



INTERNATIONAL TRADE SHOWS

International trade shows, or trade fairs, differ from U.S. trade shows in many ways. Besides the obvious contrasts like language and logistics issues, visitors may be higher level executives who spend considerable time at your booth and possibly even discuss contracts. To get the most out of your marketing investment, this VEDP Fast Fact is designed help you plan and prepare.

SELECTING A TRADE SHOW

1) *Research Trade Shows in Your Target Market*

Be sure to select an appropriate export market for your product, and identify appropriate consumer demand, acceptable taxes/tariffs, and distribution channels.

see VEDP Fast Facts “Developing an Export Plan”

If you plan to exhibit, select a trade show at least 12 months in advance in order to allot adequate funds in your company’s annual marketing budget. The primary reason to exhibit is because your buyers are there, so select a show that aligns with your product and market. You can research international trade shows in your target market online or through the VEDP. Some trade show websites allow you to search by country and/or industry, such as:

- Events Eye: www.eventseye.com
- Trade Show Network: www.tsnn.com
- Trade Show Week: www.tradeshowweek.com
- ConWorld: www.conworld.net
- FITA: <http://www.fita.org/tshows.html>

2) *Analyze Appropriate Trade Shows*

Look at the history of the exposition since they change from year to year depending on the locale, exhibitors, and health of the industry. How many exhibitors were there and who attended? What conferences are running in conjunction? Decide if the show is growing and will have good opportunities for your company. See if your competitors are exhibiting. Look for special areas that will attract visitors and determine what size booth you’ll need based on floor plan, positioning, and attendance. Sixty percent should be open space for access.

Ideas for Pre-Show Promotions

- List your company in the show directory.
- Send invitations.
- Advertise in a show supplement in the local press.
- Launch a contest where buyers must visit your booth to enter.
- Offer free services to booth visitors. Request assistance from the exhibit organizer for promotions.
- Post your company information on the show website. If possible create a link to your website.
- Send direct mail with special show offers, giveaways, or booth hospitality.
- Issue a show press release through the exhibit organizer.

PREPARING FOR A TRADE SHOW

Setting Objectives

The establishment of clear objectives before, during, and after the show is crucial to successful exhibiting. Objectives should include specific, measurable goals that center around:

- Pre-show Promotions: giveaways, contests, videos, presentations, hospitality, etc.
- Booth Management: staffing, language, etc.
- Potential Clients—introductions, scheduled meetings, etc.



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Hows and Wheres for Pre-show Promotions

Successful exhibiting incorporates many different marketing mediums, such as print, radio, television, direct mail, corporate communication, and the Internet. Create your objectives outlining whom you want to visit your booth. Then, aim all pre-show promotions at those buyers. Be creative in finding means to promote your booth via local media, and realize that your marketing materials may need to be translated or analyzed for “cultural *faux pas*” in your target market.

Managing Your Booth

Select a booth manager who has trade show experience, executive support, and the necessary authority to liaise with all departments of your company. Involve them in trade show selection and participation from the beginning. Selecting appropriate booth staff in addition to the manager may be a challenge considering travel expenses, product knowledge, and language capabilities. Be sure to have enough staff to rotate working shifts; staff should have an hour break every four hours at a minimum.

Giving your booth a professional look and feel is essential to success. Set up a motivational scheme for booth staff, perhaps with financial incentives or rewards, to maximize results. Get a firm commitment from staff on performance by outlining your objectives beforehand and discussing them together. Uniforms or matching T-shirts/hats can also give your booth a professional look, and make staff easily recognizable by potential clients.

(Levinson, Wilson, and Smith)

Show Me the Clients

One of the first objectives to set in pre-show preparation is the target number of high potential clients. It is safe to assume that most business cards you receive are not going to be viable clients. Once you have set an objective, proactively seek clients to meet you at the booth. Develop a list of qualified buyers prior to the show, and invite them to visit your booth. Some companies buy exhibitor and attendee lists from show organizers, while others use a three-tiered gift promotion, giving potential clients one-third of a gift with their invitation, one-third at the booth, and one-third with post-show information.

Did You Remember the....?

There are things to prepare for an international trade show versus a show in the U.S. Before you leave, ensure your equipment will be compatible with their voltage; adapters may be necessary. Research the local greeting and eating customs, and learn a few phrases in the native language. Check with the show organizer for any special international exhibitor instructions, including how to ship your booth materials so they clear customs. Your show organizer can also provide you with a floor plan, and outline what will be available to you in your booth. International shows usually have a “hard shell” wall and carpet.



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DURING THE SHOW

To have a successful booth, demonstrate your product or service: buyers visit trade shows to see products in action. Take a walk around the exhibition hall and compare your display with other onsite demonstrations and advertising- especially your competitors!

Stand back and look at your exhibit booth to see if your signs have good graphics clearly stating who you are, what you do, and product benefits. Keep wording to a minimum since visitors walk past your booth in about seven seconds.

Consider conducting a survey during the show. A simple survey can help you to evaluate what your local competitors are doing, buyer habits, and where customers may be dissatisfied.

AFTER THE SHOW

Trade shows are a great way to introduce your product to foreign markets, but there are many things that need to be completed after the trade show in order to make it a true success:

- After the show, create a database of contacts and divide them into categories. Use these categories to separate the best leads from the not-so-good ones.
- Send a follow-up mailer immediately after or during the show, targeting clients identified pre-show. Consider outsourcing!
- Send a handwritten card to your best leads, asking if they received the follow-up and if they need further information. Follow this with a phone call. For other leads, send an email or fax with product information.
- Set automated reminders for yourself to follow up on leads as appropriate.
- Track your success! Note your successes or failures for future shows. The average return on investment of 5-10% may not be evident until up to a year after the trade show.



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VEDP SERVICES

The VEDP offers a number of export-related services to Virginia businesses, including group market visits and market research by our Global Network of in-country consultants. These services are available to all Virginia exporters. For more information, please visit our website: www.exportvirginia.org.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Exhibitor Express: <http://www.exhibitor.co.za/>
- Exhibit Staff Training, The Hill Group: <http://www.hillgroup.com/>
- Exhibit Surveys Incorporated: <http://www.exhibitsurveys.com/>
- Extraordinary Show Productions. Preparation Timeline: <http://www.espexhibits.com/tips/timeline.php>
- Friedman, Susan. Art Business News. Out-foxing the Competition at Tradeshow. February 2002. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0HMU/is_2_29/ai_83243264
- Pettit, Ken. What Not to Do at a Tradeshow. 2007: http://www.big-images.com/1-877-781-9301/News_files/Trade_Show_Etiquette-April07.html
- Trade Show Exhibitors Association: <http://www.tsea.org/>
- Wikipedia. Trade Fairs: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trade_fair

WORKS CITED

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- O'Connor, Julia. The Trade Show Reader Volume One. Richmond: TST Publishing, 2001.

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