

Transcript – GET to YES Podcast

E1: B2B Expos: Why Are You Exhibiting, What's Your Purpose?

Generally, everybody's goal at an industry Expo is the same – to get a return on the cost to exhibit. After many years of experience, I'd like to share with you a variety of observations, learnings and things to avoid, to ensure you have the most enjoyable expo and get the best result for you and your brand.

I must admit, I've exhibited at about 26 consecutive expos, and over the last 10 years I've attended various trade shows in the Hair, Beauty & Body industries, as a delegate. I've been fortunate to have had some amazing and professional experiences, as well as (unfortunately) some real shockers too.

Going back to the beginning when I started doing expos many years ago, they were designed in those days to SELL. As exhibitors and product companies, we had trained our clients to come to the expo to buy special deals. Yeah it was quite amazing – clients would show up with their cheques books ready to buy! I specifically remember that they'd show up with a smile and an air of excitement, as they were prepared to buy... and buy big!

I was taught, that the key qualifying question was to ask, "Did they have a garage?" If they said yes, I was to present the ultra-big deal, because they'd need a garage to store it. Otherwise, I'd go for the normal large deal, so they could store it on their salon premise.

The reason why expos were really successful for us, was that the company I worked for back then, had a really clear purpose. To SELL large deals to all our clients.

This message was clear and consistent throughout the whole expo –from the pre-expo briefing, through to each and every morning (or the beginning of our shift). We were given targets to achieve and quite often there were incentives. Always one to be motivated by juicy incentives, I remember frequently working through without lunch, in my desire to win the incentive prize.

What would your Expo experience be like if all your staff were that pumped at your next Expo?

Even today, I still get excited going to an expo. Maybe a bit of that old adrenalin still kicks in, I'm not sure, or maybe I'm just an optimist... or always looking for the next new thing. Either way, I still find expo a buzz.

There've also been some great stories. I remember going to my first international trade show, Salon International in London. At that time, I was the NSW Distributor for TIGI Professional Haircare, and I'd been invited to visit London, as Tony & Guy were at their height and I wanted to see how TIGI and Tony & Guy conducted their trade show.

Well... I was blown away by the size of the trade show, it was huge. So, after winding my way through hall after hall, I came to the TIGI stand positioned in a very prominent position near one of the cafe areas. The first thing I noticed was the crowds of people in this part of the trade show –I remember thinking why do they have the stand near the café ... because the café crowds are affecting people's

view of the stand? As I got closer, I discovered something else – the crowd wasn't for the café, it is was for the TIGI & Tony & Guy stand. Somewhat gob smacked... I just stood there and tried to take it all in.

As time when on, I realised that people were lining up to buy anything that had Tony & Guy on it – including educational videos, brushes, combs, capes and posters – it was truly amazing. What was even more exciting for me, was I had been invited to stay at Toni Mascolo's house, with Toni himself driving us to his beautiful home, where we all had a fabulous meal. Later, Toni retreated from the table to his office, where he was counting the thousands of pounds the stand had made that day. Apparently, he did that after every day, of every trade show. Go figure!

So, my huge learning from that trip was that expos are not only places to exhibit and showcase your brand, but they're also places to sell... and if you get it right, you can sell heaps.

People say to me today that expos are different now – they're expensive, they don't get a return, clients don't buy any more and they just want to look etc, etc. Well they may be right in some ways however I've come across a lot of exhibitors (some of them clients), who structure their stand with the sole, simple purpose... of selling. As result, some make enough to not only cover their exhibition costs, but sometimes even produce a profit.

In this Podcast series, I'm looking forward to sharing with you a number of ideas and concepts that *do* work and if you implement them well, they'll lead you to get a better return from your expo investment.

So, the starting point is having total clarity around your purpose.

What's your purpose for exhibiting at this next expo?

Is it to:

- Launch or preview your brand
- Sell products at the expo and get your brand out there
- Exhibit a new product a range extension, a new treatment or device
- Or is to showcase your brand and solicit new business by attracting new stockists?

Of late, my observations have lead me to conclude the exhibitors who do the best, are those who sell product during the expo. Some good examples are:

- At a recent Beauty Expo, companies who've done very well are those selling make-up, lipstick, nail care, wax products and spray tan, through to equipment or devices.
- At a recent Hair Expo, new colour concepts, hair loss products, hair extensions, electrical tools, spray tan, hair accessories and sundries all sold well.

So, are you planning on selling at the next expo? If so take time to think through:

- Who you are going to sell to – is just salon owners?
- Can you structure your offer to sell directly to their staff as well?

Make it easy for people to buy a starter kit or a segment of your range.

- How are you going to display those items for sale?
- Will it be clear that you're selling product at the expo?

Maybe you're attending an expo to promote a new product, range extension, a new device or a new salon treatment. For this group, the challenge is different to those wanting to just sell product. Your goal is to have a very clear idea of exactly what you want your team to focus on. Ideally your stand design should be interactive and encourage delegates to interact with your brand and therefore 'hang' around your stand longer. BTW, the longer they stay the greater the chance of securing a commitment.

Another important aspect is to know who's your ideal client or avatar. Describe them to your staff in detail, because qualifying delegates at an expo can be challenging (that's something I'll cover in a later Podcast).

Other things to consider:

- Does your stand design complement your sales focus, and what can you do to draw delegate focus to that aspect of your offering?
- How can you create some urgency or immediacy to your offer, so you can create the need to take action, right there and then? Perhaps invite people to be the first, limit the offer quantity etc.

Exhibiting purely as a brand building exercise... where you're hoping to solicit new business by attracting new stockists, is the category that I feel has the most challenges. This group generally, can find it the most difficult to get a clear and measurable return on their expo investment. The key is to create interaction. How can you do that with you brand?

- Can you personally mix a product for a client, can they watch a demonstration, can they witness your USP in some way, can they experience the end result that your product delivers?
- Do you have an international guest or artist, that you can incorporate on your stand in some way?

You need to get creative here, have some fun, make the interaction fun for your clients, do something different, stand out, get people talking.

The days of showing up just to exhibit at expos are long gone. To make money from expos, you now need to:

- Know exactly who you want to sell to
- Get creative
- Be able to implement your ideas well
- Train your staff properly prior
- Prepare potent literature and finally,
- Make it easy for people to buy.

The next four podcasts in this series on B2B Expos, will break down each of these areas in detail, plus there's a sprinkling of sales techniques included... to ensure you and your team enjoy the best most profitable expo yet.

I look forward to the opportunity to share those and many more ideas over this podcast series. Until then, have a profitable day

