

STRATEGIC TRADE SHOW ENGAGEMENT



camoin
associates

A STEP-BY-STEP
GUIDE FOR
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
ORGANIZATIONS

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Camoin Associates is the nation's only full-service economic development and lead generation consulting firm. Since 1999, we have helped communities and organizations of all sizes achieve sustainable and equitable growth through expert analysis, effective strategies, and intentional connections. Think of us as your economic development navigator!

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INTRODUCTION

Trade shows are highly effective tools for economic development organizations (EDOs), providing critical opportunities for direct interactions with key decision-makers, site selectors, and influential industry leaders.

Effective trade show participation demands more than just attendance—it requires strategic planning, targeted execution, and diligent follow-up. In fact, according to [Trade Show Labs](#), nearly 50% of trade show attendees are senior executives, and 82% have purchasing or decision-making authority, making these events ideal for targeting those with the power to move investment forward.

When approached strategically, a single trade show can generate dozens of qualified leads and lay the foundation for transformational business recruitment wins.

This white paper offers a detailed four-step guide to effective trade show engagement, drawn from Camoin Associates' extensive trade show experience. Its goal is to help EDOs maximize the return on investment (ROI) from every event they attend.

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KEY OBJECTIVES

FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROSPECT GENERATION

EDOs attending trade shows must align their activities with clear, measurable objectives to maximize their ROI.

These objectives include:



Identifying Prospects: Engaging companies within priority industries that are planning relocations, expansions, or investments.



Building Awareness: Elevating the region's profile among site selectors, executives, and stakeholders.



Generating Leads: Securing meaningful connections that align with the organization's long-term economic goals.



Demonstrating Value: Positioning the community as a solution for the operational challenges and growth needs of targeted businesses.

By integrating a data-driven appointment scheduling strategy, EDOs can ensure their participation at trade shows yields high-value outcomes, paving the way for increased investment, economic growth, and job creation.



STEP 1: PRE-EVENT PREPARATION

Effective preparation is the cornerstone of successful trade show engagement.



IDENTIFY TARGET INDUSTRIES

Begin by analyzing your regional economic strengths, assets, and existing industry clusters. Engage stakeholders to establish clear objectives that are aligned with broader economic development goals.

Prioritize sectors with high growth potential and existing competitive advantages, such as Aerospace, Advanced Manufacturing, Life Sciences, Technology, and Retail.

Consider factors such as workforce skills, available infrastructure, logistics networks, and incentive programs to accurately match your community's strengths with potential industries.



IDENTIFY PROSPECTS

Employ advanced research tools to create a targeted and informed list of prospects who will attend the trade show.

Tools like [ProspectEngage™](#) offer comprehensive industry and market intelligence, [LinkedIn Sales Navigator](#) provides detailed insights into professional networks and company representatives, and event-specific platforms can pinpoint attending decision-makers.

Carefully evaluate each prospect's current business needs, potential expansion or relocation plans, and alignment with your region's economic offerings to create a prioritized list of high-value targets.



HOLD AN INTERNAL PREP MEETING

It is important to make sure all attendees understand the strategy, goals, and their roles before the trade show. Host a prep meeting with all team members attending the event to:

- Review target companies and scheduled meetings
- Assign lead responsibilities for key appointments
- Confirm booth staffing schedule and roles
- Review messaging, talking points, and collateral materials

This ensures that everyone is on the same page and that opportunities are not missed due to unclear responsibilities or inconsistent messaging.



CONDUCT PERSONALIZED OUTREACH

Proactively reach out to identified prospects prior to the event with personalized communications. Develop customized email campaigns, phone scripts, and direct messages highlighting how your region meets their unique strategic needs or growth challenges.

Clearly articulate the benefits of scheduling a meeting at the event to discuss opportunities in more detail. Early scheduling of meetings ensures optimal use of limited time at the trade show, allowing for meaningful, focused discussions.

Start this outreach at least 6-8 weeks before the event. Response rates drop significantly after this window.

Use this three-step outreach process:

- 1 Email prospects** with personalized messaging about why your region is a good fit and that you would love to talk with them more about it at the trade show.
- 2 Call and leave voicemails for prospects** referencing the email you sent and asking to book a meeting at the trade show.
- 3** If prospects use LinkedIn, **send them LinkedIn InMail messages** and provide them with an easy way to schedule a meeting with you online (e.g., Calendly).



Your goal should be to pre-book 10-15 meetings, which is a good benchmark for EDOs to generate the best ROI. These scheduled meetings make limited booth time more productive and allow for more focused, high-value discussions.

STEP 2: ON-SITE EXECUTION

Creating a compelling presence at the event is vital for meaningful interactions.



BOOTH DESIGN AND MESSAGING

Design your booth to immediately attract attention and effectively communicate your region's unique strengths.

Incorporate professional, visually compelling graphics, interactive demonstrations showcasing key regional assets (such as digital workforce analytics tools or infrastructure mapping), and tailored collateral emphasizing local advantages like infrastructure, skilled workforce, logistics capabilities, and incentives.

Ensure your booth clearly conveys your unique value proposition. Small hospitality touches—local coffee, snacks, or giveaways—can increase visit time and improve recall.



STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Train your team extensively in strategic communication techniques. Develop succinct, compelling elevator pitches customized to each industry's particular interests and business needs.

Equip staff with active listening skills to identify subtle indicators of interest or intent to expand or relocate, such as questions about local incentives, labor availability, or infrastructure quality.

Every team member should be trained with a 30-second elevator pitch and a follow-up question that starts a conversation. Example: "We help manufacturers expand into the Midwest with access to a trained workforce, affordable sites, and shovel-ready infrastructure. What are some

If you are sharing booth space with other partners (e.g., at a state pavilion), coordinate with them in advance to clarify responsibilities, messaging, and branding so your **unified presence** stands out and supports your individual organizational goals.

of the biggest challenges you're navigating in your growth strategy right now?"



REAL-TIME DATA CAPTURE

Use mobile customer relationship management (CRM) systems and other data capture technologies to document your team's interactions in real time. This immediate documentation allows for informed and timely post-event follow-up, maintaining momentum and demonstrating professionalism.

You should accurately record:

- Name, company, and industry
- Contact information (ask for a business card)
- Prospect inquiries
- The business challenges discussed
- Suggested next steps
- Lead type, for example:
 - A: Actively expanding
 - B: Exploring opportunities
 - C: Longer-term interest
- Other notes

AI-powered note-taking apps like [Otter.ai](#) or [Fireflies.ai](#) (used with participant consent) can help capture conversations, identify action items, and generate summaries for quick follow-up.

BusinessEngage, Camoin Associates' platform, is designed specifically for economic development teams to track contacts, log follow-up actions, and assign internal ownership. Many modern CRMs, including BusinessEngage, also support business card scanning, making it easy to digitize contact information immediately.

Together, these tools help EDO teams work smarter, not harder. This type of real-time data entry ensures nothing is lost in post-show chaos, reduces post-show administrative time, and accelerates accurate, timely follow-up—an essential step toward turning conversations into investment opportunities.



STEP 3: POST-EVENT FOLLOW-UP

Immediate and consistent follow-up is what turns trade show floor interactions into tangible investments.



TIMELY COMMUNICATION

Begin personalized follow-up communications within 48 hours of the event, clearly summarizing key conversation points and outlining precise next steps. Provide relevant materials, such as detailed prospect profiles, industry-specific resources, and regional data supporting your proposal.

Tone matters—make your follow-ups friendly and solution-oriented, not overly formal or generic. Even a short, personalized message referencing something specific from your meeting (like a comment they made or a topic you discussed) can increase engagement dramatically.



PROSPECT TRACKING AND NURTURING

Maintain and continuously update prospect profiles within an advanced CRM system. Regularly engage prospects with personalized content, industry-specific insights, invitations for site visits, webinars, or roundtable discussions.

Keep the dialogue active and personalized, positioning your region consistently as an ideal solution to their business needs.

If a lead mentions a future milestone—like a facility search beginning next quarter or a funding decision pending—schedule a follow-up touchpoint aligned to that timeline. Logging those trigger dates in your CRM helps ensure timely re-engagement when their project becomes active.





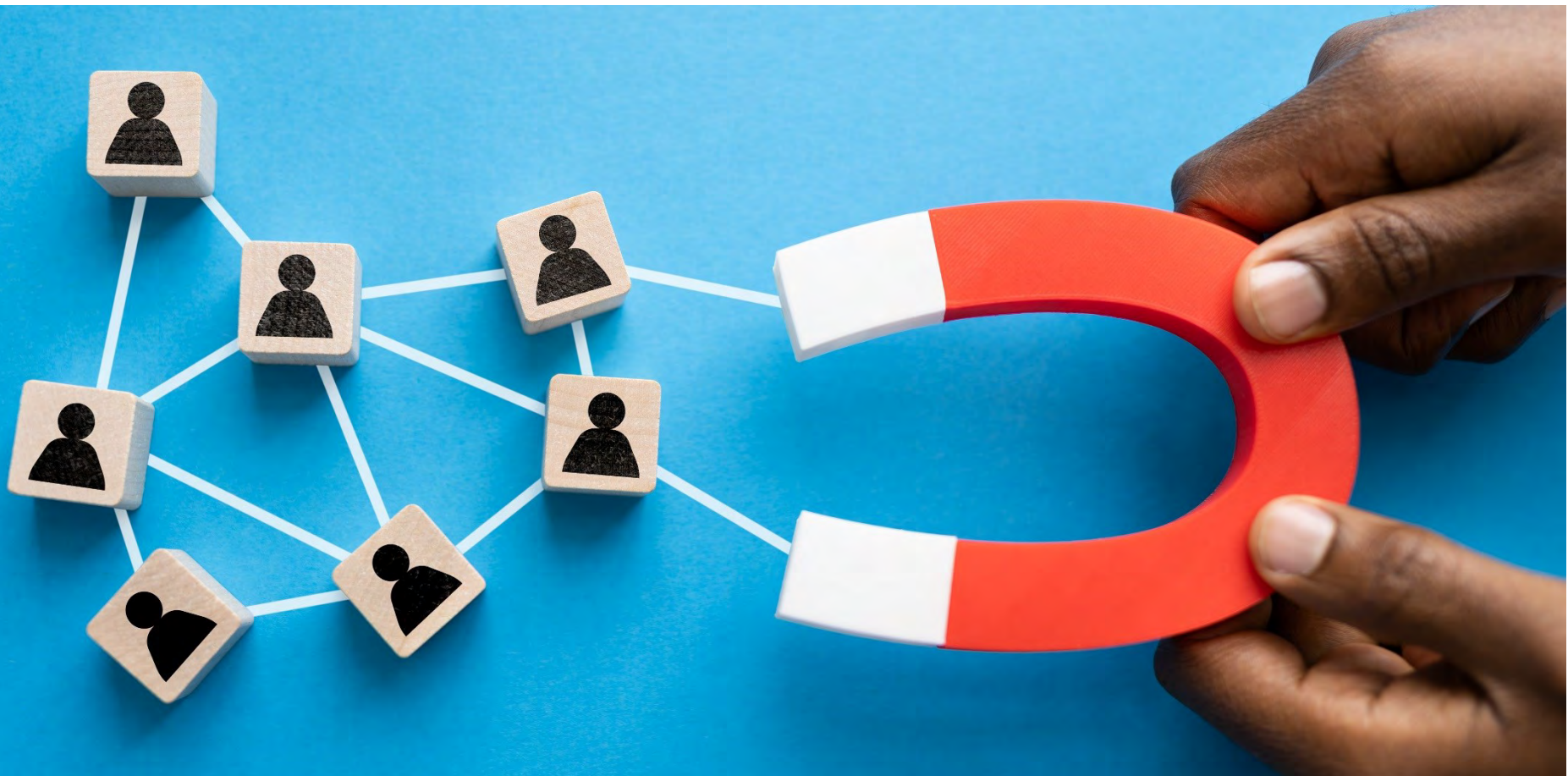
MEASURE AND ANALYZE SUCCESS

Evaluate trade show effectiveness using key performance indicators (KPIs), such as:

- Lead conversion rates
- The quality and impact of interactions
- The number of effective follow-ups completed
- The overall ROI

In addition to quantitative KPIs like lead conversion rate and ROI, gather qualitative feedback from your team post-event. What conversations stood out? What objections did they hear?

These insights help ensure continuous improvement and more effective resource allocation. Use them to refine and optimize future trade show strategies and refine target company profiles.



STEP 4: MULTI-EVENT STRATEGY

Consistent and strategic attendance at multiple trade shows on a recurring basis helps strengthen regional brand recognition and fosters deeper industry relationships.

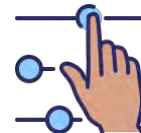


USE CONSISTENT MESSAGING

Develop and deliver cohesive, consistent messaging across strategically chosen annual events, such as IMTS for Advanced Manufacturing, BIO Convention for Life Sciences, and CES for Technology.

Consistent messaging reinforces your regional brand and highlights ongoing opportunities available to businesses. Align pre-show outreach, booth visuals, meeting conversations, and follow-up content to reinforce your message across touchpoints.

When your value proposition is consistent across all stages, it leaves a stronger impression and builds credibility.



TAILOR YOUR INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

Craft customized engagement strategies for each target industry. Understanding and addressing unique industry dynamics, emerging trends, and specific decision-making processes will ensure your message resonates with stakeholders and decision-makers, enhancing relationship building and trust.

For example, your pitch to a Life Sciences company should emphasize R&D assets, clinical trial support, or proximity to research institutions—whereas a Manufacturing firm may care more about available industrial space, logistics, and energy costs.



PROVEN SUCCESS

CAMOIN ASSOCIATES' EXPERIENCE

Since 2013, [Camoin Associates](#) has generated over 2,000 trade show prospects across more than 250 events using our [ProspectEngage™](#) team's proven process.

In 2025, Camoin Associates' ProspectEngage™ team supported clients at leading global trade shows, including [SelectUSA](#), the [International Paris Air Show](#), [BIO International Convention](#), and [Data Center World \(AFCOM\)](#).

The focus was on pre-event lead qualification, ensuring every scheduled meeting aligned with real project potential and community fit.

Here's what that looked like in action:



80 MEETINGS

were scheduled across these events with companies actively exploring growth, expansion, or relocation



40+ NEW LEADS

were identified for future business development



8 HIGH-POTENTIAL PROJECTS

progressed to the proposal stage and companies are now actively exploring investment opportunities with our clients

At SelectUSA, our team supported in-person meetings for our client, which provided a valuable opportunity to deepen relationships with prospects and communicate each client community's unique value proposition directly.

These results reinforce a core truth: when economic development organizations pair strategic prospecting with pre-qualified appointment scheduling, trade shows shift from being just visibility exercises to becoming real deal pipelines.



FINAL THOUGHTS

Trade shows remain one of the most cost-effective and results-driven channels for economic development lead generation. On average, a qualified trade show meeting costs 38% less than traditional outreach efforts. But success isn't automatic—it requires planning, focus, and follow-through.

Trade shows are a team sport. From pre-show prospecting to post-show follow-up, coordination across marketing, business development, and leadership is key. Treat every interaction as a stepping stone toward long-term relationship building—not just a single meeting.

By following our four-step guide, your organization can transform its trade show presence from a marketing expense into a business development engine.

DOWNLOAD OUR TRADE SHOW READINESS CHECKLIST

Use this quick-reference guide to ensure your team is fully prepared to maximize the ROI from your next trade show.

[GET THE CHECKLIST](#)

