

# 8 Types Of Trade Show Attendees


and how to convert them

The sights and sounds that await the typical trade show attendee can be downright dizzying. Often, these gatherings of industry professionals more closely resemble the frenzy of a casino floor than the sobering informational seminars that non-convention attendees might envision.

The glittering booths, the smiling faces, and the thronging crowds, all combine to create a feast for the senses. If, however, you are fortunate enough to be a presenter at a trade show (especially if you have a

booth), you can expect to encounter a host of different personalities, each with their own unique quirks and characteristics. Understanding these personality types and having a plan to sell to them is the first critical step toward maximizing the ROI of your trade show investment. Without a plan, you may very well get lost in the shock and awe of the trade show carnival, and your company may never get to showcase its awesomeness for the masses.

The good news is that virtually every trade show attendee can be sorted into eight distinct types, and we have tips on how to deal with each of them.



When speaking with them at the show, take notes of the things you discussed, so that the voyeur realizes you were paying attention and genuinely want to earn his business.



# The Passive Voyeur

When speaking with them at the show, take notes of the things you discussed, so that the voyeur realizes you were paying attention and genuinely want to earn his business.

The Passive Voyeur wants you to take control, but he is not looking for lame sales pitches or kitschy lines. That means your focus should be on underscoring the value of your services and emphasizing how they can provide real results. The Passive Voyeur may not engage you directly, so when you're speaking with colleagues, coworkers, or booth visitors speak just loudly enough to catch the onlooker's ear.

Try using case studies with sales figures to illustrate your organization's worth. When this attendee does finally emerge from the shadows and reveal himself, he'll be looking for you to make the first move. Without coming across as confrontational, engage this attendee with questions so that he knows you earnestly care and are willing to meet his needs. Encourage him to offer insight into what he wants, and be sure to compliment him and his business profusely (though not annoyingly so).

After the show, be sure to follow up via email or phone call. It's OK to be politely persistent, since this personality type might not be as action-oriented as other, more intense attendees. Do not be overbearing, however. Passive Voyeurs are a skittish lot, so it's best to not scare them off. When speaking with them at the show, take notes of the things you discussed, so that the voyeur realizes you were paying attention and genuinely want to earn his business.

Be service-oriented and helpful so that your follow-up comes off as natural. The Passive Voyeur will welcome a pleasant new relationship, not a bold badgering for business.

but...when  
**HOW**  
really?



Overzealous Talker  
is allergic to letting  
other people speak, so  
you'll need to have a  
strategy to get a word  
in edgewise.

# The Overzealous Talker

When you have this yapper at your booth, listening skills are key. And—if you can write fast enough—taking notes is a major benefit. While the overzealous talker is most interested in being heard, when you do finally get the chance to speak, parroting back what she's just said is a great way to build rapport with her.

The caveat, of course, is getting the chance. Very often, the Overzealous Talker is allergic to letting other people speak, so you'll need to have a strategy to get a word in edgewise.

Perhaps the best way is to interject a quick compliment as she's taking a breath. At the very least, it'll endear you to her point of view and perhaps even give you an opening. After repeating what you've heard, the next step is to ask meaningful and substantive questions to demonstrate your listening skills and plant the seeds of desire. As she yammers, pepper the diatribe with head nods and words of affirmation, such as, "Mmm hmm," and "yes," and "I see."

Since you probably won't get much time to make a pitch or even familiarize the Overzealous Talker with your products or services, the trade show interaction is all about making her feel important and valued. She's not going to let you sell her, so why not mine her for information? Ask her what she thinks of the other presenters (you know she wants to tell you). Find out how she thinks your booth compares to the others. Agree with her as much as possible and be sure to thank her for the feedback.

Oh, and make sure someone else is working the booth with you before engaging with the Overzealous Talker, so valuable leads don't get away. After all, Overzealous Talkers are known for their ability to monopolize conversations. Don't lose business because of it! When following up with her, try to quote the Overzealous Talker verbatim. Not only will this give her the impression you were listening (which you were), it'll validate her opinion of you (which, if you were as quiet as possible, should be fairly high).



At first, your inclination will be to indulge the squatter in order to sell them, but that's a mistake.

# The Squatter

There's nothing wrong with getting on famously with a trade show attendee, but there comes a point where you may begin to realize your engaging and slightly unpredictable conversation is now meandering into weirdness. Why? Because there's nothing left to talk about, and your booth visitor ... just ... won't ... leave.

At first, your inclination will be to indulge the squatter in order to sell them, but that's a mistake. They're not there to be sold. They're there because they literally have nothing better to do. They'll take you down rabbit hole after rabbit hole, discussing everything from the space program to the Dow Jones Industrial Average. Fear not!

Once you've obtained his contact info (being careful to note his tendency to linger), you can do one of two things. You can either wait for another like-minded and equally ever-present person to come along so you can turn them on each other, or you can rave about another booth at the show and get rid of him by overselling the treasures to be had there.

As a last resort, you can excuse yourself to use the bathroom and wish him a great show. If he's still at your booth when you return, well ... at least you had a break from him for a few minutes.

The good news: when following up with the squatter after the show, you won't have to worry about an awkward opening. After all, you lived together for a little while, so you should be able to dive right into the business at hand.



Sitting is a great way to add a little space to what may very well be a very productive and engaging conversation.

# The Personal Space Invader

No one really knows what motivates a Personal Space Invader to invade your space. It's one of the great mysteries of the trade-show phenomena. Does she think you can't hear her? Is she just naturally aggressive? Or does she just not understand social boundaries?

Whatever the reason, you have to deal with a Personal Space Invader at just about every show.

First, try to put a laptop or tablet between you, to create a physical barrier. Sometimes, that's not enough, so offer her a seat. Sitting is a great way to add a little space to what may very well be a very productive and engaging conversation.

If she refuses, consider turning slightly to your side. Space invaders are tough to deal with, because they may not understand that they're making you uncomfortable. Also, personal space boundaries vary from culture to culture.

Be as patient and understanding as possible, and just know that she will eventually go away and you will once again have some space to yourself. Believe it or not, Personal Space Invaders are usually fantastic conversationalists, so follow up with this trade show attendee the way you normally would.

Just make sure that when she leaves, you immediately wash the spittle off your face and neck. Because yuck.





Unless it's nailed to the table or bolted to the floor, the collector will take it.

# The Collector

When you see one of these attendees approaching your table, lighten your available swag as quick as possible. Collectors are lightning fast, and they pilfer like pirates. Unless it's nailed to the table or bolted to the floor, the collector will take it. Ostensibly, he's at the show for the same reason you are – to get business—but you both know he's really there to jack your swag. So, be sure The Collector understands that BEFORE he can loot your booth, he must pony up his contact info and listen to your pitch.

If you generously give him gifts before the pitch and information exchange, he may (or may not) humor you for a few seconds, but in his mind he is already gone, ready to plunder the next booth over. He may not even hide the fact that he's eyeing your booth-neighbor's booty to see what else he can stuff into his swag bag.

For The Collector, swag should be the reward for actively listening to what you have to offer. If, however, your collector shows no interest at all in your products or services, one of the best ways to send him off into the wilderness is to express admiration for a sparkly free item at another booth.

Watch as he makes up some lame excuse (in fact, he may not even finish his sentence) and dash off to plunder the goods. No, it's not very neighborly, but hey—you're not running a charity.



You have to go through hell and back to get her attention, but when she does notice you ... it's like watching flower petals open to reveal a pearl.

# The Runway Model

She's out of your league and, she will make sure you know it! Runway Models are to trade shows what "whales" are to casinos. They're well groomed, impeccably dressed, and keenly aware of their elite status. Typically (though not always), the Runway Model represents one of the finest brands at the convention, and she wears the designation well. Like courting a super model, you have to go through hell and back to get her attention, but when she does notice you ... it's like watching flower petals open to reveal a pearl. But of course, she has to notice you first. Here are a few creative ways to make that happen:

**1. Get crazy.** That's right. Sometimes to get the pretty girl in the class to notice you, you have to do something a little bit wild. Wear a costume. Decorate with glitter. Shine bright lights. Do whatever you have to do to stand out from the crowd. Runway Models are attracted to bright, shiny things and fearless booth teams.

**2. Play games.** Trade shows are a lot like carnivals, so play carnival games. Let your visitors play some putt-putt with a company branded golf ball. Hold a raffle for a big-ticket item (like an iPad or TV). Play ring the company branded BPA-Free water bottle and give company branded seasonally appropriate goodie bags as prizes. Runway Models love winning stuff, and they love swag bags ... even if they are company branded.

**3. Be mysterious.** Runway Models love intrigue and mystery. If you're the trade show equivalent of the tall, dark, and handsome stranger, the Runway Model will not be able to resist you. Decorate your booth in a way that demands visitor interaction by adding velvet ropes or a gate. Hide your swag in a box (another great way to keep out collectors) and require visitors to solve a puzzle to gain access to the goodies.

The truth is, none of it may work. But you have to try. She could be the sale of a lifetime. It could be legendary. Of course, she could also walk away from you as you're in mid-sentence as the next booth suitor woos her away.



An illustration of a man with reddish-brown hair, wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt, and red tie. He is holding a small brown box in his right hand and pointing his left index finger upwards. Behind him are three light blue silhouettes of people. Above his head is a large blue digital timer showing '3'00'. The background features a light gray geometric pattern of hexagons and lines.

3'00

# The Quick Hitter

Let there be no doubt; this dude is a VP.

From the determined and focused look on his face to the roll of the eyes he shoots your way as you begin your spiel. Chances are he copiously studied the trade show map in his hotel room and carefully plotted the most efficient course.

He's at your booth, but on his terms. So cut the buildup and move right to the close. He's already worked his way through your sales funnel, and frankly, if he's shown up at your booth, he's looking for answers, not questions.

Like the runway model, the quick hitter needs to be dazzled. The difference is, you have only seconds to make your mark. If you don't close, make sure to get contact information—direct contact information, like a cell phone or personal email address.

The Quick Hitter probably has a gate keeper back at the office whose sole job is to run interference on annoying cold-callers and trade show exhibitors "just following up." Don't abuse the personal info, either. Just like the trade show, get in, get something scheduled and get away. Respect the Quick Hitter's time constraints, but be as firm as possible in nailing down a phone call or visit.

He's at your booth, but on his terms. So cut the buildup and move right to the close.



# The One-Night Stand

She was awesome.  
There was laughter.  
There were tears.

You bonded over best practices, shared a passion for emerging trends, and collectively cursed the unfair regulations strangling your industry.  
It was amazing.

The best part? She was terribly interested in what you had to offer, and she may have even agreed to make a purchase when you both can “get out of here.” You have some drinks in the hotel lounge, solve the problems of the world, and vow to meet up in the morning for coffee. But alas, when you go to find her, she’s gone like the morning mist. You try to call, but it goes straight to her voicemail—which is, of course, full. Oh, she was good.

If you managed get any info at all during your heady encounter with her, maybe you landed a business card or learned the name of her company. Since you’ll probably never see her again, try to make contact with her boss or one of her colleagues.

And if that doesn’t work? Well, to borrow a line from Bogart, “We’ll always have Paris.”

Since you’ll probably never see her again, try to make contact with her boss or one of her colleagues.



| We hope to  
see you on  
the road...



Search Marketing | Social Media | Creative | Analytics

[www.webtalentmarketing.com](http://www.webtalentmarketing.com)

Toll-Free: 800-405-2947