

Making the Most of a Trade Show Visit

The International Manufacturing Technology Show (IMTS) 2018 is set to take over Chicago's McCormick Place from Sept. 10-15. The pure numbers of the show are pretty staggering, with more than 115,000 people expected to attend from more than 110 countries and more than 2,000 exhibitors with 1.37 million square feet of exhibit space divided into 10 pavilions, four co-located shows and more than 60 conference sessions.

So, like any big task, the secret to success at IMTS, or at any trade show, is to create a number of smaller goals and plan, plan, plan, all while leaving enough wiggle room for last-minute opportunities or challenges.

Here are some basic guidelines for planning to make the most of any trade show visit.

Pre-Show

- **Book Early** – Make sure to take advantage of any early bird specials for registration, not only to save money, but also so vendors have an idea of how many people are attending. It's also best to book travel, transport and hotel as soon as possible.
- **Stay in the Show Hotel** – Sure, it may be more expensive, but it will be close to the show, probably have free transportation opportunities and offer lots of networking possibilities.
- **Have a Plan** – Make a list of goals and company needs. This way it is easier to know what to accomplish and determine whether a show was a success.
- **Make a Map** – Use the show planner or a printed map to physically see the locations of the booths, which will help immensely when it comes to scheduling.



- **Look for Opportunity** – Avoid visiting the same vendors. Their competitors will be there as well, as will potential customers.
- **Have a List** – Is it a selling show? Then make sure to know the company's inventory and budget. This way, it is easy to take advantage of any show specials and ordering opportunities.
- **Set Up Appointments Before You Leave** – Call ahead and set up a meeting time. A few of these will not only allow visitors to ensure they get to see the right people, but act as a framework around which to build the rest of an itinerary.
- **Bring Someone** – Bring someone else not just to "divide and conquer" a larger show, but also to bounce ideas off of and serve as a mentoring opportunity.

- **Travel Light** – When packing, bring only the essentials. Visitors will be inside the majority of the time, so dressing for the weather can be minimal, and it is recommended to leave open space for the trinkets and other items. Make sure to bring at least two pair of shoes.

At the Show

- **Regroup** – As soon as possible, get the latest show literature and check for late additions, cancellations and schedule changes that may affect the plan and adjust accordingly.
- **Business Cards** – Make sure to get and give as many business cards as possible. If possible, use the cards to take notes about the booth, the discussion and other pertinent points. This way, there will be a frame of reference later, when the show has become a blur.

Continues on page 20

Continued from page 17

Seduction or Intention: Choosing Your Time Wisely at IMTS

listen to our people's stories and start the conversation with our talent by asking them, "What do you appreciate most about ...?" "What do you find most valuable ...?" and "What is our most important...?" The discovery stage is the place for not only facts, but feelings as well. That's part of the reason it is called appreciative. Listen to the stories of your performers. That is part of appreciation as well.

Dream is not about fantasies and umbrella drinks. This stage is about thoughtfully considering what might be, if we only dared. Starting with our positives, how can we craft our processes into an even more capable and desirable state? Nobody dreams with a list, but in appreciative inquiry, we will start with our list of positives to come up with a list that helps us create a positive message about the future we are going to create. Again, huddle with the team to collect some ideas for positive change.

Design. Your ISO certificate may not include design scope for manufacturing, but as a key member of the shop's team, it is important to have design scope to intentionally declare what the desired future state for your shop is to be. What does that future state require? I'll bet that systems, processes and strategies are essential to creating that future state. All of these are driven by the team. Select each of these based on your strengths. At IMTS, now is the time to validate what those systems, processes and strategies can deliver, based on one-on-one conversations with the experts there to communicate their products' features and

advantages. Now is the time to invest your attention on relevant potential technologies that can further enhance your shop's already demonstrated capabilities. Let the other shops watch the robot lift the car.

Deliver. The first four Ds are important, but as managers in manufacturing, we understand the critical nature of being able to deliver. No one pays for dreams in manufacturing. Delivery is where we make our revenue. So, let's deliver for ourselves. Focusing on that dream, "Parts go from production to packaging untouched by human hand... We now need to make the list of changes to be accomplished to move our organization to the desired future state." Some shops already have mature systems for managing and delivering change. In that case, just drop in the organization's proven change management process for "Design and Deliver."

IMTS is going to be awesome again this year. The distractions the marketers will deploy to lure us to spend time in their booths is certain to be even more incredible than the last time. But this time, we know the value of our time, based on the lengthening lead times at our shop. This just might be the year to skip the distractions and dream. Dream of a future where our processes are even more stable, our capabilities more defined and differentiated, and our customers find even more reasons to appreciate us being the shop they can count on in their supply chain.

2 GREAT BLOGS!

YOURCAREERFACTS.COM
PMPASPEAKINGOFFPRECISION.COM

Continued from page 19

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- **Ship It** – Always ask if any literature or other materials can be shipped. This way, you lighten the load while also getting an early gauge on a company's interest and follow-through.
- **Take Breaks** – Find a quiet spot every now and again to regroup, reorganize and refresh.
- **Leave Early** – It sounds counter-intuitive, but it makes it possible to avoid lines for transport, get some time in the hotel room to organize your thoughts and catch up on issues

at home. It also leaves visitors refreshed for after-hours networking opportunities.

- **The Last Day** – Usually the last day of the show is the "student day," with a dwindling crowd and vendors mostly looking to break down their booth. This can be the perfect time for one-on-one meetings.

After the Show

- **Grade Yourself** – Remember that plan you made months ago? Go back to it and see what was

accomplished, what was missed and put specific cards and literature with the right opportunities for follow through.

- **Grade the Show** – Try to put a value to the meetings, education and networking opportunities. Add in the discounts on anything actually purchased, and see if the show "paid for itself," then pre-book the next one.