



Trade and consumer events

Are you trying to grow your customer base or looking for new distributors? Are you considering attending an event to increase your sales? This guide helps you determine if you are sufficiently prepared to exhibit at a trade or consumer event.

Attending a trade or consumer event

You need to consider both the benefits and risks to your business when deciding on exhibiting at a trade or consumer event. It's important to be prepared in order to take advantage of the opportunities.

Attending such an event can enable you to stimulate sales, build brand awareness, build relationships with your customers, develop your customer database, conduct market research, launch new products, attract national media coverage and promote your business more broadly. However, attending events requires considerable time and resources and planning is critical.

What is the difference between a trade event and a consumer event?

A trade event is a business to business event, where you will interact with your customers such as restaurants, retailers or distributors. You go there to learn from others in the industry, see new products, and pick-up contracts or forward orders. These events tend to be highly competitive and attract leading brands.

All aspects of the product/service, such as costs, benefits, and projected return on investment are discussed. The sales process is habitually lengthy and extends beyond the show.

A consumer event is a business to customer event. It is a public event. You go there to make contact with consumers, make some direct sales at the event and conduct market research. These shows often have a higher level of foot traffic than trade shows and help create/build brand awareness in the marketplace. Your product and marketing can benefit greatly from direct feedback from consumers. If making sales is your lead objective, the sales process is quite speedy and takes place at the show.

Researching the event

To find suitable events search the internet for events and trade shows relating to your product and perhaps seek some guidance from your industry association. When you have identified an event make sure you study the program, consider the feedback report on previous events and consider the suitability of the date, location, the cost of exhibiting, how many other exhibitors are attending and the type of audience it will attract.

As part of your research, also consider any presentations or activities that you could participate in. Review the event's attendee lists and identify new customer opportunities, consider how your product will sit within the selection of products on offer, review the layout of the event and consider where your exhibit may be placed.

In addition find out what trade or consumer events are being planned in your region through your local council or through the Department of State Growth and consider if there is benefit in your business being involved.

What do you want to achieve at the event?

Be very clear about what your business objectives are and how you intend to measure success. Your objectives may include:

- making a specific number of new contacts
- identifying a number of new buyers
- meeting a number of existing customers
- gaining competitive information
- discovering market trends.

What preparation needs to occur before the event?

After you have researched the event and set your objectives, you should carefully consider the costs.

Prepare a budget

Make sure you prepare a detailed budget. Costs will vary based on a range of factors including where the event will be held, where you are located within the exhibit area, size of your booth, if you will need additional storage, if you are serving food or beverages.

The costs associated with trade vs consumer events may differ, but generally will include:

- booth space – booths in a prime location will cost more, as will larger booths. You could consider partnering with another business to share costs.
- booth build – the cost will vary according to the type, design and style. A standard sized booth is generally about 3 metres by 3 metres. The event organiser might be able to suggest suitable companies to design and construct your stand. Be aware of any additional plumbing or electrical requirements you may have.
- booth graphics – it is best to keep artwork and messaging clear and simple.
- display stands and furniture – you can often rent from the venue or a third party, or bring your own.
- supply of power to your booth for using equipment, appliances and devices – some venues include as part of booth costs.

- internet access – ensure you know the cost to access the venues internet connection. If you are making sales transactions at the event ensure you have good internet access.
- equipment rentals and other items – items such as carpeting or fridges etc. You should check with venue organiser about what is available. If you are preparing food, ensure you have access to washing facilities.
- freight costs – the event organiser might suggest a preferred freight forwarder. If possible, get a couple of quotes to ensure you are getting a competitive rate and where possible consolidate your freight with other exhibitors.
- hotel stay or other accommodation – close and convenient to the venue is a good idea.
- travel expenses including food –ensure you have budgeted travel and meals including any entertaining you may choose to do.
- marketing and promotion – marketing materials, samples, give-aways and paid advertising.
- staff costs – if you intend to take staff you may need to factor in meals, overtime and other costs.
- clothing for the event – suitable clothing with logo so you are recognisable and look professional.
- insurances – event organisers may require you to have your own insurances (e.g. public liability).
- licences - If you are serving food you may need a temporary food service licence or similar. Check these details with the event organiser. Each state and territory has its own food safety regulations which you must be compliant with. Consider seeking professional food safety advice to ensure you have what you need to be compliant.

Determine what to take

For a trade event make sure you prepare a record-book or enquiry-sheets of contacts you are going to meet with, their contact details, their interest in your products and any action to follow. Consider invoices if you are selling goods from your stand. Other items include notepads, pens, sticky tape, cabling and power-point adapters, a first-aid kit for minor emergencies, product literature, product samples, point-of-sale material and price lists, and a stack of business cards.

If you are preparing food samples or meals you will need kitchen utensils such as cutting boards, knives, etc. You may be able to hire these at the event.

You will need at least two people on the stand particularly in the busy periods; pick staff who know the backstory, can smile all day and sell the message.

Prepare a checklist

It's a good idea to prepare a list of items and activities required before the event, include the deadline, person responsible, budget and notes. These will include:

Identify marketing materials and collateral

Determine what brochures or collateral you will take such as a business capability statement. You may wish to take a presentation or a short video on a laptop or ipad, these can be used at meetings and/or at the exhibit stand.

Have a system of capturing leads and buyer information – record their details and prioritise them in terms of their importance to your business; this will assist with post event follow up.

Prepare your elevator pitch

This is your 60-second spiel which explains the goals and activities of the business and what is special or different about your business. The pitch is particularly important at a busy event where you have a relatively short period of time in which to create an impression with a potential customer. Good pitches are simple, clear and concise, have an element of good storytelling and are delivered with passion. It's useful to write down your pitch and rehearse it start to finish. If you take staff, make sure they have learnt the pitch too.

Undertake pre-event marketing

Marketing is often considered the key to success at an event. However, pre-event marketing is often neglected or forgotten entirely. The aim of pre-event promotion is to generate interest and traffic at your stand and provide more opportunities to interact with potential purchasers. The following are some of the key things you should consider:

- If there is pre-event promotion activities being undertaken by the event organiser consider how you may participate in any marketing campaign.
- Create a landing page on your website – you could have a centralised location where attendees can view all the information about your tradeshow presence in one place, including booth location, any parties or functions your business is hosting, and the times and locations of any presentations. Structure the landing page like an invitation and tie in your tradeshow theme. Include information about the event itself and a link to the event website. You could also provide visitors with the opportunity to sign up for an appointment at your booth directly through the landing page.
- Create a special promotion – perhaps you could launch a new product or hold a raffle to win a prize. Use the promotion in pre-show marketing to create excitement, incentivise prospects to attend the show, and help attendees remember and seek out your booth.
- Advertise your presence at the event on social media, through both your social profiles and also by taking advantage of any hashtags the event might be using. If you have the budget for it, you could also create an ad campaign in an industry publication or with the show directory.

In addition, for a trade event you could consider making contact with:

- your existing list of contacts – let them know you are exhibiting and that they should consider attending
- the trade show registration list – identify those attendees that you should target, (not everyone on the list is a potential customer). If you are not able to access the list, ask the event organiser if you can obtain a copy. Note that you may be required to purchase it.

If you receive some interest from your initial contacts or you have customers you need to touch base with, set up some appointments. This is a way of ensuring before the trade event begins that your stand sees an influx of targeted customer traffic.

Messaging at the event

If you are attending a trade event you may need to prioritise your conversations, have your list of target customers, prepare the message and focus your time with them.

Be clear as to which markets you want to sell into. Know your product pricing in advance ie. product price if selling to a distributor, retailer or a customer. If you are planning to export also understand your product pricing in that market. You need to be clear with potential customers if you are not in a position to export and if you are unable to meet market requirements.

Undertake post event follow up

You need to devote some time and energy to following up with all the leads you have made at the event, prioritising the most critical ones. One of the biggest mistakes that businesses make when attending trade events is not following up afterwards.

The whole purpose of attending a trade event is to convert your leads into sales. This must be done in a timely way otherwise you risk being beaten by your competitors. Have a specific, tailored follow up email ready for your leads - ensure you make it personal, refer to the event and conversation you had and include a call to action (e.g. Watch our video here or order online here).

If you have attended a consumer event, review your product feedback and ensure any customer details are included in your database or as part of your loyalty program. Perhaps follow up with an email inviting them to make an online purchase, or direct them to outlets where your product is sold.

Finding an event

If you need help finding a suitable event, consider the marketing events your competitors attend? To be sure the event is right for your business, perhaps consider going as an attendee first before exhibiting.

Search <https://www.tradefairdates.com> or <http://www.expodatabase.com>

Examples of food and beverage trade events in Australia

Fantastic Food and Drinks - <http://fantasticshow.com.au/>

Fine Food Australia - <https://finefoodaustralia.com.au/>

Food Service Australia - <http://www.foodserviceaustralia.com.au/>

The Drinks Industry Show - <http://www.drinksindustryshow.com.au>

Examples of food and beverage consumer events in Australia

Good Food and Wine Show - <http://goodfoodshow.com.au>

The Taste of Tasmania - <https://www.thetasteoftasmania.com.au/Home>

Taste of Sydney - <https://sydney.tastefestivals.com/>

Taste of Melbourne - <https://melbourne.tastefestivals.com/>

Festivale Launceston - <https://www.festivale.com.au/>

Vin Diemen - <https://www.vindiemen.com.au/>

References

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<http://spearmarketing.com/blog/10-tips-for-a-successful-trade-show-follow-up-campaign/>

<http://www.nwcidisplay.com/blog/2014/01/making-successful-elevator-pitch-trade-shows/>

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