetops” be sure to locate your “must see” exhibitors and also add those companies that fall into either the *what’s new* or *I think I’ll check that one out* categories.

The follow up visits

After skimming the treetops, it’s time to get focused. On your second visit, try to meet with every exhibitor you have a particular interest in, just to get a better feel for what is being offered. Skip the overly crowded booths and plan to come at end of day when traffic is slower.

When you do stop at a booth, let each rep know you are on a tight time schedule in order to avoid casual chatter and get straight down to business. Actually, you can help them by indicating the reason for your interest. That will allow them tailor their presentations.

Remember to take notes at each key stop you make. Be sure to jot down some of your observations about the sales presentation. For example, did the vendor really listen to why you stopped? Did the company rep ask you some questions first? Suppliers you want to work with should put your needs ahead of theirs.

You may or may not feel comfortable giving these companies a lead at this stage.

On your third visit you should focus only on those companies that appear to be best suited for your needs. Plan to spend a little extra time with each of them on in-depth discussion to share information. At this point, you need to decide whether you want them to call on you after the show or not. This benefits everyone so be sure to communicate clearly... one way or the other.

Network

From June 11th to June 14th, there will be more industry professionals per square foot at the Las Vegas Convention Center than anywhere else in the world, period. So take advantage of this unique situation and look for any and all networking opportunities.

The Clean Show affords the perfect venue in which to meet industry leaders and having so many people in one location makes access to these individuals easy.

If you meet the right people and ask the right questions you’ll probably be invited to some exhibitors’ hospitality suites and receptions. If so, take every opportunity to introduce yourself to those around you. Remember to take a good supply of business cards along. Hand them out liberally and collect as many cards as possible from your contacts. Try to hook up with new contacts at mealtimes for added information.

Finally, enjoy yourself. Leave the routine of the office behind. Even though this is work, it’s a nice change of pace and it’s a chance to learn from your peers, exchange ideas and stretch your mind.