

3 Planning

This chapter presents a clear step-by-step guide to planning for trade fair participation. A checklist is provided for practical implementation as elsewhere in the Guide.

Planning and project management

It is important to make careful and detailed plans for participation in exhibitions, because there is a great variety of tasks to be accomplished for a satisfactory outcome. Planning for the trade fair should begin as early as possible. Participation in subsequent fairs may require the planning for the following year to begin immediately after the exhibition closes. Exhibition and fair participation requires the same level of focused planning that is normally applied to other business management tasks.

One person should take responsibility for the planning and draw up the main guidelines, define the objectives, determine and delegate the main tasks and set key dates for the preparation. Checklists of all activities should be prepared along the lines of those found throughout this publication. Such checklists ensure that no activity is overlooked from the first day of planning and preparation.

Whether participating on an individual stand or with a group, the steps to be followed are the same. Initial activities should start about twelve months in advance of the trade fair and should include: planning the overall operations and establishing a timetable, budgeting, designing stands, planning staff assignments, selecting products, packaging for exports and preparing promotional and sales material.

A strict schedule should be established with deadlines in order to avoid late delivery. Allowance should be made for production, translation and printing delays as well as complicated transport arrangements.

Lists and schedules should be prepared for all aspects of preparation. Confirmation correspondence and duplicate copies of orders should all be taken to the fair site, as well as any paperwork relating directly to participation in the trade fair. Any complaints to the organizers concerning late delivery of exhibition equipment will have to be substantiated by written documentation attesting that orders were placed in good time.

The checklists on the following pages provide a basic skeleton for planning and implementing participation in most trade fairs.



Checklist for exhibition participation: planning

1. Preliminary phase (may be one year ahead)

- Select most appropriate trade fair
- Select timing (month, year) for participation
- Obtain trade fair application forms*
- Calculate, finalize and agree the enterprise exhibition budget; search for local sponsors
- Register and reserve site; decide to use shell unit or custom stand*

2. Preparatory phase (may start at end of preliminary phase)

2.1. Product development for exhibition (up to one year before)

- Identify product ranges to develop; prepare product briefs
- Ensure product design
- See to prototype development and modification
- Arrange for primary costing and pricing
- Make final sample
- Standardize packaging, labelling and product brochure design
- Decide final pricing (FOB/CIF)

2.2. Stand design (up to nine months before)

- Interview stand designer (if using custom stand design)
- Appoint stand designer
- Agree product display
- Order and prepare special exhibits
- Brief stand designer (rules and regulations, shell unit, exhibitor's requirements)
- Stand design
- Approve stand design
- Submit plans to organizer*

2.3. Advertising and promotional material (up to nine months before)

- Plan advertising and publicity policy for trade fair
- Finalize and place back-up advertising for both home country and exhibition venue*
- Dispatch copy overseas*
- Place exhibition advert in exhibition catalogue*
- Prepare exhibition publicity and technical brochures
- Arrange translations, photography, typesetting
- Print delivery
- Complete advertising/literature plans; prepare phased press releases
- Arrange press reception
- Send out reception invitations
- Arrange for photographer
- Dispatch all final promotional material to fair grounds up to four weeks before or according to fair organizers' rules*

* Take copies of all orders/paperwork for these items to the show.



Checklist for exhibition participation: preparation

1. Stand prefabrication for shipment

(to complete two months before opening day)

- Tender stand contractor* (Stand contractor is usually supplied under fair organizer's contract)
- Brief stand contractor with all design drawings for installation*
- Approve/confirm working details
- Prepare stand material prefabrication for shipment

2. Stand preparation (to complete one month before opening day)

- Supply stand nameboard details*
- Arrange electricity*, water/compressed air*, stand cleaning*, plumbing fittings*, optional extras, (furniture, flowers, etc.)*
- Arrange insurance *

3. Stand personnel (up to one month before departure)

- Plan staff requirements
- Select staff
- Staff training programme
- Book air tickets, hotel accommodation and transport

4. Invitations (up to six weeks before opening day)

- Invite overseas agents
- Arrange hotel accommodation
- Prepare guest lists
- Order tickets and badges; dispatch invitation tickets

5. Shipment of exhibition material (up to six weeks before opening date, or according to organizer's rules)

- Check shipping dates (air/sea)
- Notify shipping/clearing/forwarding agents in country of exhibition
- Collect all material (exhibits, prefabricated stand and display structures)
- Produce colour/material samples, stand/product labels, exhibitor badges
- Provide toolbox (pliers, screwdrivers, knives, adhesive tape, marker pens, duster, glue)
- Prepare shipping documentation
- Arrange dispatch

6. Before departure, prepare materials to accompany staff (until day before departure)

- Duplicate copies of paperwork marked* in other checklists
- Address books, notebooks, business cards, letterheads, order forms
- Camera, calculators, computers, printers, leads and cables

* Take copies of all paperwork for these items to the show.
