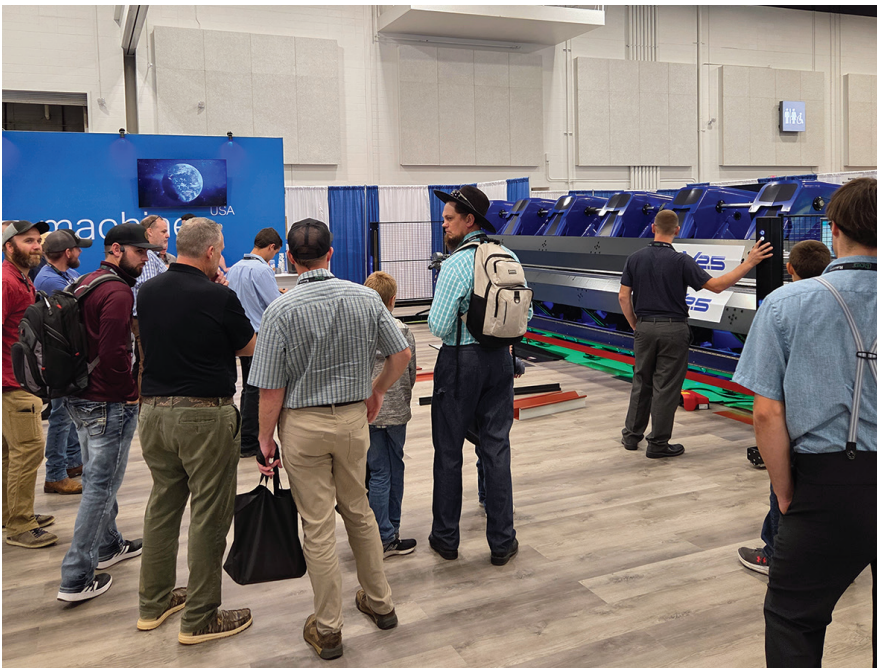


# Invest Wisely

Maximizing the Benefits of Your 2026 Trade Show Experiences



Take advantage of the opportunities at trade shows to speak face-to-face with suppliers and service providers. PHOTO BY SHIELD WALL MEDIA



Viewing equipment demonstrations first-hand is a strong reason to invest in attending a trade show. PHOTO BY SHIELD WALL MEDIA

As the 2026 trade show season approaches, builders and manufacturers have a unique opportunity to connect with suppliers, peers, and industry experts in person.

To make the most of any trade show, start by choosing events aligned with your goals. Consider the show's focus, educational opportunities, networking potential, exhibitors, location, and timing. Ask yourself: Is the focus of the show appropriate for your business? Also, make sure the show's strengths match your objectives. Strengths could include education, networking opportunities, or specific exhibitors. Location, travel, expense, and timing of the show are also important factors to consider. If you are driving, check the availability and convenience of parking at the show venue.

Once there, set clear objectives, plan which exhibitors to visit, and remain open to unexpected opportunities. Work the show floor and have a list of "must-see" exhibitors. Be prepared for opportunities in unexpected places—people are often outside their booths. Shows are busiest on the first day and slower toward the end. Use that to your advantage.

## TO DO #1: Take Advantage of Face-to-Face Opportunities

One of the biggest advantages of a show is the time spent with vendors, customers, and peers. Meeting in person provides unique opportunities to build relationships faster and in ways not possible through email or video meetings. Relationships are the key to long-term success in any business-to-business endeavor. Use this opportunity fully.

There is a saying: "A good salesperson has the gift of gab; a great salesperson listens twice as much as they talk." It is human nature to talk about yourself, but lis-

tening allows you to gather valuable information. The easiest way to get people to talk is to ask questions.

Understand the function of questions. There are two main types, each with a different purpose:

Closed questions typically have yes/no or one-word answers. They are used to confirm information or maintain control of the conversation. For example: “Can I borrow a pen?” The answer is yes or no, and both parties can move on. Closed questions are useful strategically but imply a “stop” after the answer.

Open-ended questions encourage the respondent to elaborate and share information. For example: “Why do you need a pen?” A closed follow-up might be: “Did you need to sign something?” Open-ended questions create broader answers and personal conversation.

Open-ended questions help make interactions more personal, a key to building strong relationships. Exhibitors often speak to attendees hundreds of times during a show, repeating the same product pitch. Personal conversations—about family, hobbies, or shared experiences—stand out and are what people remember after the show.

### TO DO #2: Follow Up

If a contact or conversation at the show is important, follow up. It is unrealistic to expect salespeople to remember every interaction. A personal detail or two helps you stand out. Share something you learned or experienced together. For example: “Hi John, I hope your son’s birthday party was a success. Five is a fun age.” Then move on to the business discussion.

The formula for successful follow-up is Courtesy, Purpose, Action. The personal detail is the Courtesy phase, leading into: “I am emailing because ...” Building relationships is about the other person—not you. When you acknowledge something personal, people feel naturally inclined to respond.

### Conclusion

There are many ways to work a trade show. Times have changed, and many of us remember when exhibitors were expected to greet everyone, even in the aisle. Our staff business cards are still blank on the back to take notes. Badge scans and digital cards have changed the dynamic, but person-to-person contact and post-show follow-up remain best practices.

Whether you attend the Frame Building Expo, the Construction Rollforming Show, the Post-Frame Builder Show, or any other construction-related trade show, taking these steps will help you maximize your return on investment and make the event a success. **PB**



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