

Trade Show Action Plan

A. PRELIMINARY PLANNING

- Identify goals.
- List markets or market segments you wish to reach.
- List shows that cover your market(s).
- Obtain information-demographics, dates, locations, prices, special events, etc., from the managers of shows that interest you.
- Tabulate comparable data for each of the shows of your interest.
- Determine what results you would like to get from exhibiting at one or more of these shows.
- Define your general objectives for the show(s).
- List product(s) or service(s) you would display or promote at the show.
- Identify any special manufacturing or importing required.
- Determine if you have sufficient lead-time to get these items.
- Calculate how much booth space you would need.
- Estimate the number of people you will need to properly staff a booth this size.
- Calculate the cost.
- Prepare a draft budget for the show and compare it with the amount allocated in your overall budget for shows. Does it fit? If not, what compromises are necessary?
- Judge if you have enough information to confidently make a decision to proceed to the second stage of planning.

B. PRE-SHOW PLANNING

1. Make your plan

- Pick your show crew.
- Call a meeting to set firm objectives for the show.
- Determine how much booth space you'll need to meet these objectives.
- Confirm that your show crew is large enough to handle the project.
- Pick the show(s) that best serves your objectives.
- Set a theme for your exhibit and select items for display.
- Identify any special events you would like to host.
- Plan demonstrations, games, premiums, etc.
- Plan your advertising program.
- Choose a display company to design and build your booth.
- Plan your follow-up program.

2. Start the action

- Book your show space as soon as possible to get best location.
- Select booth design that meets your needs technically and financially.
- Order booth and set deadlines for final design, manufacture, and final approval.
- Start your advertising and promotion program. Wherever possible, integrate your promotion activities with those of show management and your trade magazines.
- With the aid of the exhibitor's guide from your chosen show manager, set up a chart showing deadlines for critical activities such as arranging transportation for crew and for your exhibit, ordering on-site services and tickets for special events.
- Arrange for show services including janitor, electrical, water, drayage, hotel rooms, parking, audiovisual, carpets, plants, furniture, lights, any other special requirements.
- Order items needed for display.
- Set up training program for booth staff.
- Design and order lead forms.
- Explain your lead follow-up program to your office staff and booth personnel.
- Coordinate your lead retrieval system with the show manager's registration system.
- Organize special events, demonstrations, press briefings, premiums, etc.
- Do a dry run to set up the booth (if practical), and train your crew before it is shipped.
- Pack and ship your display or check that display company has done so.
- Ship lead form, literature, and general stationery items.
- Set up booth duty schedules.
- Make one final check that everything has been ordered.

C. At The SHOW

1. Before the show opens.

- Check booth set-up.
- Check that everything works and all supplies are on hand.
- Hold final training sessions on boothmanship and qualifying.
- Review schedules with booth staff and iron out any last-minute difficulties.
- Meet the press and place releases(kits) in pressroom.
- Check at-the-show promotions.
- Check demonstrations and special events.

2. During the show

- Hold daily reviews of progress toward objectives.
- Make any changes necessary.
- Take time to check out what your competition is doing.

3. When the show closes

- Secure valuable items.
- Pack all display items.
- Collect leads and dispatch to processing center.
- Dismantle booth, pack, and ship.
- De-brief crew as soon as possible
- Go out and have a relaxing evening.

D. POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

1. Immediate post-show action

- Hold first evaluation meeting as soon as possible after the show before memories start to fade.
- Process your leads according to plan.
- Initiate active follow-up of leads.
- When your booth returns, check for damage and arrange storage.

2. In the weeks and months that follow

- Monitor follow-up program.
- Hold final review.
- Make recommendations for changes at future shows.
- Start plans for next show.