

Your Guide To
Successful
Exhibiting
Part One

Your guide to successful exhibiting - Part One

Thinking of doing a trade show for the first time or maybe looking to up your game for the next time? Then check out part 1 of our two part guide to successful exhibiting which includes...



- Choosing your shows
- Trade Show Planning and Preparing
- Effective Ways to Cut Costs
- Tips for creating show-stopping Graphics
- Creating powerful presentations

Choosing your shows

“Selecting the right show to attend can make a big difference to your success level, qualified leads and sales—versus spending money, time and energy with no return.”

1. Ask Questions

The first questions you should be asking are “who do you want to reach at the show?” and “what do you want to have happen?”

2. Identify shows

There are two groups of shows you should be evaluating: the shows you are presently attending, and the shows you want to consider for future participation. Who is your target market and which shows do they attend?

3. Match your objectives

Selecting the right shows means matching your exhibiting objectives with the right target audiences, the right timing to meet buyers' purchasing patterns and the ability to show and demonstrate your products/services.

4. Do your homework

When evaluating a show's potential, gather as much information as possible—show statistics/demographics and review lists of previous participants. Verify information provided by show management. Speak to past exhibitors and attendees.

5. Visit the Show

Whenever possible, personally visit the show prior to exhibiting to assess its value. Evaluate the supporting events and/or educational seminars around the show.

6. Consider location

Take geographical location into consideration. Usually 40-60% of attendees come from a 200-mile radius of the show location. Consider your distribution area and target audience.

7. Consider timing

What other events are scheduled for the same time as the show and will they impact attendance?

8. Evaluate opportunities

What other marketing possibilities could the show offer? Are there opportunities for sponsorship, showcasing new offerings or participation in the educational seminars?

9. Play it safe

Be cautious about participating in a first time show. Promotional material may be extremely persuasive, but a show without prior history is a risky venture.

10. Choose your space wisely

Every show is unique and there are many variables affecting direction, volume and quality of traffic past your display. Be familiar with the floor plan. Consider how close you want to be to the main attractions, industry leaders, competitors, restrooms, food stations, entrances, exits, escalators/elevators/lifts, windows or seminar sites. Avoid obstructing columns, low ceilings, dead-end aisles, loading docks and freight doors, dark/poorly lit spaces, ceiling water pipes, late set-up areas or “black spots” on the floor plan.

Planning and Preparing

1. Determine how trade shows

can strengthen your present marketing strategy

Do you want to:

- Increase existing products/services in existing markets?
- Introduce new products/services into existing markets?
- Introduce existing products/services into new markets?
- Introduce new products/services into new markets?

2. Set measurable & realistic goals

Know what you expect from a show. Set realistic and measurable goals. Write them down and share them with your exhibiting team. Decide exactly what information you want and then set up the systems to measure your results.

3. Establish a realistic budget

There are many different expenses involved in exhibiting. When putting your budget together, consider the following:

- The exhibition space; the display (estimate 60% for structure and accessories and 40% for graphics)
- Show services including shipping, setup and dismantling and utilities, transportation
- Pre-show, at-show and post-show advertising, promotions and special events;
- Personnel expenses including travel, accommodation, daily expenses and time value.

Planning Checklist

6 — 12 Months In Advance

- Plan budget.
- Select shows.
- Book space.

4 Months

- Determine show objectives and investigate and evaluate show audience.
- Create a marketing message.
- Obtain Exhibitor Manual and read carefully.
- Source your exhibition display supplier.

3 Months

- Establish work schedule.
- Make travel plans/ book hotel rooms.
- Set-up any needed outside suppliers.
- Plan printed materials.

6 — 8 Weeks

- Check on production of display material.
- Order product samples, literature etc, from within your company.
- Confirm pre-event advertising and press releases.
- Order necessary show services.

3 — 4 Weeks

- Write and mail customer invitation letters and finalise VIP guest events.
- Confirm shipping information and provide to suppliers.
- Prepare training materials for staff at show.

1 — 2 Weeks

- Collect supplies, tickets, and service orders sent to show in advance.
- Bring credit cards for payment on site.

At Show Before Opening

- Travel to site; pick up badges.
- Confirm arrival of display, equipment, literature and supervise setup.
- Conduct pre-show briefing and outline goals to staff manning the stand.

4. Select a display that meets your needs

Do your homework and select a display that meets the goals set for each show, portrays the right image for your company, is durable, flexible and versatile and fits your budget. Explore the ease, ability and cost-effectiveness of expanding your display over time.

5. Develop an overall message

While developing your promotional plan, advertising, special events and media relations, you'll need to keep a consistent theme throughout each piece. This will help reinforce your message to prospects as well as enable them to better recall who you are.

6. Use graphics to enhance your message

Graphics are used to create interest, focus attention and tell visitors about your product or service. In just three to five seconds, graphics need to communicate who you are, what you do and how customers can benefit. Graphics are often the first impression an attendee has of an exhibitor, so it's important to make the "right" statement. Consider size—bigger in this instance is often times better!

7. Select the "right" staff

One of the most crucial aspects of any event is its people. The personnel you choose to represent you are your ambassadors. These people have the responsibility of making or breaking future relationships with attendees, prospects and customers. Invest time in training them so they know what to do and how to best represent your products, services, and company.

8. Plan early for transportation needs

Save money by planning for transportation needs well in advance of the show schedule. Choose a carrier that specializes in trade show transportation and will give you the service you need. Always communicate both in writing and verbally with your carrier.



9. Develop a follow-up system

One of the biggest frustrations after the exhibition is managing the leads. If leads are not distributed and managed in an organised and effective way, your overall results could be impaired. Determine how each lead will be followed up and who will implement it. If you plan to send literature or a thank you letter to attendees, have it pre-packed and ready to ship. Write and set-up email or mail merge templates to expedite personalizing correspondence. Whatever system you use, ensure follow-up is prompt, within three to five days after the show. The quickest follow-up occurs when you input lead information into a computerized system and transmit it immediately for fulfillment. If you don't follow up, your competition will! There are several good lead management software applications on the market. Find one that fits your needs or consider designing your own— the simpler the better. Decide what kind of questions you will receive and how to respond to them. Consider different follow-up methods for the various types of visitors, e.g. prospects with an immediate need, prospects interested in buying within the next six months, prospects who are only partially interested. Try varying the follow up; phone calls, faxes, emails or letters. By just extending the follow up period you will be amazed by the results and remember to measure your success.

10. Re-evaluate regularly

You should continually re-evaluate the reasons why you re-select a show. Make sure they continue to attract your target audience and get results.

Sample Lead Card

Event: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

Town: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

Email Address: _____

Products/services you are currently using:

Level of interest High Partial Low

Purchase time frame

Within 1 month Order

3 — 6 months Appointment Request

9 — 12 months Sales Call Required

Unknown Send Literature

Comments: _____

Lead taken by: _____



Sample Budget Checklist

Budgeting Checklist

Exhibiting involves many different expenditures.

Because of the numerous components involved, it is easy to overlook an area and have unexpected expenses. Use this checklist to manage your estimated exhibition costs.

The following is budgeting guideline:

Stand Space	20-30%
Display Stand	40-60%
Show Services	5-15%
Marketing and Promotions	5-10%
Other	5-10%

1. Space

2. Display Stand

- Design & construction
- Graphics
- Refurbishing
- Products for display
- Literature holders
- Tool kit
- Lighting fixtures
- Tables
- Chairs
- Rubbish bins
- Floral arrangements
- Audiovisual equipment

3. Show Services

- Set-up and breakdown
- Electricity
- Telephone/fax
- Cleaning
- Photograph
- Security
- Overnight services
- Shipping
- Storage
- Insurance

4. Advertising and Promotion

- Pre-show promotion
- Onsite promotion
- Post-show promotion
- Direct mail
- Public relations activities
- Premium incentives
- Special show literature
- Telemarketing activity

5. Other

- Travel expenses
- Hotel accommodation
- Subsistence
- Uniform
- Guest entertainment
- Receptions
- Sales meetings
- Speaker meetings
- Presenters/live talent
- Training expenses
- Meeting room
- Food/drink
- Gifts
- Other

Total

Effective Ways to Cut Costs

“Here are some practical, easy and creative ways to stretch your budget.”

1. Proper planning

Proper planning is the most important costcutting tip. Planning ahead saves on expensive last minute charges. Establish a list of key dates and activities. Push due dates back a month so that you always meet your deadlines.

2. Promotional production

Produce all of your pre-show mailings at the same time to save on printing expenses rather than printing several times throughout the year.

3. Buying a display

Consider the best type of display stand for your needs. Look into one that packs compactly to save on storage, lightweight to save on shipping, portable to transport by car, courier or as airline baggage, can be quickly and easily set-up to save costs, adapts easily to different spaces by adding or removing components.

4. Display graphics

Design and produce your graphics ahead of time to avoid overtime or rush charges. Have someone proofread your copy to avoid change charges.

5. Packing supplies

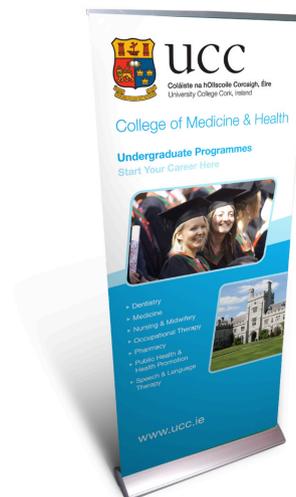
Create a “show box” containing handy items that are often not available at the show site. Include a stapler, tape, Velcro®, scissors, Swiss army knife, pens, paper, extension cords, and extra light bulbs. Remember to re-stock the box after each show.

6. Literature

Take only enough literature to distribute to highly qualified leads. Offer to send prospects literature so it is on their desk when they return from the show. This saves on drayage, production costs, and cuts down on waste.

7. Transportation

When buying a display, investigate how you will ship it. Lightweight durable systems save on shipping and drayage. Keep an accurate record of actual weight, contents and number of containers. Specify the weight on your bill of lading. Consolidate materials in one tub or shrink wrap individual items onto one pallet. Don't scrimp on shipping containers. Re-doing damaged graphics can be expensive.



Tool Kit

Order all the products, supplies, and services that you need in advance. Most contractors will give you a small discount for pre-payment. By ordering early, you not only save money but you can also avoid delays, costly errors and compromises.

General Supplies

- Personal Schedule
- Calendar
- Lead/Registration forms
- Inquiry/Sales lead box
- Brochures and press releases/kits
- Giveaways and promotional items
- Order forms and contracts
- Office letterhead and note paper
- Envelopes, office/express mail
- Staplers, staples and staple remover
- Scissors
- Paperclips

- Ballpoint and marker pens
- Tape
- Cleaning supplies
- Set up tools (if necessary)
- First aid kit

Individual Supplies

- Business cards
- Travel tickets
- Appointment book
- Hotel and car confirmation numbers
- Credit cards/cash for onsite payment
- Contact telephone list
- Client list
- Name badge

8. Travel

Investigate reduced rates or special deals with the airlines for ten people or more travelling to and from the same city.

Book early and ask hotels for any specials or corporate rates. Explore Saturday night stay-over rates, an extra night at the hotel may be less than the extra airfare. Use airport shuttles instead of taxis.

9. Show services

Pre-order show services at least 10-30 days prior to the show—electrical, phones, cleaning services, etc. The floor price is often 10-20% higher. Order more wattage than needed so you don't risk an electrical breakdown and then have to pay a higher floor price.

10. Setting up

Schedule setting up during straight time and avoid weekends and overtime hours as much as possible as it can cost up to twice as much. When possible, use your own personnel to set up your display. You will need to check the regulations specified by the exhibition hall.



Tips for creating show-stopping Graphics

“Convey technical information using good design principles and carefully planned graphics.”

1. Make them stop and look

Graphics are used to create interest, focus attention and tell visitors about your product or service. In just three to five seconds, graphics should communicate who you are, what you do and how customers can benefit. Graphics are often the first impression an attendee has of an exhibitor, so it is important to make the right statement.

2. Consider your show goals

Consider how to convey your show goals graphically. Aim to grab attention with full-blown, interesting and vibrant graphics. Make graphic images life-size for the greatest impact. Ensure your graphics can be viewed at a distance of 5-15 feet/2-5 metres or more.

3. Project the right image

Understand what image you want to project: traditional, hi-tech, dependable, etc. Your company's image will dictate choices in typefaces, artwork, colour, etc.

4. Design for the audience

Design your graphics to your target audience. Focus on customer benefits. Use your graphics to show how your company differs from the competition. Design images to stimulate your viewer's imagination to think beyond the conventional. Avoid designing down to particular audiences, e.g. white for doctors, diagrams for engineers. Convey technical information using good design principles and carefully planned graphics.

5. Use different types of graphics

There are a variety of graphic solutions available to convey your message including front and backlit photographs, digitally printed images, murals or detachable signage.

6. Have an integrated approach

Plan to use your graphics on other collateral material for a thematic, integrated look. For greater memorability, use colour rather than black and white.

7. Use photographs

Attract more attention by using photographs instead of illustrations or other artwork. Photographs attract the eye first, are more believable and better remembered. When used, illustrations and other line art should be rendered in an easy-to-understand style. Tell a story with your pictorial elements.

8. Include special effects

Pull in your audience with graphics coupled with other effects. Attract attention with movement. Consider adding an LED message sign to your display or using 3-D imaging.

9. Limit copy

Limit the total amount of copy as people rarely spend time reading a mass of type on a graphic panel. Use simple language. Write copy in short sentences and keep your paragraphs short. Proofread the copy carefully. For final proofing, an impartial third party is the best way to catch errors.

10. Avoid...

Superlatives, or the “brag and boast” syndrome, clichés and overused metaphors, superimposing copy on your illustration or reversing out large amounts of copy (white type against a black background), and periods at the end of headlines as they stop the reader from reading any further.



Creating powerful presentations

“According to trade show research, live presentations are the third most important reason people remember a display stand, after display size and product interest. Any form of live presentation, for example, a staged product demonstration, theatrical skit, magician, game show, choreography, video, audio, robots or singers, can attract a throng of visitors to your stand. The key to success is using this powerful promotional tool as an integral part of your marketing plan to appropriately communicate your company or product message.””

1. Consider your show objectives

Use your presentation to help achieve your objectives and to enhance your message or show theme. Find the most attractive benefit your product or service has to offer from the buyer's perspective and flaunt it.

2. Project the right image

Decide what image you want to project and the best way to convey your company and product message. Consider conveying your message through bold graphics.

3. Think about your audience

Always think about the audience you want to attract and what you want them to get from experiencing the presentation. Be careful not to get carried away with a great idea and lose sight of the objective.

4. Have a realistic budget

Your budget is going to be a primary determining factor as to the type of presentation your company could consider. Be realistic. Know when it's appropriate to be modest and when it's okay to be a little more extravagant.

5. Be professional

Whatever form of presentation you choose, always be professional. Your corporate image is being scrutinized by everyone. Seriously consider hiring a professional company to help with the conceptual ideas and implementation.

6. Grab attention & encourage action

Having a powerful and compelling pre and atshow promotional strategy will help attract your target audience. Consider the best ways to promote your presentation—a special mailing, advertising or the Internet. Give visitors an incentive to attend, such as a gift, discount or a special demonstration.

7. Focus your staff

Communicate and involve your staff. Let them know exactly what you expect of them before, during and after each presentation. Make sure they can do what you expect of them. Decide whether you want to use your own staff or hire outside talent. Consider motivating your team with a contest for rewarding the most prospects.

8. Monitor and capture leads

Design a simple and easy-to-use lead form to capture pertinent information from your prospects. Determine who should complete the card—visitors or staff—and train your booth staff accordingly.

9. Deal with logistical issues

Major issues to consider are how much space you want the presentation to fill, if it should be in an open or closed area, how visitors will come into and leave the area; will they sit or stand during the presentation, how many presentations should be conducted every day, and how long each presentation will be? Ensure that the presentation does not interfere with fellow exhibitors and respects the adjoining space.

10. Evaluate success

Plan prior to the show how you will measure the success of the presentation: will it be based on the number of people attending, or the number of leads collected?





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