

10 Stand management

On site

It is useful to be on hand several days before the show opens. Although it will be too late at this stage to make extensive alterations on the stand, many changes can be carried out on site.

On arrival at the trade-fair halls, exhibitors should introduce themselves to the organizer and check that the orders for furniture, stand cleaning, passes and identification badges, car-parking facilities, interpreters, flowers and photographers have been received. (If there is any difficulty, show copies of orders placed during the preparation stage.)

Ensure that all the products have arrived and are in good condition. Check that there are no problems with the customs authorities or forwarding agents. Ensure that extra labour is available to unpack the products if necessary. Check whether special equipment should be hired, such as a forklift truck. Make certain that all printed material has arrived and is in order.

It is often necessary to fix or adjust something at the last minute. There may be no tools available. It is a good idea to take along a small toolbox in one's personal luggage; it should contain pliers, clippers, scissors, electric screwdriver, cutter, steel ruler, tape-measure, spirit-level, adhesive tape, glue, labels, marker pens, etc. Also take a camera to photograph the stand.

Ensure that the stand is on the correct site and covers the space contracted for. Also check that the stand builder has followed instructions and provided any extras and services requested, such as the name-board and adequate lighting. Confirm any refreshment orders that have been placed with the catering office.

If an overseas agent is involved, he should be contacted immediately on arrival, as he will be of invaluable assistance in going through the checklist of things to do.

Pre-opening activities

Important contacts. Telephone the principal customers, trade associations and professional bodies to notify them and encourage them to visit the stand. Always inform the embassy in the trade-fair city in advance of participation in the show, and make a visit there on arrival. The embassy staff know the market and have local contacts.

Staff briefing. One of the most important pre-show tasks is to brief the stand staff on their duties as well as on the overall objectives of taking part in the show. A successful participation depends to a great extent on how effectively the stand personnel carry out their duties during the show.

Stand assistants and interpreters should be briefed on objectives and be able to inform visitors of the products and the relevant literature. They should also be fully conversant with the sales terms used in each particular country. Shipping, packaging, insurance, tariffs and discount data are important.

Staff should be smartly dressed. There are advantages in wearing the national costume so that visitors know at a glance whom to talk to. Staff should wear comfortable shoes and wear a company badge to make identification easier.

Staff should remain on their feet ready to greet visitors and answer their questions. Since working on the stand is physically exhausting, duty rosters should be planned accordingly. Off-duty staff should be encouraged to stroll around the trade fair or take a refreshment break.

During the show

A debriefing meeting should be held at the close of the first day. This may be followed by a daily briefing when goals, key messages and the role of each team member can be reviewed. Progress towards achieving goals should be reported and any necessary adjustments made.

Daily routine at the trade fair

Keeping the stand clean and tidy. The stand at a trade show provides an image of a country, a craft enterprise, its people and its products. The image should be favourable at all times during the show. Ensure that it is tidy at all times. Exhibits may be touched or picked up by visitors. Ensure that they are replaced in the display.

Using storage space. During the show all tools, demonstration equipment, samples, literature, coats, briefcases and suitcases should be kept out of sight.

Attracting visitors. Look welcoming, not bored. Do not adopt a guard-like pose at the front of the stand. Some exhibitors propose small promotional items for visitors to take away. It pays to consider carefully how visitors can be persuaded to become interested enough to stop and make inquiries.

Do not stand where exhibits or special attractions may be obscured. Do not choose a spot that prevents access to the stand. Visitors may avoid a stand where the staff are grouped together talking for they may feel as if they are interrupting a private party.

When visitors come on to the stand, do not immediately approach them, or hover about. On the other hand, always be the one who opens the conversation. If possible, have a face-to-face conversation rather than from behind.

Welcoming visitors to the stand. Talking to a visitor who comes to a trade fair stand is an important technique. This requires as much of a systematic approach as do the weeks of careful planning before the show begins. Since some visitors are prospective customers

for the product, how they are received on the stand will help determine the ultimate success of participation. In exhibiting in a foreign country, especially for the first time, taking trouble to understand the basic social and business customs will certainly pay off. Good first impressions are essential in engaging the interest, confidence and trust of visitors to the stand.

Because of the nature of a trade fair, the quantity or quality of the visitors who come to the stand cannot be prearranged. Anyone from an individual artisan to a government minister may suddenly appear on a stand without notice. If possible ensure that there are a minimum of two persons on the stand at all times. This will allow one member of the staff to pay full attention to visitors with specific inquiries.

Suitable opening remarks. Try to avoid openers such as ‘Can I help you?’ If the visitor answers ‘No’, any further approach will appear aggressive, and rebuilding the conversation almost impossible. Develop a repertoire of opening remarks that are not only more flattering but also avert the possibility of immediately severing the connection, for example, ‘Have you seen these craft skills?’ ‘Do you import crafts from foreign countries?’ ‘Have you used products from this country before?’

Identifying the visitor. Establish the identity of the visitor as soon as possible, by politely requesting a visiting card. That way he or she is immediately identified as being a serious enquirer or merely a casual visitor. If possible obtain a business card for future reference.

Identifying press visitors. It is important to identify journalists who come onto the stand. Trade-fair organizers usually issue identification badges to the press, but many journalists prefer to remain anonymous as they tour the fair.

Try to find out their reasons for visiting the stand. What, if any, pre-trade fair publicity brought them to the stand? Visitors from a radio or television station may be asked the name of the programme for which material is being collected, and the likely time of transmission. In the case of photographers, ask for the name of the publication in which the pictures are likely to appear.

Recording inquiries. It is essential to keep a written record of all visitors. Write down all prospects on a trade fair inquiry or contact form prepared for this purpose with details of name, address, company and company position and the desired follow-up. A sample contact form is given at the end of this chapter.

Registering inquiries. Make sure that all stand personnel use a similar system for recording visitors’ inquiries. In addition to the contact form, there are several methods of recording inquiries and the choice may well be influenced by the trade-fair organizer’s registration system. The most frequently used nowadays are computerized light pens, special inquiry books and forms that can be sent for processing. The light pens scan a bar code on the visitors’ badge and the resulting list of inquiries can be printed off daily by the registration staff.

Address books are another efficient method of recording inquiries, but are time-consuming. Collecting visiting cards from visitors seeking information saves time, but the nature of each inquiry still has to be recorded. Notes should be clear for the person following them up.

Classifying inquiries. Use a ranking or priority system to ensure that the most promising leads get the best attention. For example, first priority should be given to visitors who ask for samples or place orders, second priority to customers requesting information, and so on.



Checklist for exhibition participation: the show

1. On arrival at site (up to five days before)

- Contact the organizer (check all orders for furniture, stand cleaning, security, staff passes, car-parking, interpreters, press and promotional releases and activities)
- Contact overseas agent (if applicable)
- Call principal customers

2. Stand construction and installation (up to one day before opening, or according to organizer's rules)

- Progress of on-site stand construction with contractor engaged before arrival, particularly pre-fabricated elements made in home country
- Product installation and stand labelling
- Storage of promotional material
- Functioning of lighting, phones and computer equipment

3. Before opening day

- Final staff-briefing on stand (dress code, attendance rotas, routines)

4. Opening day

- Receptions

5. Daily routines during the exhibition

- Staff attendance rotas on stand (meal breaks, rest periods)
- Recording visitor details
- Registering and classifying inquiries
- Stand tidiness and cleaning
- Review of contacts made each day (with possible immediate follow-up)
- Daily closing activities
- Daily review of action (with follow-up for next day)

6. Dealing with visitors (see Chapter 11)

- Visitor comfort (drinks or lunch? privacy?)
 - Exchanging company information
 - Identifying visitor requirements (products, prices, special queries)
 - Recording inquiry information
 - Classifying inquiry priority
 - Copies of all paperwork for these items
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Sample trade fair contact form

ABC Company,
this street, that city, postal zip code, country,
Tel:/fax/e-mail

Visitor's name: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____

Company name: _____

Postal address: _____

E-mail address: _____ URL: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

Product line: _____

Type of business: _____

☐ Manufacturer ☐ Importer ☐ Agent ☐ Distributor
☐ Wholesaler ☐ Retailer ☐ Other

Interested in: _____

Action taken: _____

Follow-up required: _____

Orders placed: _____

Delivery required by: _____

Unit price: _____

Comments: _____

Seen by: _____ Dept: _____
