

Achieving success from exhibiting at events

Exhibitions, or other events that incorporate exhibition displays, provide excellent opportunities for the providers of goods and services to market their products directly on a one-to-one basis to potential customers. But there are pitfalls.

This companion guide to the nationally recognised "Greener Events" guide* is intended to help exhibitors get maximum benefit from the resources (time, effort, materials and money) that they put into exhibitions, whilst minimising environmental impacts.

*(available free on www.oursouthwest.com as a management tool to reduce the environmental impact of events)

what does your product and the way you market it at events say about your business?

Providers of goods and services increasingly need to be less wasteful of resources (including energy) to avoid a negative image and loss of business from their existing and potential customers. Respect for the environment goes hand in hand with respect for other people, i.e. your customers.

Ignoring corporate social responsibility (CSR) issues whilst being wasteful with a high carbon environmental impact can make your business look unprofessional and will increasingly lose favour with potential and existing customers. This is especially true if your competitors are seen to be making CSR improvements.

Some of the following tips may sound all too obvious but are sometimes ignored by organisations exhibiting at events resulting in disappointment and wasted opportunity, resources, cost and effort.

7 tips for successful exhibiting

1. PLEASANT MANNER

All lasting business is built on friendship

Alfred A. Montapert

Glum-faced staff on exhibition stands do not attract interest from potential clients. Staff with a pleasant manner and tidy appearance give your business a more

professional image - and delegates will more readily want to do business with them and your organisation.

Body language is very important; a smile and good eye contact helps, whereas crossed arms, stand staff talking amongst themselves, munching on a sandwich - all these can make people avoid your stand.

2. VISUAL AIDS & FREE GIFTS

**Success is getting what you want.
Happiness is liking what you get**
unattributable

Make people want to visit your stand - make it "stand out" from the rest!

Interactive visual aids, for example computer programs, bits of kit, unusual gadget or device, or a visually attractive special effect can attract more interest to your stand - especially if delegates can get "hands-on" use of equipment.

Don't hand out expensive literature; two thirds is thrown away!

Minimise accessories that are harmful to the environment. Free promotional gifts ("freebies") are only worth giving out if they actually have a practical use rather than just showing your company name/logo/website. Gifts that are over-packaged, wasteful of resources in their design (especially plastics and metals) present a poor image of your organisation.

If planning to provide free gifts ask yourself these questions: What does this say about our product/service? Can it be recycled? Is it made from recycled material? Will this be thrown away within 24 hours? Do we need to provide free gifts? Would a prize draw be better? (see tip 4).

3. EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY

Being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art
Andy Warhol

Exhibition panels with too many words are usually not read and need updating more frequently, thus wasting resources and money. Keep text short and punchy and, if you can, use interesting or stunning photographs/artwork.

Good graphic design can help avoid the need for electric display lighting for your stand.

4. COMPETITIONS

It's easy to tick the box but miss the point
unattributable

A competition such as a business card draw or quiz for a prize, even if only a modest yet useful prize, can help get delegates to stop at your stand and provide follow-up contacts.

5. HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY

You are only as wise as others perceive you to be
M Shawn Cole

Extravagant or inaccurate claims about the performance of your product will put potential clients off if they have little faith in what you say.

6. LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Getting ready is the secret of success
Henry Ford

Good location at the exhibition helps but if this is not possible make maximum use of the advice above.

To help highlight your presence, consider inviting the media to visit your stand (but make sure you have the event organiser's permission first). Pre-advertising your presence at the event can really help.

7. FOLLOW-UP

A happy customer leads to three referrals, an unsatisfied customer will tell ten or more people
marketing law

Poorly judged hard selling by post, e-mail or telephone immediately after the event will be counter productive. Remember that the other exhibitors may also be chasing sales. Put yourself in the position of the client and think how you would respond.



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