How to Capture Higher Quality Leads by Customizing Your Lead Capture Device

By Jefferson Davis, Competitive Edge

Whatever orders you capture at a tradeshow are typically the low-hanging fruit. What you can get over time with a well-designed lead qualification capture and follow-up program can be substantial. For many exhibitors, the real return on investment is often hidden in their leads.

Unfortunately, most exhibitors overlook the value of leads. And if they do value leads, they often have an ineffective lead qualification and capture process. This can cause your sales team, dealers or distributors to dismiss the potential value and therefore not follow-up on your tradeshow leads.

The starting point is to define what a good lead is. I define a good lead as:

- being information rich, which means capturing more than just what is embedded in the badge
- the visitor has agreed upon a clear visible next action.

In my experience, too many exhibitors just automatically accept whatever information is embedded in the badge. Keep in mind, you may never have the chance again to stand face-to-face with this visitor and ask good questions, and read not just their verbal answers but their body language.

To start developing or improving your lead quality, begin with a clear definition of what information you need to capture to help you, and the people receiving the leads, to understand the quality and potential value of the lead. If you are not in sales, but are a marketing or exhibits manager, I recommend that you ask sales management and/or the sales team.

Finally ask "*What is the typical order of your qualification questions?"* This will give you a good understanding of how your sales team qualifies leads and provide plenty of content to design your lead qualification process.

Once you have your list of questions, because the tradeshow environment is so different than a field sales call, you will want to organize the questions into the natural flow of conversation.

A good strategy is to begin with your "front-end" or situational questions. These questions give you quick understanding of who the visitor is, what their interests/needs are relative to your offerings, and what information you might need to share with them during the interaction. Examples include:

- *What brought you to our booth today?*
- *What's prompting your interest in our products or services?*
- *Tell me a little bit about your business?*
- *What do you do with the business?*
- *What current goals, projects or challenges are you facing with regard to our types of products or services?*

"Back-end" questions are the stronger qualifiers and include things like purchase authority, timing and priority, budget, competitive situation, and next action. Good examples include:

- *How are you involved in analyzing or making a decision?*
- *Who besides yourself might be involved?*
- *What is your timeframe for this purchase or project?*

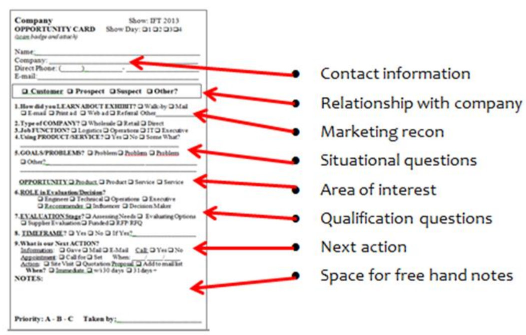
- *What kind of budget have you allocated for this purchase or product?*
- *What other products or solutions are you considering?*
- *How do you feel our products or services compare at this point?*
- *What do you think our next action should be?*
- *When would be a good time to take that action?*

As you can see, there are a lot of qualifying questions you could ask. Ideally, you want to narrow it down to your top 5 to 7 questions.

Also, when designing a lead qualification and capture device, it's better to have multiple choice answers to make the process more efficient. Typically, you will not want to have more than six or seven answer choices. And it's always a good idea to have one of those be "other?" with open space to enter notes.

Once you've narrowed down your qualification questions to the top 5 to 7, and ordered them in the natural flow of conversation using the front end and back end question flow strategy, you are ready to create your first draft of your lead process.

If you're using an electronic capture device, simply enter the questions into the device and build the multiple choice selection boxes. If you're using a paper lead form, here's an example of what it might look like:



Once you have the first draft of your lead capture device developed, please keep in mind the first time you use it will be a test. It is critically important that you have your booth staff practice using the question process and capture device in role-plays before they hit the show floor.

Be sure to analyze your leads at the end of each shift and/or end the day to see which questions are being asked and which are not. Also, follow up with the team after the show and ask them which questions worked and which ones need to be edited, added or deleted along with the multiple choice answers.

If you follow this process you will have a very effective lead qualification and capture process. This will dramatically improve the quality of your leads, encourage your sales team to want to follow-up more aggressively on the leads, and ultimately lead to greater exhibiting return on investment.

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