

## Gift Show Guidance

**Make sure you attend the right one.** First, spend some time checking out the trade show's website. What companies are going to be there? Are any of them potential matches to your product needs? Cross-reference your list of needs with the list of attendees.

**Register in advance.** Shows have different policies and pricing structures; you may be able to save money by registering early. Some shows only want qualified buyers, media people, and experts. Others simply require that you register online. Do your homework to find out what's required to get in. If you call ahead of time, you may be able to schedule an appointment with a company that is attending the show.

**Stay at the hotel associated with the event.** It's usually more expensive, but most of the retailers and buyers will be staying there because it's convenient. And after the day's events, they'll all be meeting in the lounge for a cocktail.

**Make a plan.** The worst way to go to a trade show is unprepared. You need a goal and objectives! Arrive early and get your hands on a map and a directory. Map out which booths you want to hit and plan an order of importance, because trade shows are massive, and you can't afford to needlessly tire myself out. Start walking the floor as soon as possible. Once you've visited the companies on your list, feel free to walk the floor at your leisure.

**Dress the part.** People will take you more seriously if you dress appropriately. If the trade show is about floral equipment and giftware, you might not need a three-piece suit.

**Bring two pairs of comfortable shoes** and wear them on alternate days. Walking a trade show can be exhausting.

**Bring business cards** with you everywhere. You could meet an important contact anywhere. (lobby, at the bar, or elevator) You never know, so be prepared.

**Pick up a copy of every piece of literature** that is available.

**Avoid approaching booths when they are packed.** If you approach when it's busy, the chances of you getting in to the right person are slim. Plan on hitting most booths on the second day for that reason.

**Wait for salespeople to engage you.** Approaching a booth can be intimidating, because it feels a bit like you're walking into someone else's living room. What works well is simply observing and waiting for a salesperson to come to you.

**Always get a business card.** It's not enough to give someone your information. If you work a trade show hard, you could walk away with dozens of cards. That's why trade shows are powerful.

**Follow up.** Once you have someone's card, you should follow up. All of your efforts will have been for naught if you don't.