

The Art of Lead Retrieval

Capturing leads at the NACS Show should be your number-one goal.

BY LISA PLUMMER



Electronic lead retrieval makes capturing — and following up on — leads easier than ever.

If your primary method of capturing and qualifying leads at trade shows has been to collect business cards, write notes on them and toss them into a goldfish bowl, then perhaps it might be time to consider adopting a more modern technique.

Capturing quality leads that could translate to sales is the main reason you've invested your time and money to exhibit at events such as the NACS Show, right? Shouldn't maximizing this golden

opportunity be a top priority?

You might want to consider the various electronic lead retrieval technologies available — including those offered at the NACS Show — and also review your overall lead strategy.

ELECTRIC AND EFFICIENT

As opposed to the fishbowl method, electronic lead retrieval is a wonderful tool that offers a host of benefits for ex-

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hibitors, including increased efficiencies in capturing the contact information and interest levels of a greater number of attendees. This helps you maximize your lead potential and increase the reach of your business, according to Charlie Bowden, president of In4med, a lead retrieval technology solutions company.

“Exhibitors are under a lot of pressure these days to make everything count and lead retrieval tools offer some great advantages,” said Bowden. “As companies search for efficient cost-effective solutions to collect information about interested prospects, they will find that these tools can help make the collection of contact data faster and easier.”

And since getting in front of as many quality prospects as possible is crucial, capturing and qualifying leads quickly and efficiently is not only key to maximizing your time and energy at the event, but also that of your sales department when it begins the follow-up process after the Show.

At the NACS Show next month in Chicago, exhibitors can choose from several electronic lead retrieval options, with packages ranging from basic to advanced. Developed by EPIC Registration, these offerings include the newest Diamond package, which allows exhibitors to customize attendee tracking. Besides coming equipped with 20 standard qualifying questions and codes, this wireless unit allows exhibitors to add 10 additional customized qualifiers and codes, as well as the ability to manually type in key information about each attendee.

“The coolest thing with these scanners is they have a place where you can actually take notes,” said Donovan Woods, NACS exhibits manager. “After you scan someone’s card, you can manually type in lead-retrieval-specific information that maybe doesn’t necessarily coincide

with your qualifying questions. And depending on which unit you buy, you can either upload [the data] immediately to your website or you can just print it at the end of the Show.”

Karen Bradley, president and CEO of the Rocky Mountain Popcorn Co., remembers how valuable renting a lead retrieval system was for her company when it made its debut at the NACS Show four years ago.

“The first year we did the NACS Show it was just crazy,” said Bradley. “I was so grateful I had that lead retrieval system and we knew which [qualifying] questions to ask because there was no way I could come back here and try to remember a few hundred leads. That’s why a lead retrieval system is such an important tool; rather than write it all down in a notebook, you’ve got [all the data] on one piece of hardware that gets downloaded into software.”

SUCCESSFUL LEAD RETRIEVAL

Following these quick tips can help you take your lead efficiency even further at the NACS Show:

- **Select the right device and quantity.** Some lead capture systems run off electricity while others are wireless. The latter offers the added benefit of mobility, which allows booth staff to wander around and outside of the exhibit area to capture leads rather than be restricted to one spot. Both NACS and EPIC recommend renting at least one lead device for every four staffers working the booth.
- **Qualify those leads.** Ask strategic, custom qualifying questions to understand attendees’ needs and take as many notes as possible. This will help enrich the information you collect and help you decide how to prioritize the leads once you get back to your office.
- **Train staff.** Besides making sure your

sales team knows how to use your lead retrieval system, make sure that everyone working your booth understands your marketing message. Besides being able to scan badges, verify attendee contact information and ask qualifying questions, booth staff should adequately provide information and answer attendee questions.


“Booth staff has to be briefed, they have to be solid, they have to have great communication skills and they have to be comfortable in a selling environment,” said Ira Gleser, vice president of industry communications at Coca-Cola Co. “If you have people equipped to do that, you’re going to maximize the opportunity.”

As a long-time NACS exhibitor, Coca-Cola continues stepping up its onsite lead capture and qualifying process with the help of recent investments in interactive and e-literature technology. Once attendee badges are scanned, they are asked a series of qualifying questions and are given the option to use interactive touch screens positioned throughout the Coca-Cola booth. With this system, attendees can view rich content and video, select the information they are most interested in and have it immediately emailed to them, added Gleser.

“NACS will be the third large convention where we’ll be using the system,” Gleser said. “We’re working on really qualifying what [attendees] seem to be interested in and making sure they’re getting the info they’ve requested, which is helping us build a robust lead follow-up system on the backside.”

But if making that kind of investment isn’t within your current budget, renting one of the Show’s electronic lead retrieval systems, developing a solid lead collection and qualifying strategy and working it consistently throughout the event is a great start.

Unless the old goldfish bowl method is really helping you achieve your ultimate trade show ROI, consider leaving it behind in your office — with an actual fish in it!

To learn more about effective exhibiting, including lead retrieval best practices, check out the NACS Show webinar series: www.nacsonline.com/NACSShow/ForExhibitors/EEPW/Pages/Webinars.aspx 

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NACS Supplier Member Benefit: Supplier Committees

By Lisa Austin

As a NACS supplier member you have the opportunity to participate in the association’s Supplier Committees, and the rewards of your involvement are as diverse as the supplier members who comprise the groups.

Participation in these committees allows you to further familiarize yourself with the issues important to retailers and suppliers. You can serve as a voice for suppliers in the affairs of NACS and collaborate on the achievement of its strategic initiatives. In addition are the benefits of getting to know fellow supplier members and retailer liaisons. This is a social group united by a common goal: Succeed in a very challenging channel.

There are several supplier committees to choose from, including:

- **Membership**, which provides direction on outreach, recruitment and retention as well as communication to current and potential supplier members.
- **Exhibitor Advisory** supports and develops programs that address the exhibiting experience.
- **Manpower** executes the Round Up Volunteer program at the NACS Show. This is a great way to get involved outside of your booth.
- **NACSPAC** supports the retail committee in raising money for the political action committee through a live auction and individual fundraising.
- **Research** compiles and interprets industry metrics, establishes category definitions and supports research initiatives that benefit the channel.

The time investment is not overwhelming; as a committee member you commit to attending two two-day meetings each year as well as participating in conference call meetings as necessary throughout the year. You are required to cover your own expenses for meetings.

If you or someone from your company wants to get involved, go to the “Membership” tab at nacsonline.com and click on “Committee Involvement” under the “Supplier Membership” section. Complete the supplier Committee Interest Form and submit your application before November 18 for committee involvement in 2012.

And while a better understanding of the convenience channel is indeed rewarding, the true benefit is the camaraderie and friendships formed through the supplier committees. The value of that is priceless.

Lisa Austin is the vice president of sales-convenience for Oberto Brands.