

# GrayMatterz

THE ZIMMERMAN GROUP, INC.

*Marketing/Consulting*

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### POWERFUL OPPORTUNITY

In the movie, *Dead Poets Society*, Robin Williams' character challenges his students to follow the words of Henry David Thoreau and "suck out all the marrow of life." And while going to trade shows might not be poetic, it can be a strong life force in this tough business environment.

So what's the secret to wringing the most from your trade shows — especially in the midst of frequent budget cuts? Thinking beyond the obvious. And using all the tools you can for an *integrated* attack. Because in this business climate, you can't expect to surpass the competition with cash alone.

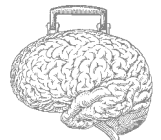
Recently, we helped two clients prepare for dramatically different trade shows. Client A sells services to pharmaceutical companies. Their trade show hosts about 30 booths. Client B manufactures and sells products to the telecomm industry. Their trade show boasts closer to 1,000 booths.

### INTEGRATED ATTACK

In both cases, we used a carefully orchestrated combination of such traditional vehicles as media relations, direct mail, advertising in trade journals and show programs, as well as development of coordinated marketing vehicles. These vehicles included sales literature, booth graphics, giveaways, and so forth.

But we also asked ourselves, how are Client A's needs unique? Client B's needs? One obvious difference: the imperative for visual impact.

We knew that in a room of only 30 booths, Client A would be seen — in fact, every booth there would be seen. Of course we designed a beautiful booth to help brand the organization. And we also sent a dimensional mailing — a high impact poster in a tube — to the attendee list. Excited recipients have been buzzing about this ever since.



*Brains for hire.*

But this approach would not have been enough for Client B. For them, we had to reach out harder to grab the attention of attendees who were actually on the show floor. Even though our pre-show mailer was bold and different, we needed to have a greater presence at the show itself. So we designed a visually arresting 18-foot x 14-foot banner to hang in the middle of the hall.

## **BEYOND MATERIALS**

We recommend that our clients think bigger than just development of show materials. Years ago, we heard nightmare stories about exhausted sales reps who returned from major shows and plunged immediately into piles of waiting work. Then, when the next trade show season rolled around, they re-opened their booth crates and discovered that the "hot" leads they'd earned a year ago were cold and useless.

Since then, we've worked hard to help our clients with two additional functions that are critical: personnel training and trade show follow-up.

## **PERSONNEL TRAINING**

When appropriate, we help personnel who are new to boothmanship prepare for this different role, so that they learn:

- Which questions to ask to get the most from prospects,
- How to deal with the "wave" effect — that is, when seminar doors open and hordes spill out and step up to your booth,
- What to do when competitors or spouses try to snag your best giveaways,
- How to complete a solid leads form, and
- Why it's important to bring a spare pair of shoes!

We even go so far as to include role-playing in our support services. For instance, we craft questions and pose them to booth staffers before the show, providing them with the opportunity to verbalize answers to the tough questions — before the morning of the first exhibit day.

## **TRADE SHOW FOLLOW-UP**

But we don't stop there. We help prepare a plan for leads follow-up. Sometimes this includes simple scheduling. Sometimes it includes developing new marketing materials. Our goal, in all cases, is to (with apologies to Thoreau) help our clients "live deep and suck out all the marrow of . . ." — well, of their trade shows.