

# HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL TRADE SHOW EXHIBITOR.



# Welcome

## ***Congratulations on choosing a trade show to promote your business.***

*(By the way, if you're not familiar with the term, a trade show refers to a show that's aimed at other businesses, corporate or government audiences rather than individual consumers – if they are your market, please see our Guide to Consumer Shows.)*

*Regular exhibitors know that the number and value of leads make trade shows one of the most effective ways to achieve sales targets.*

*Like most things in business, better planning leads to better results. So spending some time upfront – including reading this! – will help you take full advantage of the many opportunities that will arise.*

## Read on and you'll discover how to:

- **Set** clear, measurable objectives;
- **Plan** an effective stand that will sell;
- **Maximise** return on investment in the show with tips, techniques and proven methods;
- **Generate** visitor traffic to your stand; and
- **Brief** and get the best from your people on the day.

### **So, where do you start?**

The timetable on page 3 is a good place to begin.

Diversified trade shows:



## ***What's a trade show?***

**A trade show refers to a show that's aimed at other businesses, corporate or government audiences rather than individual consumers – if they are your market, please see our Guide to Consumer Shows.**



# Your timetable

*Click here and we'll  
take you to that section*

Timings	Action	Reference
<b>Immediately</b>	Appoint a show manager	Page 4
	Set a budget	Page 4
	Set measurable objectives	Page 4
	Design your stand to sell	Page 7
	Read the exhibitor manual to check operational requirements	Page 8
<b>3 months out</b>	Plan how to promote your stand	Page 9
	Start promoting your presence at the show	Page 9
<b>A week before</b>	Brief your people for the show	Page 15
<b>During the show</b>	Hold daily briefings, review objectives and progress, get feedback – change processes where necessary	Page 17
<b>1 week after</b>	Finish following up your leads	Page 18



# Before the show

## Starting now!

### Appoint a show manager

Depending on the size of your company and scale of your exhibit, this could be you or another staff member. Your show manager must:

- Understand your show objectives;
- Be thorough; and
- Work well with people.

### Set a budget

How much you decide to spend depends on what you aim to achieve and its value to your business. When you're assessing what the show might be worth, don't forget to allow for future sales and brand awareness if applicable. Many exhibitors find the value of their show participation is reflected in sales for months or longer afterwards. Use the **Budget Checklist** template to help you.

### Set measurable objectives and create your USP (Unique Selling Proposition)

Knowing what you want to achieve and how you're going to measure it, will help you focus your message and design your stand to communicate it to your audience.

### This is not a solo sport!

When you're setting objectives and planning your stand, involve your sales team, marketing people and everyone else involved – it will help them feel part of the event and motivate them.

### What are your objectives?

What do you want out of the show? Your objectives should be precise and specific to your business – and, of course, you can have more than one. Use the possible list of objectives on page 5 as a thought starter – the **WHAT** column is to quantify or explain what you want to achieve.

# Before the show (continued)

## Example:

Market Research Objectives	YES	NO	MAYBE	WHAT
Generate sales leads	✓			Generate 80 sales leads
Test your marketing/sales				

## Objective checklist:

Sales Objectives	YES	NO	MAYBE	WHAT
Generate sales leads				
Make direct sales				
Build a contact database				
Launch new products or services				
Use offers to drive customers to retail outlets				

Customer Relationship Objectives	YES	NO	MAYBE	WHAT
Build relationships with current customers				
Up-sell customers				
Cross-sell customers				
Educate customers				
Reactivate lapsed customers				
Create customer 'ambassadors'				

Market Research Objectives	YES	NO	MAYBE	WHAT
Test a new product				
Test your marketing/sales materials				
Assess consumer awareness				
Discover consumer perceptions				
Trial new products and/or variants				

Brand Building Objectives	YES	NO	MAYBE	WHAT
Communicate by demonstrating				
Create market awareness				
Strengthen or change existing perceptions				
Position or re-position your brand				
Open new markets				

Channel Objectives	YES	NO	MAYBE	WHAT
Identify and recruit new distribution partners				
Generate media coverage				

Media/PR Objectives	YES	NO	MAYBE	WHAT
Get 'discovered' by the media				
Generate media coverage				

## Using the objectives checklist

You can circulate a copy of this list to each of your participating people and ask them to fill in the boxes, then consolidate the results.

Once you've decided what you're going to focus on and the results you want to achieve, put it in a sentence.

You should end up with something like this:

**Generate 80 sales leads:** 40 from retailers and 40 from manufacturers.

**Achieve:** 10 one-on-one meetings with key accounts.

**Identify:** 10 new distributors.

## Create the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) that will get visitors to stop at your stand.

You may want to achieve 80 sales leads at the show but how are you going to attract people to your stand?

Think about your product or service. You may already have a USP that you use in other communications, but a show gives you new possibilities that something like a print ad can't deliver. Remember a visitor is interested in "what's in it for me" so focus on benefits.

Look for the 'news' angle. If you have a new product, new flavour – or even a special price or deal for the show – say so. Don't just pitch products, pitch solutions that will create opportunities and deliver value for a visitor.

If your product or service will increase margins by 15% or save 10% on production costs, say so. Everyone is interested in solving problems, reducing costs, improving results and getting more value.



## When setting your objectives remember:

- *Be realistic*
- *Related objectives tend to work better*
- *Don't pick too many or you'll lose focus*
- *Prioritise them in order of importance.*



# Design your stand to sell

Your stand design and activities should reflect the measurable objectives you want to achieve.

**Be bold. Be visual. Be single minded in your message. In nearly every case, simple messages work better.**

## Space is important

If possible, measure your stand in your office or somewhere relevant and mark the area with tape or objects. If you don't have space, use a scale drawing. Put your stand contents in place and make sure there's enough room for visitors. Don't clutter your stand, unless you are a two dollar shop, simplicity is attractive.

Think about making a comfortable space to chat to visitors and put yourself in their position. Would you feel comfortable chatting there?

Think about traffic flow – where people will enter and exit your stand – and make it easy for multiple visitors. Try not to block access or create bottlenecks.

## The 3 second rule

*Does your stand clearly communicate your main message in 3 seconds? This is how long you have before your visitor's attention wanders to another stand.*

What's the brand or message here?



What's the brand or message here?



# Design your stand to sell (continued)

How to be a successful trade show exhibitor

## Learn from experience

To help plan improvements for future shows, try the following:

- Take pictures of your stand at the show;
- Check out other stands for good ideas; and
- Get feedback from the people manning your stand.

## Make the most of your graphics and signage

To maximise the impact of your materials, make sure you:

- Have your signage professionally produced;
- Can read the message from 5 metres away – if you can then lots of visitors can;
- Keep the message short, clear and easy to understand. Don't use jargon or words your visitors won't know;
- Try headings that work well in other marketing material;
- Consider using a statement that will provoke useful questions from visitors;
- Have nothing important on the walls below one metre – furniture and visitors will block it; and
- Check that all messages relate to achieving your measurable objectives.

For more details on the subject, read our **How to create an outstanding stand** booklet.



## Your silent salesperson

*The graphics and signage on your stand act as silent salespeople – put yourself in your visitor's shoes – look at your stand and ask yourself, 'am I getting the right message?'*

## Setting up on the day

*Every show has different requirements and timelines. The Exhibition Manual contains all the required information and any forms you need to fill out. It's best to read this about 3 months before the show so you can plan effectively.*



**SPECIAL  
OFFER!**

# Invite everyone to the party!

## Promoting your presence at the show

The organisers of the show will bring visitors into the event but not particularly to your stand.

To encourage this you need to tell people what you'll be doing at the show and why they should take the time to visit you. Stress the benefits – think back to the unique selling proposition you created earlier and use that. Add some intrigue. Create a special offer for show visitors with some sort of incentive. Have some fun, but don't skip this part.

### Timing

You don't want to start too late or too early. Aim to start your campaign 3 months out but plan for maximum activity 2-3 weeks before the event.

### Budget

Plan for 15% of your budget to go into promoting your presence at the show. Research shows that most exhibitors under-invest in this area, on average spending only 6%.

### ***Piggyback messages!***

***Add a show message to other communications.***

***For instance – put a footer on your emails, add a note on invoices, put a sign in your showroom or offices.***

## Proven, cost-effective promotional activities

### Direct mail and/or electronic direct mail (EDM)

Send personalised mail to existing customers and prospects. Tell them what they will see at your stand, where you are located and who to contact for further information.

Use this opportunity to reward loyal or previous customers. Invite them to your stand to redeem a special offer or invite a small group to a private function on your stand.

### Your website

Make sure your site has detailed information about the show and what will be on your stand. Things to include on your site:

- Your stand number;
- A plan showing where to find you;
- How to get tickets to the show;
- A link to the show website; and
- Special offers.

### ***Seize every opportunity!***

***Call your Diversified contact and ask about all available opportunities – most shows have marketing material you can take advantage of.***

# Invite everyone to the party! (continued)

How to be a successful trade show exhibitor

## Trade Press

Find out from your show contact if any trade press publications are producing pre-show features. Consider placing an advertisement in the feature and try and get editorial by talking directly to the publication, or leveraging the show's PR agency (check the PR section for more ideas).

## Telemarketing

Invite your best prospects personally. Set up meetings or tell them when you are holding demonstrations or when they might have the chance to meet with technical staff they might not normally meet.

Call them again the week before the show to reconfirm any appointments.

## Grab any free materials

Find out what free promotional material is available to you to help promote your stand. Most shows will have a variety including hard copy tickets, electronic tickets, posters and web buttons.

## Join key buyer programs

Many trade shows have a key buyer program – if so, get involved! Make sure your best prospects get included so they know what you are doing at the show.

## Issue personal invitations

Use the relationships that your senior staff have with existing and potential clients and have them invite key prospects (VIP's). Encourage them to call personally or mail them invitations.

## Other ideas

- Ask any stockists of your products to invite their customers to your stand and display brochures in their outlet;
- If you have sales reps, get them to hand out tickets whilst on the road;
- Include details of the show and your stand in any newsletters you produce;
- Change your company voicemail welcome to say "Visit us at (show name) on stand (number); and
- Consider advertising in the official show guide and appropriate trade press.

### ***If you only do one thing:***

***2-3 weeks before the show, mail your current customer and prospect database an invitation to visit your stand.***

# Invite everyone to the party! (continued)

How to be a successful trade show exhibitor

## Think before you print!

64% of literature picked up at shows is thrown away.

- Avoid handing out expensive literature – save it for follow-up communications;
- Consider an inexpensive piece to give away at the show;
- Offer to post or email more information; and
- Literature doesn't sell – people do! Use literature to enhance and reinforce your face-to-face conversations.

PEOPLE SELL



LITERATURE DOESN'T

## Promotion works

*83% of the most successful companies (in terms of business and leads generated) at a range of exhibitions were the ones that took the trouble to mail their prospects and customers before the show.*

## How to optimise PR and media attention around a trade show

Start planning early. Remember that some major trade publications are bimonthly or even quarterly, so make sure you send your information at least three months before the show.

Find out from your Diversified contact which publications are producing pre-show features. Consider placing an advertisement in the feature and try to get editorial by talking directly to the publication, or using the show's PR agency. They will be looking for stories and angles that will interest the target audience. Often they will have a form you need to complete so make sure you ask for their contact details and tell them:

- Why you are exhibiting at the show, including:
  - new technology;
  - unique new products;
  - product improvements; and
  - anything else new or noteworthy.
- If you will have any VIP's on your stand;
- If there's anything interesting about your stand, e.g. carbon neutral; and
- If you are doing anything differently this year, such as holding a competition.

### At the show:

- Invite key journalists to your stand – or visit theirs;
- If there's a media room onsite, leave an invitation for media to come to your stand for product demonstrations. Make sure you leave media kits for them as well; and
- Ensure you have a designated media spokesperson on your stand to handle any press queries.

## Making the most of your media kit

If there's a media press office onsite, provide press kits. Remember, shorter is better. Keep the content to a minimum and include a press release with any news.

Press kits can be softcopy on CD, DVD or memory stick or in hardcopy but don't pad out a hardcopy kit with heavy brochures which journalists won't want to carry. Look for a grabbing headline to put on your press kit cover and remember to include your company name and stand number.

Press kits typically contain:

- A press release;
- Photos with captions;
- Your company logo;
- Any supporting literature;
- Lists of technical specifications; and
- Contact person's name and details.

## Tips for writing an outstanding press release

A good press release can be the difference between being noticed and being invisible. Following these tips will help you make the headlines:

- Keep your copy newsworthy, factual and short;
- Give it the newsworthy check:
  - is the information new and relevant?
  - will it be interesting to the publication's readers?
  - does it sound too much like an advertisement?
- Can you find a human interest story about how a customer has used your product;
- Start with a heading that summarises the subject of the release;
- Put your most important points in the first paragraph;
- Avoid technical terms that might confuse the reader;
- Make sure you add in contact details, date of release and anyone you've quoted who is available for follow-up interviews; and
- Finally, keep your release under 400 words.

### **Show it if you can!**

*It's a good idea to look for things like product samples or relevant small items to put in your media kit.*

*They can involve your audience and increase memorability.*

### **Keep going after the show!**

*Keep your PR campaign going after the show too. Send out a media release containing success stories from the show, new contracts, accounts or distribution deals.*

YOU'RE  
THE LUCKY  
WINNER!

# Attracting visitors with competitions and demonstration



## Competitions

Competitions can be an effective way of gathering leads. Unless the vast majority of the show visitors are your target audience, the “drop a card in the bowl to win” competition will probably mean you collect the details of all the visitors after a freebie – not your product!

You’ll improve the conversion rate by ensuring your people on the stand qualify visitors first, rather than greeting them with “would you like to go into a competition?”.

When choosing a prize, think about your audience and try to find something that they will like – and ideally that’s also related to your product or service.

Government regulations differ for competitions from state to state so check the latest regulations before going ahead.

## Giveaways

Giveaways can be good – but don’t let them go for nothing. Make sure you get some qualifying information from the visitor, or have them do something, before handing over a gift. Don’t just pile them on a counter or table on your stand

You can also mention gifts as an incentive to visit your stand in your pre-show marketing. One way of doing this is by rewarding visitors who bring your advertisement or catalogue to the show – even a print out of an email voucher!

## Demonstrations on the stand

Generally product demonstrations are very effective ways to attract and engage an audience. When you’re planning a product demonstration, think about the following:

- Promote demonstration times in your pre-show marketing and in signage on your stand;
- Consider taking bookings;
- Limit basic presentations to 7-10 minutes;
- Focus on the 2-3 main points, solutions and benefits that will appeal to your largest customer group;
- Plan the demonstration like a performance, with a beginning, middle and end;
- Crowds draw crowds – work hard at engaging the first few visitors;
- Connect with your audience, keep eye contact with the crowd and greet newcomers with a smile and nod; and
- Use a call to action at the end – like filling out a form or talking to a sales person – don’t let them drift away!

***Use show specials to motivate purchase.***

***Offering a bonus or discount on orders taken at the show can be a deal closer and new client winner.***

# Attracting visitors with competitions and demonstration (continued)

## Hints for effective product sampling

Offering samples of products is a big part of exhibiting at many shows. Here are a few simple tips for successful product sampling:

- Make sure your stand is large enough to allow space for sampling as well as sales;
- Use clear, visible signage to encourage sampling;
- Engage visitors with knowledgeable and friendly staff to chat about the product;
- Have a special offer to encourage sales; and
- Comply with applicable food safety rules. These vary from state to state, you'll find them in your **Exhibitors Manual**.

## Other sales & promotional opportunities at the show

There may be a number of ways you can promote your presence in and around the show itself.

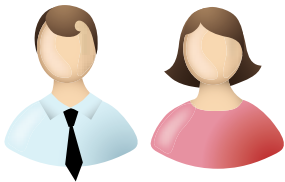
Ask your Diversified contact about any opportunities that may be available to you – these could include:

- Sponsorship opportunities to show your brand in high traffic areas such as entrances, registration areas, lounges etc.;
- Networking functions you can sponsor, or send your sales staff to;
- Seminars that your company can present at;
- Awards you can enter;
- Key buyer programs you can enter; and
- New product showcases – most shows will have a web page for this.



### *Think space for all!*

*If your stand is crowded with sampling and demonstrations, ensure visitors who just want information can find the materials they need.*



# Putting the right people on the job

Choosing the right people can significantly increase the chances of achieving and exceeding your show objectives. Visitors judge a good stand on enthusiasm, friendliness, product and company knowledge, listening, consultative selling skills and professionalism. Having your staff excel in these areas will put you ahead of the competition.

Involve staff in the exhibition planning process – this will ensure motivated staff for the whole show.

## What makes good exhibition staff?

Take the time to select the right exhibition team. Train them on what the company hopes to accomplish at the show. They need to be comfortable and efficient at quickly greeting, engaging and qualifying visitors, giving a short demonstration, cross selling, gathering lead information and thanking and dismissing visitors.

You want employees with good product knowledge, great sales techniques and a friendly engaging personality.

Get motivated staff. It's important that your staff want to be there. Are they motivated or do they resent having to work at the show? Think about their reason and whether you need to provide incentives e.g. reward the person who achieves the highest number of leads in a shift or the overall best result from an individual or team.

Smart, passionate and professional staff



This could be your stand!



## How many staff and who does what?

Take the time to think about the roles you want each staff member to play, here are some things to consider:

- If it's a national show you may need state representatives;
- People with specific product knowledge or technical knowledge may be an asset;
- Having one nominated spokesperson makes media liaising more effective;
- Having a plan that covers potential issues will help manage risk;
- How many people do you need? Think back to your goals. Say you want to generate 500 onsite sales. If for example it takes 6 minutes to deal with each enquiry one person can handle a maximum of 70 leads in an 7 hour day, and 210 over 3 days. You'll need to plan in breaks so in this example you'll need a minimum of 3 sales people to generate over 500 leads.

For more details on the subject, read our booklet; **How to effectively select, brief and train exhibition staff.**

## Staff dress

How should you dress at an exhibition? Take a cue from your customers – you should be dressed the same or slightly better. Suited and booted sales staff can frighten off a more casual visitor crowd.

Uniforms can make your staff easily identifiable and turn them into a network of moving advertisements for your company. Use bright colours and logos to stand out from the crowd.



**SMART**

## Chat isn't cheap!

*Chatting to visitors who are not likely to become customers can make your stand look busy – but it's wasting time and missing opportunities to sell to other visitors.*





# It's show time!

## What to do on the day

### Be ready to go

Get in early and have the stand setup and ready to go at opening time.

### Have a daily briefing...

Get together every day to discuss any issues, report on progress of goals, reassess what still needs to be done. Keep the energy up and positive.

### Record and classify all sales leads and visitor enquiries

Have a system to capture all sales leads, enquiries and other relevant information. Decide how the follow up is to be done before the show and have someone responsible for the process, which may include:

- Using a lead tracker system that logs the visitors' details from their name tag bar code;
- Drawing up a lead form and keep details in a file – use the sample lead form available as part of this series of booklets. Keep it simple and consider using tick boxes to encourage completion; and
- Know what information you MUST have to follow-up a lead and anything else that would be useful to know.

Classify your sales leads and enquiries and make sure the hottest leads get attention first. Below is an example of lead classification, however you may find that sorting your leads by product interest, territory or area of interest may be more useful.

- a) Large order, ready to buy;
- b) Small order ready to buy OR large order, longer time frame;
- c) Small order, longer time frame;
- d) Send literature, add to database; and
- e) Other (e.g. press)

### *Tap into templates*

*Use our lead form template to record details of new prospects.*



# Reap the post-show rewards

## Follow up, follow up & follow up!

Trade shows are a great way to generate immediate orders at the show, but the long term value is in following up your leads from the event.

Every visitor detail you received should get a follow up. Follow up your most valuable leads first and aim to have them all followed up within 1 week of the show and the remainder no later than 3 weeks. If you can do it by email, people expect email to be sooner.

### Eight winning ways to follow up after a show

1. A personal thank you email from the staff member they met at the show;
2. A personalised letter or email containing information requested at the show;
3. An invitation, or confirmation, to subscribe to your e-newsletter;
4. A reprint of any press coverage;
5. A reminder of the expiry date of a show special or an extension of the offer date for customers who didn't buy at the show;
6. A special offer redeemable within a month after the show;
7. Update your web site thanking your show visitors; and
8. Add a contact form to your web site for people who didn't attend the show.

### Measuring your results

Track the leads and measure your results against your goals. Don't just do this immediately after the event but track them 3, 6 even 9 months later. Only then can you fully assess the value of the exhibition.

### De-brief the team the week you get back

Go through a team performance checklist. Do an honest appraisal of what worked and what didn't.

### Follow through on all press releases

Call the editors you've mailed press releases to or who visited you on your stand. Ask if there is any more information they need.

Tell the media of success stories at the show – new accounts, distribution deals etc. You may get mentioned in post show reviews.

### **Amazing but true!**

**Many leads are never followed up. Don't waste potential business and ensure you follow up ALL leads.**

# Other booklets in this series that may interest you:

- **How to create an outstanding stand**
- **How to be a successful consumer show exhibitor**
- **What a marketing manager needs to know when planning for an exhibition**
- **How to effectively select, brief and train your exhibition stand staff**

*Help and inspiration are  
only a phone call away*

We're here to help, inform and inspire you. The information in this booklet is just the beginning – talk to us and discover how you can make the most of your investment at the show.

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