Make the Most of Your Time at a Trade Show

Knowing the right way to attend a tradeshow, gather information quickly and efficiently, and turn your time and energy into a highly profitable experience takes some pre-planning and organization. Chuck Simanek, Exposition Manager for Aberdeen’s World of Concrete, offers the following tips on making the most of a trade show visit:

“Walking a trade show,” said Simanek, “if done correctly, can be an educational eye-opener, as well as a profitable return on your investment in time.”

Start by arming yourself with a show directory. These directories are handed out during the registration process and are vital tools. Write down the booth numbers of any exhibitors who may have sent you invitations to the show, or whose products or services you have used successfully before. Also, note any exhibiting companies offering a similar product line or service. You might want to include those booths that attract your interest even if you do not plan on purchasing their line.

Using the floor plan in the directory, plot your course to utilize the least amount of distance, time, and energy. Whenever possible, make appointments with key exhibitors, and group your appointments by location.

Always allow adequate time; not just for your pre-arranged appointments, but also for wandering through the show and observing. You may not have been aware of a new product innovation which could benefit your business. Allowing yourself the time to observe could result in a surprising and worthwhile discovery.

Trade Show Bureau research has shown that a trade show attendee spends an average of 21 minutes in each exhibit gathering information. Twenty minutes is a good time to allot for each booth you plan to visit seriously.

The only way to find out if an exhibitor has what you're looking for is to walk up and ask. Feel free to ask for a demonstration of a product, or for more literature describing the product or service.

Remember to include in the total time available to you: time to watch live product demonstrations; and time for relaxation.

Critical to the success of attending a trade show is pacing yourself and including adequate time to eat and to rest. Carrying around a great deal of product literature can prove to be quite uncomfortable by the end of the day. Be selective about the product literature you pick up.

It goes without saying that a pair of comfortable shoes is a must, and taking time just to sit and people-watch for a few moments can recharge your energy level.

After the show, write a summary or informal report on the exhibiting companies with whom you may wish to do business. Your report, which should reflect facts and your best instincts, along with the material you gathered during your visit, will keep the information fresh in your mind. And remember, the program book you picked up upon your entry into the show can be used as your directory of products and services throughout the year.