

Get The Most From Your Trade Show Visit



By Jim Lauria

Trade shows are a rich hunting ground for insight and content for your marketing program, putting contacts, context and content in one place.

Let's look at this year's American Water Works Association Annual Convention and Exposition (ACE) in Philadelphia, which runs from June 11-14. This year's theme is "Uniting the World of Water"—a great reminder to pull together a world of information at the show.

Open With The Opening Session

Plenary sessions are a great way to get a state-of-the-industry overview, spot trends, gather some statistics, and hear from thought leaders. This year's opening session, Legends of the Water Industry, should set a high bar. Panels like the Water Utilities Issues Forum or Emerging Public Health Issues in Water bring together the sort of water experts I call "hydro-luminaries," who tend to be great sources of insight.

These large sessions also tend to include award presentations. One year, a utility using my company's technology won Plant of the Year. That turned into the basis of many a good story for the press and our sales team!

Cruise the Exhibit Hall

Of course, this is what most people do at a trade show—in fact, it's ALL many people do. But before you bulk up your pen collection and look around for someone to have lunch with, stop by the poster session to see the latest science. Check out the bookstore at the AWWA Pavilion and consider the hot topics writers have focused on. (After all, they're all about content!)

Also, be sure to visit trade publications' booths to check in with the editors and publishers. Those contacts are solid gold for content marketers, and you can get a great idea of what sorts of material they're looking for if you take time to listen to what they're up to.

Now it's time to check out the industry exhibits. Check out your competition. Talk to prospects—utilities, specifying engineers, integrators and manufacturers reps. Take a look at the information they are choosing to display, distribute or collect. (That should give you some ideas of the kind of content you want in next year's marketing plan.)

Get Out

Many shows include optional facility tours. Sign up. Go see what's happening. If nothing else, you could meet an invaluable contact on the bus.

By the time you head home from ACE, you should have a stack of business cards from new contacts, pages of notes and statistics, ideas for new content to share...and a few aces up your sleeve.

Listen to Jim share more on working tradeshows for marketing content on Monday, June 12, when ACE (and Jim) come to Water Online's hometown, Philadelphia!

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