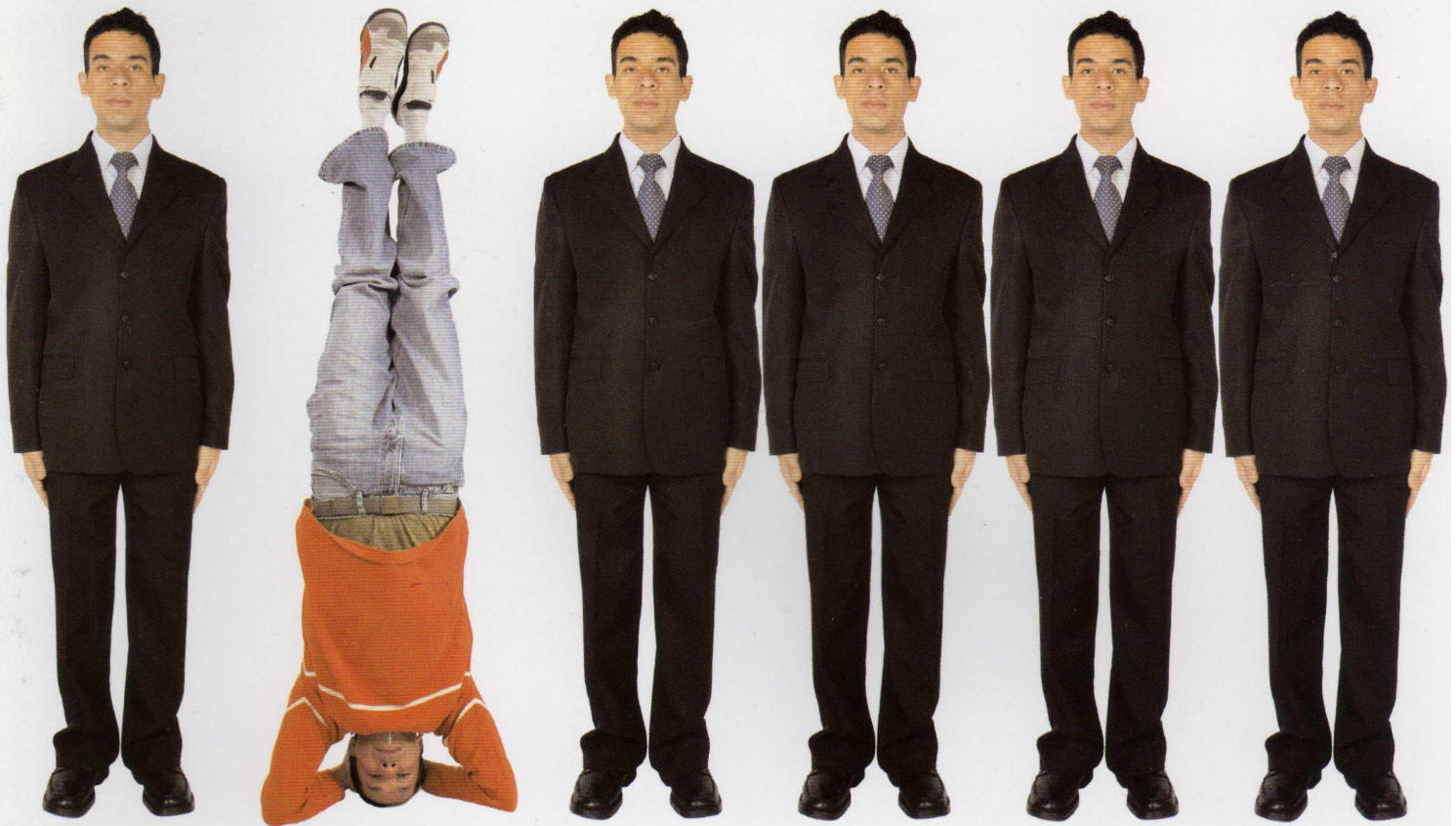


# Strategies | 2.07 V9.N2

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## Standing Out from the Crowd — How to Get Noticed at Trade Shows

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# Ooh! Ooh! Pick Me! Pick Me!

## Maximizing Visibility, Opportunity and ROI at Trade Shows



by Jamie K. Mulholland

**W**hen you're challenged with coordinating your firm's involvement in a trade show, it can be daunting. After all, the show is there, and you've plenty to do here. The show is months away, and there's other work now.

Often what happens is one of two things: It gets pushed aside until just before the electrical deadline when you slap together some pens and brochures and dig out the display; or with the best of intentions, you spend some serious cash on a giveaway which draws tons of people and excitement. People you will never hear from again, except for those who visit your booth next year, asking, "Hey, did you bring those combination flashlight-sticky note dispensers again this year?"

The logistics of trade shows can be cumbersome. However, with careful thought into a few important issues early on, your participation can make the firm shine to the right people, and make you stand out as a master executor.

### Before the Show

#### ■ Pick ONE goal.

Determine the one thing you want. Why are you attending? Is anyone a target, or are you there to be visible before existing clients? Do you want to walk away with a mailing list of 15,000 or 2 hot prospects? Depending on the show and the practice area(s) you're trying to market, it may be either. Determine who you want noticing your presence and plan every aspect of your involvement around that target.

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#### ■ Plan your work, then work your plan

Once I have an event like a trade show to plan, I immediately type up a timeline – backwards. I start with the date of the show and enter everything I need to do, no matter how insignificant, backing up to the day I am typing. Everything, from move-in to cutoff dates for such things as furniture orders or warehouse shipping and travel details goes into this list. Keep it as a running document, so you can add things as they pop into your mind, and keep complet-

ed items in there as strikeout text so you can use it as next year's timeline, too.

#### ■ Maximize visibility...

##### ...in the booth

A 10x10 booth is perfectly adequate. Even better than size is location. All shows have a floor map you can review beforehand. Tour the site early on, so you can see things the map won't tell you, like how certain spaces are lit, ceiling heights and general traffic patterns. Also, find out where already-committed exhibitors are placed. If you're looking to draw traffic, position yourself near someone who consistently draws a crowd.

Now, think back to your primary goal when designing elements inside the booth. Are you displaying printed materials or hosting a putting contest? Will you need a table and chairs for people to hold meetings? Tie every element back to your goal.

##### ...in the giveaways

Law firms often purchase one giveaway for everyone. Here's another area where analyzing what you're trying to do (and why) may be more cost-effective and have a greater impact. Some shows are filled with non-decision makers strolling around because they've been excused from work to attend and are on a mission to collect as many clickie pens as possible. Consider "tiered" handouts:

#### 1 Something for everyone.

Candy is inexpensive, you can print the firm logo on the wrapper and you can buy enough to last the whole show and spend much less than you would on pens or highlighters. You can also select one substantive piece to bring in bulk, such as a practice area newsletter or firm profile, for anyone and everyone to take if they wish.

#### 2 Something for prospects.

Assemble a customized supply of firm brochures or department profiles. Include newsletters, team member biographies and business cards. This is for anyone with enough interest to actually stop and talk or ask a question. If they don't want to schlep it around the trade show, offer to mail it to them. And, with the money you saved on buying candy, offer them something from the nicer stash you brought —

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# Ooh! Ooh! Pick Me! Pick Me!

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a higher-end pen or a note cube. Your interaction with this prospect is of a greater quality than any passer-by, and your handouts should reflect it.

### 3 Something for VIPs.

Bring a "premier" selection of even nicer items (t-shirt, golf shirt, etc.) for clients or referral sources attending the show.

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Encourage the attorneys who are planning to attend to use the floor map to plan visits to both present and potential clients.

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### ...in sponsorships

Nothing guarantees visibility like a good sponsorship. When you do your booth prospect visit, bring the show's sales representative to tour the site with you. They'll provide feedback on good areas for traffic or visibility and brainstorm on ideal locations or materials for including the firm logo. Sometimes, out of these meetings, sponsorships are creat-

ed that don't exist in the sales packages distributed to other potential sponsors.

### ...on the show floor

Encourage the attorneys who are planning to attend to use the floor map to plan visits to both present and potential clients.

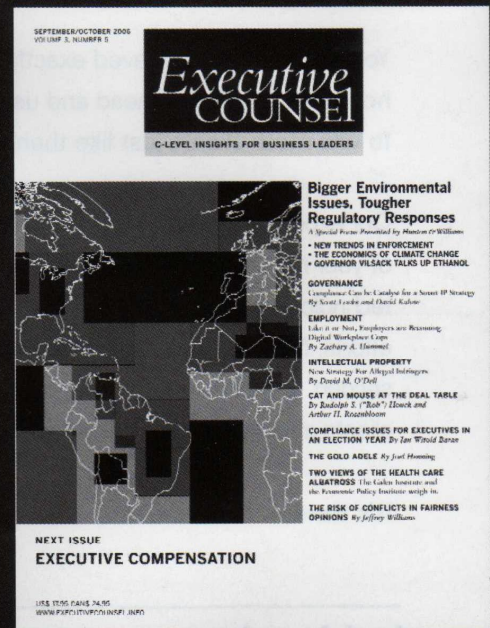
- Good approach – do a little legwork. Find out exactly who they would ask for when they visit. "Is Joe Schmoe, your vice president of HR, here at the booth today?"
- Even better approach – have them make contact beforehand. "[Ring, ring] Hello, Joe! Are you attending the expo next week? I have some ideas with respect to employee training in light of that recent decision..."
- Better still – "...and I'd also like you to meet a client, Jack Flack of Flack Enterprises. I think you two can do business with each other."

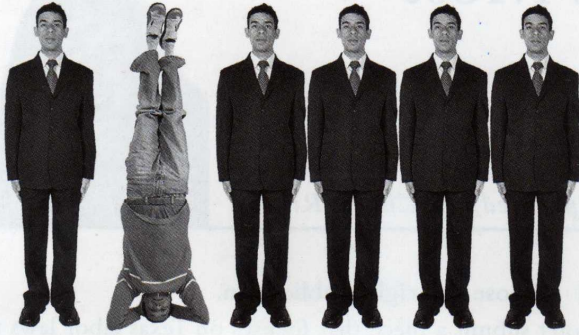
## During the Show

### Manning the booth

The booth is the face of your firm. Assign one to two people to work the booth. Any more and prospects are intimidated or outnumbered or worse, the group spends more time talking to each other than attendees. Those people

General Counsel  
Deputy General Counsel  
Chairperson  
Vice-Chairperson  
CEO  
COO  
President  
CFO  
CIO/CTO  
HR Chief  
Business Development Chief





## After the Show

### Say thank you

If someone has helped you achieve your goal – the sales rep who sold you the sponsorship or a lighting tech during setup – say thank you afterward. It can be something as simple as a thank-you note, or as generous as a gift card or sporting event tickets from the firm's stash. You will not only make their day, but trust me, they will remember you next year.

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Use the momentum at the show to plan and improve the future.

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### Follow up

Follow up with absolutely everyone you made personal contact with (even the tire kickers – you never know where your next piece of business will come from). If it's someone in your immediate area, arrange a personal meeting. If you promised to mail something, do it. If you obtained a mailing list, formulate a plan to use it. Make the most of the time and money that you invested in the show. ■

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should be able to tell the difference between a prospect and a non-prospect and answer questions intelligently. Don't sit. If you have to, rent a counter stool so you stay at eye level with visitors. Don't eat. And you'll be amazed at what an icebreaker a combination of a smile and a "Good morning/afternoon!" can be.

### Plan next year

Remember your checklist? Bring it with you and add notes as to things you forgot to pack, ideas from other booths, things you wish you'd done differently and ideal booth/banner locations. Use the momentum at the show to plan and improve the future.

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