

# Three Dog Logistics

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**Article Title:** Benefits of Attending Industry Conferences - A Checklist for Success

As we prepare to attend the 11th Annual Bridge Conference on Integrated Marketing and Fundraising, it strikes me that conferences are a great topic for the 3 Dog community. In the direct marketing world, we generally attempt to reach audiences via non-verbal communication methods. These may include direct mail, parcels, online marketing, and many others. Conferences are the exact opposite of this norm, we actually get to meet and talk with people from our industry who are there to learn and grow. Sounds like the perfect target market for any direct mail campaign, right? Most folks assume the only reason to attend a conference is to generate new business, while this is an EXCELLENT reason there are lots of other benefits to consider. With advance planning and targeted goals any company can make a big splash at a conference and deliver exceptional ROI for your organization.

Let's talk about verbal vs. nonverbal communication for a second. One of the most frequently quoted statistics on nonverbal communication is that 93% of all daily communication is nonverbal. Dr. Albert Mehrabian, author of Silent Messages, conducted many studies on nonverbal communication and found that 7% of messages are conveyed through words, 38% through vocal elements (tone, inflection, etc), and 55% through nonverbal elements (facial expressions, gestures, posture, etc). Of course, this statistic can flex depending on the situation, but it's generally accepted that between 60-90% of communication is nonverbal. Luckily, conferences are designed to be huge verbal communication-a-thons!

There are two ways to participate in a conference, either as an attendee or as an exhibitor. Attendees are there to learn, network, and meet with exhibitors. Exhibitors are there to network, showcase their products, and generate new prospects. In many cases, exhibitors are also allowed to attend education sessions. Either way attending a conference delivers important benefits such as:

- Networking with like-minded people in your industry
- Meet experts and influencers face-to-face (F2F)
- Learn about new tools, techniques, and ideas
- Generate prospective new customers and partners
- Solicit F2F feedback from industry users to develop new products/services
- Take the pulse of your industry - what's hot, new, and future trends

Sound good? There are four important factors to consider before deciding to participate in an industry event. Planning and preparation are key to a successful conference experience. Follow our checklist and you'll be an expert in no time!

## **Checklist for Successful Face-to-Face Conference Engagements**

### **1. Plan, Plan, and Plan Some More**

- Start early! There are often early bird discounts that can save you lots of money as either an attendee or exhibitor. Early action can add up to significant savings.
- Select an event that's relevant to your company. Will attendees be your target market, how many will be attending, and who are the other exhibitors?
- How far are you willing to travel and devote to the event? Sometime local events within driving distance are an easier decision. Depending on where you live there can be many excellent local options.
- Determine your budget not just to attend the event, but exhibit set-up, marketing collateral, giveaways, staffing, travel, etc. Be sure to allow for things to go wrong and add "recovery plan" money as a budget line item.

### **2. Set Clear Goals for the Conference**

- Be concise about what you're trying to achieve at the conference; tailor your strategy to meet those goals. Just showing up and winging it is a recipe for disaster.
- If your goals focus around new business acquisition spend some time deciding what your organization's unique sales message will be. Make sure that message is reflected in your booth and all event materials.
- Be creative! Create unique activities or engagement strategies so attendees want to stop by your booth and learn more. These can include contests, giveaways, surveys, games, etc. The more you stand out the better!
- Get started ordering all materials and specialty items way in advance. The last thing you want is order delivery disasters right before the event.
- Reach out to your contacts and let them know to stop by your booth. For existing clients it's an excellent opportunity to invite them for lunch/dinner to get F2F feedback and ideas.
- Develop a strategy to collect booth guest contact information for follow-up after the conference. The event may have a lead generation package available for exhibitors, be sure to ask.

### **3. Complete Timely After-Conference Follow-Up**

- Send a thank you email to booth visitors as soon as humanly possible.
- If you had booth visitor discussions around specific requests get that information to the prospect within a week of the event. Once back in the day-to-day bustle requests will disappear from the attendees' memory, be sure to keep it top of mind.

- Conduct a post-mortem meeting with your conference staff to record what worked well and what you would change the next time around.
- Pick a date to decide if ROI dictates the company should participate again the following year. Depending on your sales cycle, it may take up to six months or more to determine lead conversion rates from the event.

Ready to give conferences a whirl? At Three Dog Logistics, our consultants will help develop a plan that delivers your event freight at the lowest cost and fastest delivery speed possible. Remember, we take the bite out of postage and freight. Visit [www.threedoglogistics.com](http://www.threedoglogistics.com) or call 410-284-5494 extension 340 to schedule a complimentary consultation today.