FOR DISTRIBUTORS

How a Distributor Can "Show UP" for the SAAC Show

Like me, I know a lot of you look forward to shows. In fact, my very first day in the industry there was a local education and trade show called WRAP-V (put on by 5 suppliers). I remember winning a $100 raffle good toward self-promotions. I learned so much, I was hooked.

The size of the show did not matter. At large national and regional PPAI and SAAC shows, I found that my "Promotional Product IQ" always takes a jump. Even the small, few hour shows put on by a group of multi-line reps got me revved up with new ideas to share with clients.

I went for several reasons: To find new suppliers, or factories with a special niche: To get educated and improve my relationships with factories I used a lot. To find specials. To get educated on our products and how they are being imprinted. And to find incredible self-promo specials. Seriously – If you are not one of your own Top 10 users of promotional products, you can increase your business a lot by changing that.

As I look back over the trade shows, there was always a constant: "If I wanted to be in-the-know, I had better get to The Show."

So, with SAAC just a short bit away, here is a reminder list of why you should be excited to attend and "How to Show UP" or raise your level of success from the show.

Here are some tips to get ready for a show:

1. **How long will you be at the show?** Is it a multi-day or a few hours? Having this information will allow you to plan out your time.
2. **Make your shopping list.** I always tell my clients I am going to an industry show. It's a reason to call them and ask how you can assist with their sales.
    a. Do they have a project that you may be able to make more successful?
    b. A product launch?
    c. An event?

d. A product that is NOT selling that they want to promote?
e. It's always the right time to shop for Holiday gifts. Shows are when I create that list for specific clients and an 'in general' list.

PRINT your shopping list to carry with you as well as have it on your electronic device. I print the list, staple it to the inside of a manilla folder and carried it around with important show emails (see #8).

3. **Shopping List, Part B**: Add your client's phone number to their request on your list. You may want to call her from the show floor with information. Letting her know "you are so important that I'm interrupting my day to get back to you" spurs immediate action. Getting an order ON THE FLOOR excites your factory as well! Some time, ask me about my "$150,000 from a savings and loan" trade show day.
4. **Determine your sample budget for the show.** As distributors, let's stop expecting samples to all be free. Yes, it's a partnership, but I think it shows good faith on the part of those of us who are selling. Besides, if you buy it, I have found you are far more likely to SHOW it. And quickly. Hope you will pardon this soapbox moment: NEVER, EVER just take a sample from the booth if it is not obvious that you're supposed to.
5. **Decide on which suppliers you NEED to visit.** You may want to mark them on the trade show map so you don't miss them. By the way, refer to that map during the show.
   As an example of who I **need** to visit, I always make it a point to stop at my industry web provider and ask "what's new?" Almost all of our promo sites are basically the same BUT if you work with the vendors, you can do some things that will make you stand out. An FYI – what we have done with our site SEO-wise behind-the-code with our replicated site generates business from all over the USA.
6. **Look for suppliers you've not heard of or seen in person before**. Make a plan to stop by some of them. I strongly suggest you check out their website in advance of the show.
7. **Look at some suppliers that have fallen off your radar.** You had not sent an order their way in a while. Why not? Stop by to say hello.
8. Each of the items in numbers 4 to 7 may be augmented by the **pre-show emails** that you receive. Look, I get it, most of those offers are… not very enticing?… but there could be some with incredible offers that make that booth a **MUST STOP AT**. I print those emails off and they are in my Shopping List folder.
9. **Schedule important meetings.** There are some trade show meetings you absolutely have to have: A special *THANK YOU* that you want to share after they bailed you out. Or there could be customer service issues or you want to

specifically meet your CS representative in-person. Schedule a time with the appropriate people, either in their booth or over lunch or coffee. It's easy to lose track of time on the show floor, so put the meetings on your schedule, set an alarm or two, and then text the other person to let them know you're on your way. That can also be a reminder to them.

10. **Keep moving.** Don't waste your supplier's time with too long a conversation because they have more people to meet, too.
11. **I walk the floor looking for the unexpected.** There's a USB company I have used exclusively for a decade because I noticed something in their booth (it fell into the 'General Holiday Gift' ideas category) and ended up having an in-depth conversation with the owner of the company.
12. **Wear the most comfortable shoes you have**. In my 20s and 30s, I used to show up to our shows in full suit complete with dress shoes. I wanted to be taken seriously even as a 'young kid' in the industry and to me, a suit showed I was a professional. We can have that debate sometime. The first thing to go, though, were the dress shoes. I found some other shoes that didn't look odd with my show attire and I switched them out each day. When exhibiting at a show, I've even switched them out during the day. Last show tip: Break the shoes in before the show. It's incredibly hard to pay attention to conversations and your shopping list when your feet hurt.
13. **Travel light on the floor.** Sure, when samples are everywhere, that can be difficult. Fill your bag, and check it. It's worth the small investment.
14. **Have special trade show business cards.** I have some with my shipping address AND MY FED EX NUMBER. I leave room on that card for them to take notes and add my credit card, too. YES – most suppliers take electronic notes. But I want MY CARD to get into their purse or pocket. It's good to be a special project.

    If you're someone who expects us to scan one card into our phone, you better be the most memorable human being on the planet, because we then have to find you in our phones based on remembering your name.

15. **Never eat alone.** If there is a supplier who has done something great for you, spring for lunch or a snack between meals. This tip can also include not taking a cab alone. I remember one cab ride where I let the supplier "sell me" the entire time and it turned into orders. He's still on my holiday card list.
    For those who correctly feel that meals CAN be a time-sucker, at least 'fill your stomach.' Rather than bad for you fast food, bring a yogurt and some cheese and fruit from your hotel. Almonds are a low-fat source of protein and stay with you until you have a meal. Last meal tip: Don't eat at lunch time. The lines are the longest and it becomes the biggest time suck.

16. If you finish the whole show and have extra time, **walk the show again in reverse order**. You will see things you missed the first time.
17. Promise the factory that you will let them know what happened with the project they got you information for. And follow up, whether it worked or did not.
18. I have gotten the follow up email 6 months after the show. I'm disappointed that I made that poor an impression that they have a several month backlog of projects in front of me. Here's how I get around that: **Send Nice To Meet You emails to those suppliers you want to build a relationship with right away.** You can also invite people to your social media platforms (the ones you check every day). Follow their company pages and immediately make a positive comment. I promise you that even if 1000 people read this, only a small fraction will take this action. It makes a difference. I read once that "Like a good golf swing, it is all in the follow through."
19. **Supplies to make sure you have**: a Sharpie. An extra battery bank for your phone. Two chargers. A small stapler. I use the show as a way to test out new-to-me pen suppliers.

I think that our tradeshows are one of the supporting structures of an industry that must continue to improve in a very important way: our job is to help the marketing of each of our clients to become better. It's a huge responsibility and as salespeople we must always strive to "Show UP!"

To that end, I want to encourage you to always have shows on your agenda. And… If you have tips I can add to this list, reach out to me at Hank@YuloffCreative.com. As a reward, I'll send you one of our 8 best-selling business books: The Marketing Checklist 4: Your Guide for Overwhelmed and Overthinking Entrepreneurs.

See you at the SAAC Show!

FOR SUPPLIERS

How a Supplier Can “Show UP” for the SAAC Show

There’s one big reason I’m the type of distributor you want to meet at an industry show: it’s because I realized a long time ago that that almost every relationship I have with a promotional product factory was created on a trade show floor or through a meeting with a multi-line representative. I also figured out that I needed my competitors to have a good level of success because I can’t keep any factory alive with just my orders. It’s important for us to all work together as we work separately.

My very first day in the industry was a local education and trade show called WRAP-V (put on by 5 suppliers). I remember winning a $100 raffle good toward self-promotions. I learned so much, I was hooked.

For a motivated distributor, the size of the show does not matter. At large national and regional PPAI and SAAC shows, I found that my “Promotional Product IQ” always takes a jump. Even the small, few hour shows put on by a group of multi-line reps got me revved up with new ideas to share with clients.

I attend shows for several reasons: To find new suppliers, or factories with a special niche; To get educated and improve my relationships with factories I used a lot; To find specials; To get educated on our products and how they are being imprinted; And to find incredible self-promo specials because I know that if I am not using promotional products, my clients will wonder why THEY should use them.

As I look back over the trade shows, there was always a constant: “If I wanted to be in-the-know, I had better get to The Show.”

So, with SAAC just a short bit away, here is a reminder list of how you can lure more distributors to your booth, get them excited to attend and “How to Show UP” or raise your level of success at the show.

Here are some tips to get ready for a show:

1. **Have enough staff.** I know that it's expensive, REALLY expensive to bring your team. Our rule for our small business coaching business is that we only take a single size booth because the two of us can operate it without having anyone wait too long. When we used to have double booths, we'd hire a 3rd or 4th person whose only job was to know enough to hold the prospect's attention. So, even if that extra person is new and is scanning us or showing us the "ONE THING YOU GOTTA KNOW ABOUT US" while we wait for someone more knowledgeable, the distributor will stick around because they will feel 'seen.' You also need to have enough people so that you can rotate off the floor for breaks and meetings.
2. **Invite me.** Pay for the email list ahead of time and let me know you're going to be at the show. In that email, though, tell me what you do as if I have never heard of you and answer the question WHY YOU. You see, as distributors, we're all struggling with what products to show our prospects so that they see our vision and buy into it. As a sideways step here, may I ask a favor? Here it is:

I get tons of emails from y'all. Every day. All day. Some of you almost every day. And here's the thing: you are showing me a product without a use. Add a success story that I can use in my sales pitch to sell your products.

3. We have a list of 46 things that go in our **trade show emergency kit**. Send us an email for the entire list: Info@YuloffCreative.com
4. **Send a great special ahead of the show.** Make it an incredible, awesome, "I've GOT to get to that booth" offer. The better it is, *the more pissed I will be at myself if I do not get to your booth*. Encourage me to print and bring the email with me. By the way, if you would like to reality test some specials, give me a call (or send me a text): 818-731-4265.
5. **When you're at the booth, all attention is on the people walking by.** It is amazing how often I've seen people reading a newspaper during show hours, and they were the only person in the booth. They miss a lot of us walking past.
6. **Don't take phone calls in your booth**. Leave the floor to make the calls. When you put me off (I have actually had someone hold up a hand toward me like "I have a bigger name on the other line" and want me to wait at a trade show that I paid to attend and come meet him). This is another reason to have more than one person in your booth.
7. **Make your booth interesting.** It's your hardest challenge, to get me to turn left into your booth, especially if we don't know each other. You've got to capture my attention because, let's face it, if I don't know you, I already have "a cap factory" or "enough pen companies" or "a company that makes those popular travel mugs." If you have a sign that says "Don't Miss This One Important Thing" I can, at the very least, see what it is that makes you different.

8. **Wear the most comfortable shoes you have**. I found some shoes that didn't look odd with my show attire and I switched them out each day. When working a show, I have even switched them out during the day. Last show tip: Break them in before the show. It's incredibly hard to pay attention to conversations and your shopping list when your feet hurt.
9. **Don't read the second line of the distributor's badge before you read the first.** If the company they work for is more important than who that person in front of you is, you're going to miss opportunities. Having been in both situations, large national distributor and small firm, we notice the attitude.

My favorite day on a trade show floor was when an S&L gave me a $150,000 budget for three products for Customer Appreciation Day promos. And I got to shop during the show with purchase orders in my pocket. I needed 25,000 of a food item which was the hard one because I had no relationships in that area. There were 3 companies on the floor that had a product that would have fit our need. We chose the one who was most welcoming of a small company.

10. **Have a list of questions to ask us as we try and walk by**: "Working the show" can be all about getting a distributor to stop in her tracks. Questions can act as a pattern-interrupt and get us to pay attention to you. Here are a few questions:
    a. "Have you ever seen an X as special as this?" (if it IS special)
    b. "Want a case study that will make you money next week?" Ask for one industry that is important to them – what prospect do they have and what industry are they in. I will always look for stories that will help me expand my client base.
    c. "In just 60 seconds, I can make you $X." It might be a product you have that works as a great hobby sale. That's a product I can show after I close one sale and offer a "by the way, can I show you one more idea?"
    d. "Aren't you Channing Tatum?"
    e. "What's on your shopping list for the show?"
    f. "What's on your shopping list you haven't found yet?"
    And a personal favorite:
    g. "What's the one thing I MUST know about your company?" This is especially great if a distributor wants to use the right promotional product in their sales.
11. **Follow up immediately.** While you are gathering promised information, send them an email that says "we're working on the project we spoke about, so this is just a note to let you know that it was great to meet you, and thank you for stopping by." Over the years, and over many trade shows, I am floored by how many companies spend the time and money to exhibit and yet let this simple relationship builder wander away. If you have any down time, you could send them from the booth. Heck – text me an hour later and

say “THANKS FOR STOPPING BY! Come back and I will have a special coupon for you” or some such reason to get them back to your booth. Remember: A friendly Pattern Interrupt that is valuable to the recipient can drastically increase your sales from the show.

12. **REALLY follow up**. Get us the information we need, as quickly as possible.
13. **One more reason to follow up**: If we have never met before the show (or the distributor has never sent you an order before) Send me a survey with a photo of your booth. Ask me: How did we do when you stopped by? What can we do to start a business relationship (instead of “to earn your business.”)? And because it’s good to know: Who in our category are you currently using for these products?
    Offer a prize for answering. The information will be worth it. You can even call me and say thanks for answering the survey, ‘may I ask you one more question about one of your answers?”

If you have any questions about booth layout- or attracting distributor attention, we’re an email away! Reach out to Hank@YuloffCreative.com. We want you to exhibit and we want to help you succeed and Show UP!