

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 Electric Power 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 Services Contractor (GSC), takes possession of your shipment as it unloads at the advance warehouse or unloads it at show site at the loading dock during exhibitor freight 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 Services Contractor on-site. Actual shipping weights are rounded up to the next hundred pounds, so 415 pounds becomes 5 CWT. Most GSC'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) 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. A B/L for an airfreight company is known as an airbill.

The inbound B/L is usually prepared by the shipper (an exhibit manager, exhibit house or transportation agent) on forms issued by the carrier. An outbound Bill of Lading also be provided by the carrier to attach to the General Service Contractor's Uniform Material Handling Agreement 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 and the matching Uniform Material Handling Agreement at the end of teardown to the GSC's service or freight desk or failure of your chosen carrier to pick up your freight in the GSC's published timeframe will result in your freight being "forced" (also known as "freight recovery") onto the GSC's preferred carrier. Depending on which option you selected when completing your Uniform Material Handling Form, your freight will either be moved off the show floor and held in the GSC's local warehouse until you have the freight picked up and pay their local moving and storage charges, or shipped via the GSC's preferred carrier at whatever rate that carrier wishes to charge.

Never leave your Bill of Lading and Uniform Material Handling Agreement in your exhibit with your freight. These two pieces of paperwork must be turned in to the freight desk in the GSC's service desk area, checked by their personnel for completeness and signed off with the time and date of receipt noted on their Material Handling Agreement, and you should receive and retain a copy of each for your records before you or your staff leave the show floor.

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