

8 Promoting participation

This chapter deals with a key issue, that of promoting a firm's participation in trade fairs. Much of this activity will be undertaken in collaboration with the trade fair organizer and will require attention to detail in preparing material specifically for use during fairs.

Print and display material

Every exhibitor will need well-presented literature describing both the enterprise and its products clearly and simply. It should be suitable for distribution from the stand to visitors.

Before a decision is made to print, a check should be made with the trade-fair organizer to avoid duplicating the show's publicity. The organizer will probably use visitor leaflets translated into the local and perhaps other languages. These may also be available for use by the exhibitor. Details of all the printed material available from the organizer will usually be listed in the exhibitors' information manual.

Well-produced and illustrated brochures should not be used as hand-outs. A 'one-pager' is recommended, well written in the language of the market in which the trade fair is being held, as well as one prepared in a recognized international language. Care over the translation will bring results, whereas poorly translated literature will send the wrong message.

After the fair is over, the visitor may still retain that silent salesman – the trade literature.

For organizers of national stands, well-presented promotional hand-outs are even more important. They usually take the form of a group trade-fair publicity brochure, conveying professionalism in the export potential of the crafts on display.

Price-lists are also essential, with reference to bulk discounts, transport costs, customs duties and any other information on costs.

Visitor tickets

Advance visitor tickets to the trade fair are also usually available from the fair organizer and these can be sent to key prospective visitors. However they are distributed, tickets should not be issued too early in case they get lost, or too late for busy intending visitors to make it to the stand at the trade fair. A personalized letter with a complimentary ticket can make all the difference.

Organizers of group stands could enlist the assistance of their embassy's commercial office to distribute tickets with an official invitation to visit the national exhibit.

Direct mail

This is of particular relevance to TSIs. Advance mailing requires the preparation of a list of potential buyers, users, agents, importers, distributors, wholesalers, retailers, trade organizations and journalists. The compilation of the list and subsequent mailings could be done in collaboration with the appropriate embassy or with help from the trade-fair organizer.

Material being dispatched by the printer should be delivered to a sure address at least one month before the opening day. Direct delivery to the trade-fair site may result in its being mislaid. TSIs and exhibitors should always maintain a plentiful supply of literature and up-to-date price-lists, together with the contact address of agents available for the opening day.

Public relations for a trade fair

The success of participating at a trade fair is directly related to the effectiveness of public relations (PR). These should be developed around a theme that can be used to advantage during the show and says something of the uniqueness of the artisanal products on display and their country of origin.

The PR campaign should aim to attract the right kind of public – one suitable in composition and purchasing power for the products on display. It should provide contact with the specialist press, in particular, to ensure maximum coverage prior to the trade fair and maximum attendance of journalists with an interest in craft products.

PR and the organizer. The trade-fair organizer's publicity campaign will be far broader in scope than the exhibitor can achieve, but it is important to know how and with what methods the organizer plans to carry out the campaign. Co-ordinating individual or group efforts with it will save money. The exhibitor's manual should give details of the organizer's campaign for the trade-fair period and can serve as a guideline.

The PR methods used by the organizer frequently include websites, visitors' leaflets, direct mail, advertisements, a catalogue, press receptions, posters, television and radio interviews, liaison between hotels, railways and airlines, a daily news leaflet during the show, press releases, a conference programme, opening-day invitations and special events to attract the press, trade and public. Usually the trade-fair organizer's press and public relations department is pleased to work with exhibitors, taking their proposals and requirements into consideration.

The trade-fair catalogue – the buyer's guide. Craft exhibitors will probably have only limited funds for advertising at the show. The trade-fair catalogue is therefore often the best (and cheapest) advertising medium because it also acts as a sales and reference book for trade-fair visitors long after the show is over.

Promotion at the trade fair. Receptions for potential buyers on the exhibition stand during the show are another means of publicizing participation and products, especially for national groups.

Seminars, VIP visits to the stand and other events sponsored by the organizers offer opportunities to make products better known and initiate contacts. Movement and action on an exhibition stand never fail to command attention. Live or video demonstration of craft-making skills is an effective way to encourage visitors to stop and take an interest in the products on display. This is equally true for a wide range of skills from weaving to metalworking, making jewellery and wood carving. Additionally, such activity lends itself to television and newspaper photo opportunities.

Seeking radio and television interviews, either demonstrating the product or against a backdrop of the exhibit, can mean effective coverage. New and different products from various places invariably create news. The media may be glad to include an item in their regular coverage, and thereby generate interest and help attract visitors.

Press release programme. This is of particular relevance to TSIs. Hand-out material for journalists should be broader in scope than the usual product information. It could include background data on the country, information on its economy, details of its craft enterprises and profiles of the exhibitors at the show. Copies of press kits should also be placed in the trade-fair press room together with an invitation for journalists to visit the stand.

Additional press publicity can be obtained for exhibitors by staging special events on the stand during the show and inviting journalists to attend them. Scheduling a national day, with visiting dignitaries, a trade minister for example, and cultural attractions from the home country is also advantageous. Other events that can draw journalists to the stand are product demonstrations, special receptions and press conferences.

A press campaign can be conducted on behalf of the craft exhibitors by the TSI. For national groups, press conferences or receptions can be used to advantage. Press previews of exhibits before the show opens are effective, but require advanced planning.

An advertisement can also be placed in the special 'Trade Fair' issue that leading trade journals often publish to coincide with the fair.



Checklist for promotional material preparation

1. Print and display material (up to six months ahead in advance) translated into local and other languages, if necessary

- Leaflets
- Enterprise profile (corporate biodata)
- Brochures, catalogues
- Handouts (for press and stand use)
- Price-lists (discount offers, transport costs, duty payable)

2. Audiovisual promotional material (up to six months in advance)

- Purchase equipment and practise using it
- Prepare slide shows, computer-generated projection material
- Make videos

3. Visitor tickets (not later than four months ahead)

- Identify recipients
- Obtain tickets from organizer
- Distribute these (with personalized letter)

4. For TSIs and national exhibitors (up to six months in advance)

- Group brochure
- National publicity material (enterprise, tourism, etc.)
- Embassy's commercial office to distribute invitations with official invitation to visit the national exhibit
- Direct mailing to contact widest audience

5. Public relations for the fair

- Contact trade fair organizer's PR office
- Provide PR office with promotional material and ideas
- Request inclusion of exhibitor's material in trade fair catalogue
- Check seminars and VIP visitors of interest
- Check possibilities for inclusion of skill demonstrations on stand

6. Press-release programme

- Check location of exhibition press office
 - Deliver promotional material for distribution
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