

EXHIBITING TRADE TIPS

The 10 Best Questions to Ask Potential Customers

Asking good questions is about building relationships. It's about helping prospects become clients by helping them make more informed decisions. And it's about doing your homework before selling at an Clean Gulf event.

Your own variations of the following 10 questions may provide you with the best results.

1. ***Tell me about your business.*** This broad question brings to the surface facts that are of the greatest importance to your potential customer.
2. ***What are your responsibilities?*** Most people never ask the question because they make assumptions – which may be incorrect – based on what they know about certain jobs.
3. ***What are the biggest challenges you face in expanding your business?*** As a professional salesperson, your job is to identify specific needs and challenges.
4. ***What are your priorities?*** This question will reveal whether your potential client has established priorities and will help you tailor your presentation to match their goals.
5. ***Ask a relationship question.*** Ask any question that advances the relationship to a higher level – family, hobbies, etc.
6. ***What do you like most about the interaction with vendors at shows in which you currently participate?*** It doesn't matter whether you can deliver the same attributes, but you must know what they are before you begin your sales presentation.
7. ***If you could change anything about the vendors you currently work with, what would you change?*** What you're searching for is just that one piece of dissatisfaction. Once identified, you have a starting point on which to build your presentation.
8. ***What are your criteria for making a decision?*** How can you make an intelligent sales presentation without knowing what the decision is going to be based on?
9. ***Describe your decision-making process.*** What steps do you go through? Is the decision made informally or through a very involved committee process?
10. ***What are your expectations for working with a new vendor?*** If you want to build a long-term relationship, ask this question.

Some commonly misunderstood definitions follow and more tips:

What is MATERIAL HANDLING?

Material Handling, also known as "drayage", is the process which occurs when union labor (usually Teamster), under the supervision of the General Contractor (GC), takes possession of your shipment as it unloads at the advance warehouse or unloads it at show site at the loading dock during move-in; delivers and stages it around your booth space (usually with a forklift); removes the crates, pallets, and cartons marked with "EMPTY" labels after your set-up is complete before the show; returns the empties at show close; and delivers your show freight to your transportation carrier when they arrive at the dock for outbound loading.

How am I charged for Material Handling?

Material handling service is charged by the hundredweight (or hundred pounds of weight), abbreviated as CWT (C = the Roman numeral for 100) based on weight of your freight per the certified weight slip presented by the transportation carrier or weighed by the General Contractor on-site. Actual shipping weights are rounded up to the next hundred pounds, so 415 pounds becomes 5 CWT. Most GC's charge a 200-300 pound minimum for inbound shipments so consolidate your shipments for cost savings to meet the minimum weight. Occasionally a special small package rate may be offered for packages weighing less than 30 pounds, such as small-package carriers' envelopes, pouches and small boxes.

Is the handling of all types of freight charged the same per CWT?

No, there are different rates if you:

- ship to the advance warehouse vs. direct to show site;
- ship via common carrier vs. specialized carrier (van line, airfreight, company truck or privately-operated vehicle, known as POV); or
- if your shipment is crated, mixed (some crated, some pad-wrapped) or uncrated (pad-wrapped or loose pieces).

Rates for material handling are quoted in the Exhibitor Services Manual.

The rationale for different material handling rates is based on the number of times the freight is handled, difficulty of handling the freight (such as unloading stacked, pad-wrapped or loose items), having to move one exhibitor's freight to access another's freight further to the front of the trailer, the equipment and labor time it takes to unload, the type of truck or trailer they will be unloading and the fragility of freight requiring special handling.

You may also be charged additional surcharges if your freight reaches the advance warehouse after their published deadline date and time for accepting show freight, unloading after 4:30 p.m. but before 7:30 a.m. (in most cities), or missing your on-site targeted inbound freight deadline as specified in the Exhibitor Services Manual.

What is the Bill of Lading?

The Bill of Lading (B/L), also known as a Uniform Material Handling Form, is the document that establishes the terms of a contract between a shipper and a transportation company under which freight is to be moved between specified points for a specified charge. It serves as a document of title, a contract of carriage, and a receipt of goods.

The inbound B/L is usually prepared by the shipper (an exhibit manager, exhibit house or transportation agent) on forms issued by the carrier. The General Contractor will give you an outbound Bill of Lading for each separate shipment you need to ship out of your exhibit, after you settle your on-site show invoice.

Failure by the exhibitor to turn in a completed, signed Bill of Lading at the end of teardown to the GC's freight desk or failure of your chosen carrier to pick up your freight in the GC's published timeframe will result in your freight being "forced" (also known as "freight recovery") to the GC's preferred carrier. Depending on which option you selected when completing your B/L, your freight will either be moved locally off the show floor and held in the GC's local warehouse until you have the freight picked up and pay their local moving charges, or shipped via the GC's preferred carrier at whatever rate that carrier wishes to charge.

Never leave your Bill of Lading in your exhibit with your freight. The outbound B/L must be turned in to the freight desk in the GC's service desk area, checked by their personnel for completeness and signed off with the time and date of receipt noted, and you should receive and retain a copy of the Bill for your records before you or your staff leave the show floor.

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