



OnBoard Sightseeing Tours

Top 4 Ways to Ensure a 20% Increase in Attendance Next Year

Our current and former sales and management team have attended over 50 trade shows. We operated a "Tour Desk" at the Gaylord National Resort & Conference Center in National Harbor, Maryland, for two years. Although we have never hosted a convention, we have seen just about every side of hundreds of them. The most successful convention planners we have gotten to know well have one thing in common: They employ strategic thinking to see over and beyond the success of this year's event to see that their most important strategic objective is to make sure everyone who attends this year comes back next year AND BRINGS THREE FRIENDS. To accomplish that, you have to have a two-pronged focus: Make sure this year's attendees have an awesome experience and make sure they tell everyone they know.

We have put together the five top ways convention planners can make sure more people come back next year. These tips come from our knowledge and experience in attending and exhibiting at conventions, as well as providing services to tens of thousands of convention attendees over the years. We provide this report free as a service to our convention planning partners in our commitment to help you achieve greater success in your entire enterprise. Naturally, we'd be happy to serve you and your clients along the way, too. Without further ado:

1) Focus on Facilitating Their Business



Far and away, the #1 thing you can do to make sure your attendees become evangelists is focus on making them money. That's 60% of why they are attending in the first place. (We'll talk about the other 40% later). This one is easy, but it takes pig-headed discipline and determination. You have to be vigilant. Do you facilitate meetings between buyers and sellers? If not, add that. Do you give them every opportunity to entertain, pitch to, and interact with their clients? If not, fix that. The best thing you can do is enhance your feedback loop. Send them a survey that solicits ways you can improve. Please, don't stop there: You need to make phone calls

to 10% or more of your attendees after the show and ask them for feedback. How can we make it easier for you to do business during the show? Our favorite suggestion came from someone who said, "we do more business at the evening dining events than any other part of the show." The punch line was, why don't we facilitate breakfast dining events and lunch dining events rather than offering a group meal. You can triple the business making opportunities for your attendees by making that one simple change.

2) You MUST Ask Them For Referrals



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Most of the people who attend the show have co-workers and clients who have never attended but who are strong candidates to come next year. Figure out a way to reach those people. Use Social Media sites like FaceBook, Twitter, and FourSquare to have your attendees announce that they are at the show so their network will see that they are there. Start a program where every attendee who recommends someone to come to next year's show gets entered in a drawing. Send out emails to all attendees asking them to add email addresses to your invite list for the next year. The best way to get referrals is also the easiest – ask for them.

3) Facilitate Their Follow Up

The best way to make your show more valuable to attendees is to help them follow up on the leads and potential business they found when they visited. 75% of trade show leads are never followed up on. There are many reasons why, but the most common are that salespeople are too busy “catching up” when they get home and the fact that the leads are assumed to be too tenuous. If you can help your attendees overcome these problems, they will get more out of the show, and they will be twice as likely to come back and bring colleagues next year. This is not an easy nut to crack, however. We have a few tips that can help. First, recommend a follow up service. There are a few out there, such as LeadOptimize.com. Secondly, research the topic online and compile the information that is out there about how to perfect follow up, and then teach it to your attendees by posting written materials on your website and by holding seminars during the show. If you want to get serious, set up a follow up system using social media communities. A great example would be to set up a BuddyPress website that would set up a FaceBook-like community just for show attendees. Or, you can set up different pages on FaceBook or your own website where attendees can network and communicate with each other. The more conversation you can start, the more likely the follow up will be effective.

4) Help Them Connect With the City

You know that the location of your convention impacts how many people want to attend. Cities like New York and Las Vegas draw more shows because people want to visit those cities. Orlando, Washington DC, and Chicago are similar. A significant part of the attendee's decision is the desire to visit that city when they are not working. The more you can facilitate a connection between your attendees and the city, the better impression they are going to have of your show. Attendees who had a great time seeing the city are twice as likely to promote their experience online to their networks on LinkedIn, FaceBook, Twitter, etc. Also, they are likely to post pictures and videos online, which is not as likely from the floor. Connecting your guests with the city is one of the best ways you can be certain to increase satisfaction and therefore attendance next year.

OnBoard Tours was founded in 2004, and has served nearly 1 million travelers to New York City, Washington DC, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Las Vegas. We have been the highest rated bus tour provider for three years running on TripAdvisor.com and Viator.com for NYC and DC. We have been successful because we create life-enriching experiences for our clients with a higher level of service. Find out more [About OnBoard Tours](#) here.

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