

Last year corporate exhibitors noticed how well prepared many of the MBE participants were for The Marketplace. The effective use of Time Organizers and MBE Briefs by certified suppliers was highlighted as a sign of professionalism.

This preparation guide will assist your company in maximizing its effectiveness at The Marketplace. Even if you are an “old hand” at The Marketplace, you will find ideas on how to make this year your company’s best ever.

- Show how professional you are by preparing for The Marketplace
- Make sure you aren’t the exception to the rule.
- You might be surprised by the number of people who notice!

The Marketplace is a unique opportunity! MAKE IT HAPPEN! BE PREPARED!

## 1. DO YOU KNOW WHY YOU ARE GOING?

Before you can sell effectively, you must know whom you want to sell to and why. You need a strategy that allows you to identify market segments, target potential customers and integrate the trade show with your other marketing efforts – direct mail, telemarketing and public relations.

## 2. DO YOU HAVE SPECIFIC AND REALISTIC OBJECTIVES?

Setting the company objectives for a trade show motivates employees. It gives them a target to reach. This is a prime time to examine the needs, strengths, and weaknesses of your company so the conference can improve your position in the marketplace. A sales dollar objective may not be realistic for EXPO, but an information objective can be specific and easily attainable.

### **EXAMPLE OBJECTIVES:**

1. Qualify a list of potential customers (e.g. determine who has the buying power).
2. Establish contact with key purchasing people of six companies you are not currently calling on or marketing to.
3. Determine if current or potential business opportunities exist, and learn how these companies do business.

Be sure to write down and organize the information you gather at the conference for future reference.

### **IDENTIFY MARKET SEGMENTS**

Use The Marketplace to investigate new markets in the Houston economy. There are many industries represented at the conference and it is broken down into villages. Carve new market niches for your products or services.

### **TARGET POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS**

Identify new contacts, locally and nationally. Pick up a list of buyers, if available. If not, ask for the key purchasing names in your business line. If the person in the booth cannot give you that information, find out who can.

### 3. TIME ORGANIZATION

The Marketplace program gives specific information on which companies will exhibit, who will represent them and at what times and what products and/or services they may be seeking. If you make full use of this information, you will have a tremendous strategic and planning advantage. To accomplish this, use the enclosed Marketplace Time Organizer.

#### Marketplace TIME ORGANIZER

Included in each registration package is the Marketplace Time Organizer that divides the day into fifteen-minute segments. The time available at the conference for sales calls will be limited. Scheduling and organization are vital. The following might help:

1. Photocopy a Time Organizer for each of your company representatives who will attend the conference.
2. Meet with your salespeople and help them prepare for the conference. Attend the Pre-Marketplace workshops to get the latest trends and insight from exhibitors.
3. Develop a master list of companies you want to visit. The list should include the company name, booth number, commodity, and when and appropriate contact person will be at the booth.
4. Divide the companies on your master list among your sales people to avoid scheduling overlaps and conflicts. This will ensure that you cover as much ground as possible. Without a planned schedule, you risk missing the people you need to see, many of whom will be at their booths for only a short time.
5. Adhere to your schedule. Stay on time as much as possible.
6. Prioritize in advance your target list of companies. Highlighting the company name and booth number is a good visual reminder. This will prompt your people to move for one booth to another; a long wait for a low priority company could mean missing a high priority account.
7. Attach your Marketplace Time Organizer to a clipboard with pen and paper. Write down the contact's name in the space provided on the Time Organizer to enable a follow-up letter or a personal sales call after the conference. Sales follow-up is the mark of a professional organization. Don't let a hot lead cool down from lack of attention.

#### HOW TO REACH YOUR OBJECTIVE AT THE MARKETPLACE

1. It is easy and a common practice to waste meeting time on pleasantries, not business. The Rigel Awards luncheon provides for this type of interaction. Booth time is business time and should be used as such.
2. Be organized. Know whom you are going to contact, where and when. Know what questions you will ask to obtain the information you need.

4. Smile! Relax and enjoy yourself.
5. A list of questions that back up your conference objective will ensure that you achieve your goal.

Sample Questions:

- a. Get the name and title of the person you are speaking with at the booth. Are you directly involved in the purchasing of (commodity/service)?
- b. Do you have a list of the company's purchasing staff?  
Do you have a list of personnel responsible for the purchasing of services?
- c. Are there any other offices that have purchasing responsibility for this product or service?
- d. Have you encouraged your major contractors to use MBEs? If so, whom would you recommend that I contact?
- e. I (name of company) open at this time to new vendors/suppliers?
- f. Would I be welcome to call you for an appointment after the conference to discuss possible business avenues?
- g. If "No", do you have any idea when new suppliers will be considered and how I may have the opportunity to become a new vendor when an opening arises?

## THE MARKETPLACE SUPPLIER BRIEF

This is included in the pre-registration package.

Purpose:

1. To provide the corporations basic data on MBE companies. To act as an extended business card of sorts – a business tool to augment the sales call made at the Marketplace.
2. These forms may be taken from the conference to the corporate office to be used for future reference as a sourcing aid for new suppliers.
3. To maximize MBE exposure at the conference, time limitations may preclude you from personally visiting each company. These forms may be left at the corporate booths for their review after EXPO.
4. These briefs are not meant to take the place of person-to-person meetings. We all know that it takes more than a piece of paper to make a sale. The MBE Capability Briefs will remind the corporate contacts who they met at EXPO and serve as the tickler for future suppliers.
5. TYPE your MBE Brief, and photocopy as many as you feel you will need for the conference. Attach a business card.

Last year many corporate representatives commented that they found these MBE Briefs to be a useful post-EXPO reference. Don't leave the office without them!

## **ARE YOU ADEQUATELY PREPARED?**

LET'S REVIEW THE LIST SO FAR:

- 1- The Marketplace Program & Schedule
- 2- The Marketplace Time Organizer complete with priorities highlighted
- 3- Clipboard, pen, paper, watch
- 4- Established trade show objective and targets
- 5- List of questions to gather the information you need
- 6- Sufficient copies of The Marketplace MBE Brief
- 7- Plenty of business cards and company brochures

## **WORK FOR EXPO AND EXPO WILL WORK FOR YOU**

## The Marketplace Time Organizer

TIME	BOOTH#	COMPANY NAME	COMMODITY OR SERVICE	CONTACT PERSON	CONTACT MADE
8:30	=====BUSINESS STARTS RIGHERT HERE, RIGHT NOW!=====				
8:45					
9:00					
9:15					
9:30					
9:45					
10:00					
10:15					
10:30					
10:45					
11:00					
11:15					
11:30	=====THE RIGEL AWARDS=====				
2:00					
2:15					
2:30					
2:45					
3:00					
3:15					
3:30					
3:45					