

HMAVIEWPOINT

Get the most out of attending a trade show.



Brian Smolik
Big Squid RC -
President
Hobby Manufacturers
Association
RC Division – Vice
President

There is a trade show coming up. You've booked your flight and hotel. Maybe you're going solo, or perhaps you're taking someone with you. In any case, here are a few tips to make sure you get your money's worth out of the trip.

First, do some research and plan some goals for the trip. Maybe you are attending the Rocky Mountain Hobby-Expo or the NRHSA show, or even CES or SEMA. All of these major trade shows will have a website set up with a map and list of Exhibitors, Keynotes and Speakers. While shows like CES and SEMA are huge compared to others, your trip to even the smallest show will benefit from creating a must-see list.

Back before Big Squid RC had our own booths at these shows, we found out the hard way that just showing up, walking around, taking photos without a plan always burned us. I can't tell you how many times we would get home from a show only to find out we missed a new vehicle hidden away in someone's booth, or that I missed talking to a key figure of a company that wasn't hanging out at his/her booth but doing keynotes and speaking events. After a few of these "Doh!" moments, we started making lists of people we wanted to see and talk to and of companies we didn't want to miss based on the show's website.

Have you attended a CES or SEMA show? These shows are so huge you might not even get to the same building or on the same block as a company you thought you would see there and just "run into." Do yourself a huge favor and plan ahead!

Second, after you have a list of people or companies you want to talk with, come up with a few things you would like to speak to them about. You don't want to finally run into someone at company 'X' and forget the question you wanted to ask them. This lapse happens all the time at shows. After a few hours, you have talked to so many people and seen so many new products that your mind can go utterly blank at those critical moments. Take the time to write down those questions or comments.

Third, and this probably should have been stressed above, BE POLITE to the staff at the show. I can't count the number of times I have seen some poor booth staff take the wrath of an upset customer or shop owner over some return or a product issue. While the person working the booth may be able to help answer your question or help get you in touch with the correct person, they probably have nothing to do with your issue and are most likely unaware of the situation. Remember, it's been a long day or days for them as well as they stand there and talk to hundreds of people. When it comes down to it, we are all on the same team: we want these hobbies to survive.

Fourth, the best reason to attend these shows is to make new contacts and meet people face to face. Putting a face with that voice you have been talking to over the phone can be a huge benefit. Getting a business card or having an "in" with a company where you usually can't get past the front desk can easily happen at these shows. Instead of just emailing the sales or service address at a company, you can save time and trouble if you can contact someone directly to help you get the answers you need.

These tips might all seem simple. That's because they are, but most people don't do them. Give them a try, and you will be surprised by how much more you get out of that next show!

If Big Squid RC is at the next show you attend, please stop by the booth and say hi! **HM**



Hobby Manufacturers Association

1410 East Erie Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19124 • Phone: 267-341-1604
E-mail: heather.stoltzfus@hmahobby.org • Web: www.hmahobby.org