

10 tips for easy (and successful) exhibiting

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In a busy marketplace, a face-to-face meeting with a potential client can be priceless. Exhibitions offer remarkable opportunities to meet with new clients and market your products or services. The question is, how do you make sure your exhibiting experience is both easy and successful?

Justin Hawes, Managing Director of Scan Display, simplifies the process in these 10 easy tips.

1. Choose the right show

It's easy to just pick a show and say "let's do it", but it's much harder to make sure it's the right show for your business. Take a look at what the show's objectives are: who is visiting the show, who else will be exhibiting, and are the dates right for you.



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"There's little point in booking an exhibition stand during your peak business period in the year," advises Hawes. "Make certain you will have the capacity and the resources to dedicate to the chosen exhibition before booking your space."

Hawes stresses the importance of looking at an exhibition's statistics from the previous year to get a feel for how busy the show will be, and if possible, a breakdown of the visitor profile.

2. Determine your objectives

After selecting your exhibition, Hawes recommends narrowing down your objectives for your time at the exhibition. "If you don't have focus, you could end up wasting precious time (and money) or concentrating on the wrong things," says Hawes.

Decide what it is you want to get out of the exhibition and narrow it down even further to create clear objectives. Do you want to attract new clients, build brand awareness, launch a new product, enhance your image as a company, drive sales or find new suppliers and recruits?

3. Start early

By getting a head start on booking and building your exhibition stand, you're not only more likely to benefit from better rates, but also have a clearer idea of what needs to be done beforehand. Leaving everything to the last minute will probably result in your not being able to secure what you need for your stand to look and function at its best.

4. Select the right exhibition contractor

When looking for the perfect contractor to build your exhibition stand, Hawes advises three points: Don't contact too many; choose local; don't select somebody who subcontracts.

"By getting too many quotes from contractors, you'll end up confusing yourself and trying to compare quotes that may not be comparable. Stick to three contractors for quotes and choose from that small pool," says Hawes.

By choosing a local contractor, your business not only supports local economy, but it means that somebody will be nearby should something go wrong. "You don't want to be stuck for hours trying to sort out an audiovisual problem while losing

business on your stand, as you wait for a technician to come to site.”

Similarly, choosing a contractor that doesn’t subcontract will ensure your supplier is able to help out with any issues a lot faster than waiting for another contractor to arrive on site.

If you wish to decrease costs in the long term, it’s advisable to work with a contractor who can suggest reusable elements for future shows.

5. Staffing is critical

It is absolutely essential that your staff members on the stand are the right fit. Each member of the team on your exhibition stand must be aware of and understand the objectives you have set out for the exhibition. A staff roster detailing shifts and breaks is important to make sure there is always somebody in attendance.

“It’s imperative that each member of staff on your stand has been trained to deal with any likely queries that may be directed to them, so they feel equipped to answer confidently,” says Hawes.

A team leader or even a top member of management should also be present at all times during very important shows. Clients like to know they’re dealing with the correct people at an exhibition.

6. Make your stand interesting

If you want to stand out from the crowd, you’ll need to make sure your stand is different both in how it looks and how it engages exhibition visitors, advises Hawes.

“If your stand has the ability to draw people, allowing your staff to connect with them in a fun way, then that’s half the battle won.”

Include social media elements, or something fun such as a photo booth, coffee or ice cream bar, or a competition that involves collecting contact details. This will make it easier for your staff to connect with people who visit the stand and make your business a talking point for visitors.

7. Take a walk

During the quieter moments on a show, make sure to get off the stand and take a walk around your selected exhibition. This will give you the chance to evaluate what your competitors are doing on their own stands, as well as get ideas for future exhibitions. You may also find some new suppliers along the way!

8. Follow up fast

After you’ve packed up your stand and headed back to the office, it’s important to follow up with all the leads that were generated at the event advises Hawes. “Make sure to keep a lead generation book at the stand to capture requirements and contact details from the visitors. This makes following up after the event easier, allowing you to target each lead in a proactive manner.”

9. Analyse the exhibition

After an exhibition, you need to establish whether it was worthwhile for your business. Go back and take a look at your initial objectives for the exhibition and, as a starting point, examine whether those were achieved.

Once you’ve determined whether your objectives were met, it’s important to also evaluate what went right, or wrong, at the exhibition. A short analysis will help you make better decisions for your next exhibition, and will shorten the planning

process too.

10. Time to experiment

Once you have a clear idea of what went right for you, and what could be improved upon, it's time to get creative. Look for ways to improve on what went wrong, and how to make good ideas even better in future.

"Take a look at changing the layout of your stand, or selecting a different area in an exhibition hall. Perhaps the show didn't attract the right audience for your objective. In this case re-think your objective for the next show, look to other shows or try your hand at something new like mall activations," concludes Hawes.

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