

If you only do one thing at an overseas trade show.....

If you've got to the stage of selecting a new export market to enter or you want, quite rightly, to support your distributors in their markets, then exhibiting at a trade show can be a positive way of doing this. If you haven't selected your next export market yet and want help with this [please get in touch and ask about our Gateway system!](#)

Tradeshows are notoriously expensive though and measuring the return on investment isn't always straightforward. So here's a few issues to consider to make it a success.

Research

Before committing to a show make sure you know the market and you've done your export market research. Have a plan for how your going to enter the market. We're happy to help you with all of this stage.

Once you've done the export market research make sure you also do the trade show research.

- Is it the right show for you, your route to market, your product range?
- Where within the show do you want to be situated?
 - The most popular shows get booked up well in advance so you may not be able to get a space.
 - DON'T settle for any old space just to get into the show! If you're in a totally inappropriate hall within the show it will be a waste of your time and money.
- If you have a distributor, is it you exhibiting or them?
- Is there a group / trade association / country pavilion and do you want to be part of that?
- Is there any funding available to contribute towards your cost? [Contact us to find out about this.](#)

Internal Admin

Who within your organisation will be responsible for the show organisation and administration? Can you set up a team to be responsible for this and if so make sure everyone knows exactly which aspects of the organisation they are responsible for.

Accommodation

- Book it in plenty of time! Hotel prices can rise considerably around the dates of big shows and often get booked up well in advance.
- Do you want to pay higher prices for a hotel closer to the showground or have a longer commute to and from the show each day (bearing in mind the extra travel costs)?
- Consider renting an apartment instead, particularly if you're taking a few members of staff.
- Look into AirBnB

Exhibitor's Manual

- Read it! – Many international shows have specific procedures.
- Use it!
- Extrapolate the deadlines and create a calendar linked task list.

Marketing

- Create your own show-specific material to promote your company's participation.
- Use the exhibition organiser's materials and check what marketing options they offer. These will vary from free of charge (or included in the stand price!) options to very expensive bells and whistles options.
- [Translate](#) some specific marketing material. This demonstrates you are serious about the market.
- Consider having an interpreter on the stand. You want to be able to easily communicate with your stand visitors!
- Create invite lists well in advance of the show. Target the people on this list with email campaigns and phone calls to make them aware of your attendance at the show and give them a good reason to visit you.
 - Make sure you follow up any email campaigns.
- If it's a large regional tradeshow consider putting on a distributor conference for any of your existing exhibitors at the show. This can help you raise your profile at the show and create a buzz around your brand.
- Use any social media hashtags that the exhibition organiser is using in their own promotion and enhance your social media activity in the lead up to the show.
- Carefully consider what product range you will be taking and promoting at the show. Is it adapted for that specific market? Has it been localised? Is the labelling appropriate and does it meet the local product standards?

The Stand

- What size of stand do you need?
- What is included in the package you are buying?
- What extras do you need and can the exhibition organiser provide them or do you need to?
- Make it as accessible as possible. i.e. as open on as many sides as possible.
- Check you allocated space for pillars, corner protrusions or anything else that could impede your display.
- How much construction work are you permitted to do or is it heavily unionised like in the USA for example?
- What security measures do you have on the stand? i.e. locking up samples, TV screens and valuables overnight.
- Is your stand design and display material localised for the market? Are you sending out the right message?
- What snacks, drinks, videos and attention grabbers are you going to have on the stand and where will you position them so they encourage visitors into your space?
- Have you booked an electronic badge scanner and as a back up if that fails do you have visitor forms?
 - MAKE SURE all this is fed into your CRM. (for more info on CRM systems contact [Jiggy Patel](#))

Transport

As a registered exhibitor you will be contacted by numerous “appointed” logistics firms. Check them out first before committing!

- Be careful who you choose for your transport and check very carefully the level of service they will offer you.
 - E.g. are they trade show experienced and can they really get your goods all the way to your booth within the showground or will they be left at customs!
- What are the lead times?
 - General shipping times, customs clearance times, getting to your allocated booth times.
- Look into temporary export and samples procedures.
- Is a return shipment worthwhile or can some marketing materials and samples be left with your distributors (if you have any).
- If you plan on taking your own goods (by van for example) do you know what documentation you need? Do you have a parking and unloading permit?

Getting you to the show

- Understand the entry requirements for the country in question (visas, passports etc)
- Are there different nationalities amongst the staff going to the show – they may all be subject to different entry requirements.
- When to travel - those setting up and knocking down may need different arrangements to others.
- Currency requirements.
- Have you got your exhibitor passes?
- Think about your car hire or public transport needs to get to and from the show / hotel / airport.

Your Show Team

- Who is going and when?
 - Can the same people set up, staff the stand during the show and knock down?
- Is there excellent product technical knowledge in attendance?
- Do the staff all have good sales and communication ability?
- What impact will it have on your domestic operation while these people are away?
- Is this a great opportunity to give staff normally internally based some wider experience?
- Brief your team on what is expected of them whilst they are on the stand and on the trip as a whole.
- Do make it a good social opportunity too and have fun!
- Have a review meeting after the show back at the office and learn from it!

Continuity

If it is a market you are serious about make sure you repeat your attendance if it was an appropriate show. Become part of the scene. It takes time to break into new markets and exhibiting just once will not cut it!

And Finally

..... that one thing that you MUST please please do regardless of everything else.....

FOLLOW UP, FOLLOW UP, FOLLOW UP

Otherwise it is a complete waste of your time and money

Have a chat with us to find out how we can help you with your next trade show or any other aspect of your international trade.

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