# Transcript – GET to YES Podcast

## E4: B2B Expos: Reducing Your Stress During the Expo

Hi, Neil here from The SALES CATALYST. In this episode, I'd like to talk to you about some ideas to take the stress out of your next Expo.

For me, the stress used to come when I felt things weren't working smoothly on the stand. Whether it be running out of information packs, or needing to get more enquiry forms printed or… I once ran out of Business Cards. All good first-world problems.

As the years went on, I discovered that what really reduced my stress was the number of leads. If the team was securing a solid number of sales leads – enquiries – then generally I could relax a bit. For me, attending an expo is all about it being an investment, that grows your business over the coming months. To do that, you needed to turn all those enquires into new accounts, or put simply, into sales.

I also discovered that the key for me was to have two things in place:

1. An easy way to collect accurate contact information from our leads
2. Have a clear and professional plan to connect the expo to the next step or experience, after the expo

Have you thought through your post expo experience?

In this episode, we're going to cover a few vital points in this area – like ideas to link that great expo experience to a smooth and seamless experience after the expo… and secure orders.

We're going deep here, as there are some important specifics to discuss and think through:

- Different ways to collect information from the contacts you have at the expo
- Some of the mistakes I've seen companies make and how it's cost them dearly
- How to build an effective bridging strategy
- How to make the post expo meeting an extension of the expo

The starting point in securing future business from an expo, is to ensure that you make it easy to collect contact information from those who visit your stand.

So, what's your plan… how are you going to collect that vital information? This simple point may seem super obvious, but I must share that I've experienced some real shockers here. For some unknown reason, there's some staff who think they've done a great job at an expo, if they've out heaps of business cards. Others I've observed have run out of business cards, and some even think they've done well if they run out of samples!

Let's be clear. None of those methods will guarantee you further engagement with anyone who's visited your stand. The only way to do that, is for you to secure their contact information. That information then allows you or your sales team, to get in contact with them after the expo – not the other way around.

Here are simplistic methods to collect delegate and/or prospect information. One of the first I used was and still is, the most basic of all. It's the good old fishbowl. It's easy to source and simple to use, if you're just starting out. Use it collect and store, salon/client business cards. However, there are also a couple of rules with this quite simplistic approach:

- Always try to avoid starting the day with an empty bowl – nobody wants to feel that they're the first to leave their card.
- How can you create the perception of popularity? Maybe consider offering a prize, or lucky draw for leaving your business card.
- Finally, somebody needs to take control of the cards and record them all before they get divvied up across the sales team. After all, that is why you came to the expo – to secure business opportunities.

The down side of the fishbowl approach is that it's difficult to make notes or comments. Because of that, sometimes all you end up with is a stack of names with no context and no idea how to bridge the conversation from the expo to the phone call you will be making to 'follow up.'

The next level of collection still lies within the manual, non-electronic space. It's to create a professionally designed 'lead' or 'enquiry' form on an A4 or A5 page, with your logo. These can work well, as it allows you to list the types of information you want your sales team to collect. However, proceed with caution. Most people are OK with sharing brief pieces of information at an expo, but they're not always comfortable with giving their life story on a form. Keep it simple, make it quick and easy to complete. As a suggestion maybe request:

- Business Name, Suburb and State
- Website, Phone
- Their preferred method of contact
    - Phone
    - Mobile
    - Text
    - Email
    - Mail
    - Other?
- The category or product discussed
- What action is required, the best next step and or comment
- What's their day off?
- I'd always include the name of the person who took the lead information. I found over the years this helped with clarifying writing and/or the entry of information.

If you do use this popular method and especially if you have several people working the stand, get a few clipboards in the same colour, blue for example. All blue folders contain lead or contact forms. Maybe all black folders contain price lists. Think about how you can make it easy for your staff to grab and complete. The last thing you want, is for a staff member to have a perfect lead and they can't find the lead form… what sort of impression would that give of your business or brand?

Finally, and even more importantly, once these forms are completed, they're to be deposited in one place and only one place. I used to make up a box and we'd deposit all leads forms in there. If you do

nothing else, please pay a lot of attention to how you're going to manage (and safeguard) this end of collecting your leads.

Over the years I've seen some stands leaving their completed lead sheets sitting around on their stand, some I've seen only partially completed or writing you can't read. Set some controls and clear expectations here – because later all these need to be entered in a spreadsheet, so you can clearly count and measure the number of leads and perceived value they've brought in against your expo investment.

Other clients I speak with say they're in the electronic age, so they want to look sharp and record all of their lead information on laptops or iPads. The bonus here, is that it saves heaps of time typing them all up at the end of the show. Again, this can work well, so long as the information required is short and to the point.

Some key points to consider with this system:

- Keep the form simplistic and easy to enter
- Have enough devices to cope with the busy periods
- Make sure everyone can type and work the device
- Design the form to include a comments area

A couple of things to be aware of with this system:

- Don't give the device to the client and expect them to enter their info, they may not be familiar with the device, they will feel embarrassed if they appear not able to master the system
- Generally, with this method I've noticed a higher failure rate than for other manual systems, with multiple spelling mistakes and generally the follow up notations are shorter and less specific
- Again, you need to ensure that you receive and collate all the lead information at the end of the show.

More recently, several expo organisers have offered an electronic capture system to scan a delegate's badge as a part of the exhibitor booking process. While these can be fantastic, please do your due diligence prior to using it to ensure you understand what information you'll receive out the other side of the expo. You may only end up with a list of people who've visited your stand. What you'll need to think through, is how to capture conversations or make notes on requests that need to be honoured after expo. For me, the notes are where the Gold is lost or made.

I've seen many companies do well and others leaving with little to show for their efforts. At the end of the day, it's more important to have a system in place (no matter what it is) because it's those leads that will make you the money, long after the expo has finished.

Let's now chat about how to manage the flow from the expo conversation and excitement, to the all-important post expo business meeting and how to make that as smooth as possible. For me, the post expo business experience starts from the actual expo – this called a bridging strategy. It's a strategy to link the two experiences, the expo and the visit to their premises, or the post expo meeting at yours, together.

A good example of this is in the beauty industry, where some clients exhibit to promote a new range of products that deliver a new facial concept through a different or specific application. For those that are genuinely interested, their process is to offer the opportunity to experience the facial themselves, back in their own salon. This is a great example of how you can link a visit to your stand back, to a visit to their business –very smoothly with a simple, yet logical step.

Some other clients sell a starter kit at the expo, or a small collection of their range for evaluation. This can be another way of using a bridging strategy, because it gives a reason and purpose to a post expo business conversation. Think about what you can offer as a bridging offer. After all, a bridging strategy is simply a way to secure your next business conversation.

What's your post-expo process? Are your sales team just going to sit on the phone and ring leads or is there a process that you can explain at the expo that will link together with that all important post-expo business meeting.

What are your take ways from this episode? Was it:

- Refining your lead capturing system
- Keeping it simple
- Creating a bridging strategy to help you increase the ratio of successful post expo meetings

Until next time… ENJOY YOUR DAY