



Preparing Your Booth Staff for Interacting With Visitors in a COVID Environment

By *Jefferson Davis, Competitive Edge*

As we prepare for the re-opening of live tradeshows, there is great anticipation about how the exhibiting environment will look and feel different, along with concerns about how each of us are supposed to function and navigate this new environment.

Because of the ongoing concerns about health and safety, it's critically important to understand that everyone you meet has been personally and deeply affected in ways that you may not be able to immediately recognize. One of the biggest keys to you and your visitor's comfort will be your ability to demonstrate high-awareness, empathy, and genuine concern for the thoughts and feelings that each person you interact with may be carrying.

Here are some practical ways to begin preparing yourself and your booth staff for re-entering the new exhibiting environment.

1. While planning your exhibit, consider having less booth staffers than usual and allowing more open space between staffers.
2. When selecting potential booth staffers, ask them to think about and communicate their fears and concerns about getting out and interacting with people during in a late pandemic stage. If there are any concerns or fears about being in the exhibiting environment that are unable to be resolved, it is best to let them choose to not attend the show.
3. Talk to the show organizer and make sure you are up to date on the latest health and safety mandates in force at the convention center and the city where the event is being held.
4. If masks are still required, be sure to bring an adequate supply for your booth staff and attendees who may not have one. Be sure your mask covers your nose and your mouth and do not lower or remove your mask when interacting with visitors. Because masks tend to get odorous, you may want to encourage staff to change masks more frequently.
5. Hold a mandatory staff meeting on the last day before the event opens to discuss how everyone is feeling both mentally and physically. Discuss your in-booth health and safety protocols in detail and make sure everyone understands and is comfortable working the exhibit.
6. If any of your staff appear to be under the weather, have a fever, or are coughing for any reason, you should keep them out of the booth until they are feeling better.
7. Encourage staff to not congregate together in the booth. A good strategy is asking them to create an imaginary box around themselves with 3 feet on each side of them.
8. Encourage your staff to be more passive on proactively approaching people near the booth or in the aisles.

9. When people enter your booth, do not immediately approach them, but pay close attention to their body language and wait for them to give you eye contact. The combination of body language and eye contact will send strong signals about the visitor's level of comfort about being approached.
10. When you do approach, do so gradually and stay 3 to 6 feet away from the visitor.
11. Do not attempt to shake their hand, unless they extend their hand first. If you are uncomfortable shaking hands, then maybe offer an elbow or toe tap as an alternative.
12. During the conversation, remind yourself to maintain your distance and resist the temptation to touch visitors.
13. If your exhibit has product demonstration areas that visitors touch, be sure to sanitize high touch surfaces after each interaction.
14. If at all possible, try to use a lead capture device that does not require you to touch the visitor's badge.

To be sure, exhibiting in this new environment is going to be very different than what we are all used to. By preparing your booth staff, you'll ensure a safe and comfortable experience for staff and attendees to interact.



Jefferson Davis, President of Competitive Edge is North America's leading exhibiting productivity expert. Since 1991, his results-focused, process-based approach to addressing critical exhibiting success factors has helped clients generate over \$800 million in combined exhibiting results. Jefferson provides highly-intensive exhibit consulting and training services guaranteed to deliver results.

For a no-obligation discovery meeting, [schedule a 30 minute meeting here](#).