

# Practical tips for organising and exhibiting in trade fairs



Trade fairs, also called trade shows, are an important instrument in the sourcing and procuring process. A trade show is a marketing tool to access new markets and to encourage exchange of information. The show combines personal contacts, information collecting and deal making. For businesses, it provides an opportunity to gain new ideas, to know, improve business contacts, find new customers, partners, agents, as well as to source products and materials.

There are different types of trade exhibitions such as:

- a) multi-branch or special trade fairs;
- b) international, regional or national shows; and
- c) fairs for business representatives (B2B) or for private consumers (B2C).

The stakeholders involved in trade fairs vary from visitors, manufacturers, suppliers to organisers. Depending on the role in a trade fair, two checklists are provided to give information on

- I. Organising a trade fair
- II. Participating in a trade fair

## I. Organising a Trade Fair



Sound project planning prior to a trade fair is essential for its success. Planning a new trade show begins at least a year in advance. This checklist provides an overview of the most important steps for successfully organising a trade show.



## A. Before the trade show

### 1. Idea finding process

- Interviews with manufacturers, associations, buyers, government, importers and wholesalers to understand market needs
- Observe and learn from other trade shows
- Research on local laws related to the event, as well as on venues, reliable partners, sponsors, and the media for promoting the event

### 2. Planning of the show

- Visit involved stakeholders, such as industry associations, potential exhibitors, venues
- Contact service providers (e.g. cleaning), stall constructors, marketing agencies and media

### 3. Budgeting

- Plan and estimate costs for tickets, marketing, staff, services, technology and logistics
- Analyse the value of the trade show investment and calculate Return in Investment (ROI)

### 4. Pricing

- Price the stalls according to different pricing models (space, stand type, early booking, loyalty, etc.)
- Price the visitor tickets after proper market research

### 5. Business plan

- Clear and understandable business plan structure
- Must contain the following elements:
  - Executive summary
  - Business idea
  - Targets and markets
  - Partners and sponsors
  - Venue and time (show dates, construction and dismantling)
  - Marketing plan
  - Timetable with deadlines
  - SWOT analysis
  - Budget

Organisers have to perform follow-up tasks after organising a trade fair. This will help them to evaluate the event, analyse the problems and use that experience to do better in future.

### 6. Final steps before the show

- Finalise venue and service contacts and register name of the trade show
- Establish management team, budget and marketing concept
- Nominate chief guests for opening and closing ceremony
- Complete distribution of tasks (within and outside the team)
- Finalise the press announcement, collecting visitors data, planning side programs (e.g. conferences), sponsor acquisition, service providers, collecting exhibitors contacts and send invoice



## B. During the trade fair

### 1. Launching the trade show

- Monitor stand construction
- Monitor transport and delivery of goods
- Welcome the first exhibitors
- Check entrance and ticket office
- Monitor cleaning
- Collect contracts and money

### 2. During the trade fair

- Launch the event with an opening ceremony and press conference
- Distribute exhibitor inquiry sheets
- Distribute application forms for next show
- Inform exhibitors about dismantling the stalls
- Conduct closing ceremony for trade show
- Transport materials through transport agencies or other means







### C. After the trade fair

- Evaluate inquiries from participants and visitors
- Evaluate attendance of visitors and exhibitors
- Finalise budget (profit or loss)
- Prepare (internal) final reports
- Celebrate success of the event
- Start planning the next show

## II. Participating in a Trade Fair



In trade fairs, (potential) customers practically fall into exhibitors' laps. At the same time, participating in trade shows can be costly for a company. In order to get the biggest return on investment, it is important to have a clever strategy for all stages of the exhibition.



### A. Before the trade fair

The first decision prior to exhibiting in a trade show is whether to participate individually (full responsibility for organisation, staff, marketing, stand design and construction, products presentation, service orders etc.) or with partners. In this case, there are different options: Firstly to act as a main exhibitor with additional represented company or secondly to be an additional represented company with a different main exhibitor. The third option would be to participate in a country pavilion.

#### 1. Choosing the right trade fair

- Decide on participation in the trade fair as an individual or as a group
- Select the right trade show according to the theme of the trade fair, target group, geographical scope or special offers (discounts, marketing promotions, stall layout and location)
- Define goals and motives for the participation

#### 2. Budgeting

- Evaluate the trade show investment and calculate ROI
- Plan all direct costs, staff costs and income/revenues of a show

#### 3. Activity plan

- Plan all the to-dos before, during and after the trade fair
- Apply for visa for travel booking if required
- Submit stand registration



#### 4. Booth planning and design

- Bring in expertise from experts, e.g. architects, stage designers, graphic artists, craftsmen and booth builders
- Use colours, light, design and audio-visual techniques to present products and services in the best way

#### 5. Marketing

- Advertise your participation in the event through a campaign, a press conference, the internet, press kits or press interviews
- Check if organisers offer useful marketing and promotional materials to the exhibitors, e.g. online advertising, poster campaigns, social media, brochures, leaflets and free entry tickets

#### 6. Team training

- Brief your staff about the goals and objectives of participating in the trade show
- Train your staff on how to deal with visitors and customers
- Proper trade show booth etiquette starts with well-trained, knowledgeable staff
- Staff should have specialist knowledge and should demonstrate a genuine belief in the product
- Train your staff on the do's and don'ts of trade show booth etiquette
- Good listening skill is a key to excellent trade show performance
- Avoid drama. Your trade show booth staff are there to work, so keeping a professional demeanor is of utmost importance





## B. During the trade show

- Show up early and organise the booth if necessary
- Look after printed material and have business cards ready
- Do not talk with your colleagues while the client is waiting
- Deliver requested information to the client during the show
- Don't leave the booth unattended
- Don't sit and wait, be proactive
- Don't eat and drink (only with clients, no garlic)
- Don't talk badly about the competition
- Don't use mobiles, laptops, etc.
- Take notes of the discussions with clients and make summaries at the end of show day
- Before and after the show, schedule time for exchange with colleagues about the day
- If there is time, check out the competition at the show
- Look for innovation in product, design and new presentation ideas



## C. After trade fair

- Prepare internal final show reports
- Thank important customers
- Discuss and evaluate the performance within your company
- Promptly follow-up with potential business partners from the trade fair and mail materials to interested customers
- Quickly process inquiries of your customers
- Analyse ROI: Benefits: (measurable income through contracts; could be even 6-12 months after the shows) minus Investment (Overall Trade Shows costs) = Result
- Based on this, decide to continue participating in this show (= start preparing the following show) or to try another more suitable show
- Celebrate the success of your participation

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