

Achieving Success at a Trade Show



# STAGE 1

# PRE-SHOW PLANNING



~ Step 1 ~

## Planning

.....

~ Our pitch ~

Trade shows can put you face to face with buyers. According to the Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR), 81% of attendees have buying power.

~ The caveat ~

They'll cost you a tidy sum, so you're going to want to do your research.

Let's do this step by step.

..... WATCH VIDEO .....



# What's your objective?

## State your goal concisely

A couple paragraphs will do. What do you intend to get out of exhibiting? Are you looking for sales leads, launching a product, or building brand recognition? What can you accomplish in person that you haven't been able to do online? State your goals simply and concisely.

This paragraph is the beating heart of everything that follows. Refer to it often as you continue planning for the show.

**TIP**

Keep  
your  
goals  
simple!



# Know your audience

## Define your target audience

Before you can even start looking for a trade show, you have to have your target audience firmly in mind. This begins with knowing your existing customers.

So, who makes the decisions about stocking big grocery chains? You're going to want to identify some of the same qualities in show attendees as you've found in your buyer personas.



Think buyer persona: That's all the demographic information you can gather about your clients – age, gender, income level etc. – used to create a profile of a customer. My business might have lots of buyer personas, one of which could be: A 35-year-old tertiary-educated, professional woman who makes her family's grocery-buying decisions.

Now's the time to match your 35-year-old buyer persona to the people who stock the grocery shelves for her. My trade show target audience is those people who make decisions on behalf of my customers.

You should remember that you aren't appealing directly to your target market when you attend a trade show. You're marketing to the people who make decisions on your customers' behalf.





# Research trade shows

You have your target clients in mind. Now you want to find the one convention they're most likely to attend. Most trade shows will readily provide material on participation numbers and demographics. If you can't find the information online, ask the organiser, and remember to insist on recent data.

There are also a handful of databases – like ExpoDataBase and TradeFairDates – that allow for quick comparisons of a multitude of shows.

An event's longevity is a good indicator of success, but don't stop there: Was it well publicized last year? Can you find past exhibitors who'll share their reviews? Industry insiders often have stories to tell. Reach out to them on social media, and don't assume they won't speak to you!

## TIP

Reach out to industry insiders





# Check out the competition!

We'll call this step *reconnaissance*.

## TIP

Find those trade show pics



It's possible, even in advance of a show, to research the competition. They'll show up on convention lists and you'll want to find out as much as you can about their displays and messaging so you can differentiate your business. Photos from previous shows can tell you a lot about your competitors' varying approaches.

What did the competition focus on in their displays? Some of it may be good, and some quite indifferent. The point is that you don't want to reinvent the wheel, nor do you want to reproduce the same old wheel.

Remember that you'll want to continue your reconnaissance at the show, by visiting their booths and taking notes about their displays.



~ Step 2 ~

## Estimating potential buyers

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The big, horizontal industry trade shows can be expensive, while smaller, niche trade shows are generally more affordable. The best way to figure out which will benefit you most is to dive into the demographics. Of those 50,000 attendees at a big show, how many are actually potential buyers? Crunch the numbers for smaller shows, too.

You want to complete this step having a good idea of the number of potential buyers at the show of your choice.

..... WATCH VIDEO .....

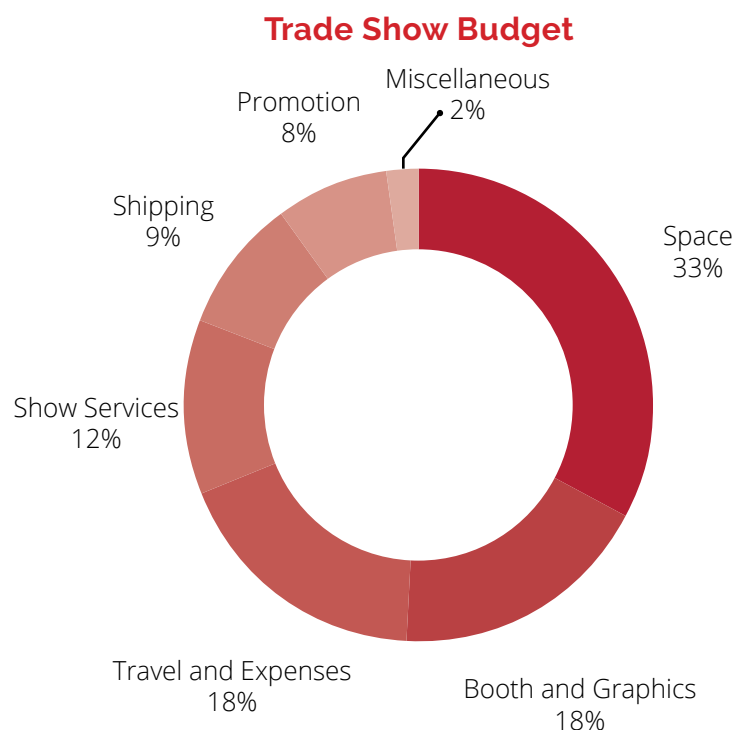
## Establish your cost

Your costs range from registration, to the rental of floor space, to the rental or construction of your display. Then there's airfare and accommodation. What about staffing your booth? And the cost of promotional material?

Rental of floor space will likely consume 33% of your total budget, while construction or refurbishment of your display could clock in at 18% of total spend.

Make an exhaustive checklist of all your costs, then add a 10-15% contingency for the things you didn't anticipate. (See graph below)

Finally, divide your budgeted cost by the number of potential buyers, estimated in the previous step. There you have it – your cost per buyer.







## Quantify your objectives

Detail-oriented exhibitors leave trade shows with something vital – data. Now's the time to create the framework for the numbers you want to collect.

How many leads do you want to generate for post-show follow-up? How many buyers would you like to talk to?

**Create a chart that shows the numbers you hope for versus the numbers you achieve.**

All contacts aren't created equal, so you might want to find a way to rank your interactions from highest to lowest.

If you've identified prospects, start reaching out to them now, letting them know you're going to be at the show and updating them as the date approaches. Keep your correspondence punchy!

**TIP**

Collect  
Data!





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~ Step 3 ~

## Plan your content

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By now you've picked a show and have a good idea of your cost. Return to your objective (the very first step in this process) and get ready to design your booth around it.

..... WATCH VIDEO .....



## Design your booth and book your spot

Custom booths are one-of-a-kind structures that belong to your company, but can be very expensive. Rental booths are cheaper but challenge you to set yourself apart with clever design choices.

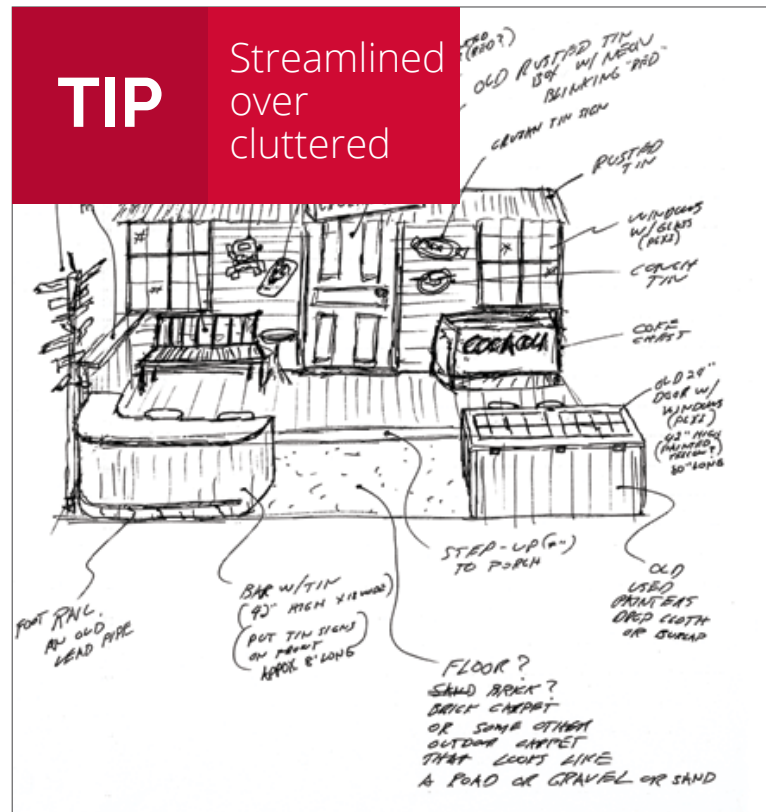
Surveys have shown that very few trade show attendees are interested in videos or printed material. (They can watch it/read it all online when you send that follow-up message.) What they do want to see is a product or demonstration. They're in the room with you. Wow them by designing exhibits that appeal to their senses.

Your colour choices are going to be dictated by your logo and product branding, but you can do lots of fun and memorable design with brief and bold statements that capture your brand. Even if you have a few dollars to spend on professional design, go in with a clear idea of what you'd like to express. A good way to start is with a list of adjectives describing your display.

Once you've decided on the space you'll need and where your booth is going to be, it's time to book your spot!

### TIP

Streamlined  
over  
cluttered





**Customised  
booth**



**Rental  
booth**







## Pick your sales team

Your sales team says more about your company than any brochure or giveaway. You want to pick the most articulate and knowledgeable staff to man/woman your booth.

Charisma is important, but fizz without substance won't quite do the trick.

If you're going in with a relatively new staffer, consider the investment you'll have to make in training to get her to a point where she can fluently answer a detailed enquiry. Oh, and don't forget to choose people who actually want to go. Leave the listless ones at home.



**TIP**

It's not  
enough to be  
bubbly





## Prep promo material

Even the most thorough attendee has limited time and willpower. Your promo material has a good chance of being chucked in a bag with a dozen other brochures and gimmicks, especially if you haven't put a whole lot of thought into it.

Try to relate your giveaways to your product, with a spin that's clever without being overly elaborate. For a honey producer, why not offer vials of your product topped by a tiny bee?

If you have the sales personalities to be the fun booth, go for it. Try a spin-the-wheel game or an instant selfie booth where you grab a pic of you and your potential client with your branding in the background.



### Giveaways

Some exhibitors like to run contests to give away prizes. They consider it a good way of gathering leads and touching base with prospective clients. Now's the time to figure out if it's worth the spend. (See Stage 3 for our advice on the type of prospect you should present with a premiere prize.)





**Product: Honey**



**Product-related  
giveaways**



**TIP**

Give away  
your best  
swag



~ Step 4 ~

## Promote your presence

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Engage your social media machine by creating a strategy and appointing staff members to implement it.

..... WATCH VIDEO .....

## Update your website and social media

Start posting on all your platforms, letting people know where you'll be and what the event means for your business. Tell attendees why they should stop by.

Why not document the build-up to the show? That way you can outline the steps and post your news: Here's a pic of our graphic designer working on signage for our booth, or our plan for games and giveaways.

### TIP

Post when  
you have  
news!







## Make the right contacts

Research shows that almost 75% of attendees know exactly which booths they want to visit before a trade show. Try to set appointments to have clients stop by for demos and sales pitches.

Your digital correspondence should include a call-to-action, like clicking through to a video about your business, or requesting a customer service interaction.

### TIP

Schedule appointments

Most importantly, don't send your correspondence into the digital void where it can lie unopened or ignored. Follow up on your requests with calls and a few friendly words:

*"Hi Melanie, I'm assuming you got my email. We're hoping to see you at our amazing trade booth at the TT Annual Trade Show on January 16, 2019. You're going to be excited when you see what new we have to offer."*



## Consider printed invitations

It would be foolhardy, even in the digital age, to assume that everyone wants an electronic invite. Sending out printed invitations can still be effective, and you might be missing an important market segment if you don't. By now you've booked your spot on the trade show floor, so include your booth number on the invitation.

Put some thought into which company representatives you want to invite, and consider sending invitations to more than one rep at each company. It'll improve your chances of getting a visit.

**TIP**

Invite more than one rep per company

This might be an area where you can justify spending a few dollars on promotion. Because written correspondence is increasingly rare, choose a nice, heavy stock to send your invitations on, with an embossed letterhead or a coloured logo. Take the time to personalize. You're building your company's brand before the show even begins.





~ Step 5 ~

## Messaging and measuring.

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Striding into the show with a consistent message gives everyone confidence. You need to hone your sales pitch, and figure out the indicators you should be measuring.

..... WATCH VIDEO .....



# Create an elevator pitch

An elevator pitch is a brief, persuasive speech that you use to spark interest in what your organization does. A good elevator pitch should last no longer than a short elevator ride of 20 to 30 seconds, hence the name.

It should be interesting, memorable, and succinct while explaining what makes your organization or product unique. It can take some time to get your pitch right. Spend the time to develop one that is compelling and sounds natural in conversation.



Follow these steps to create a great pitch:

## 1. Identify Your Goal

Start by thinking about the objective of your pitch. For instance, do you want to tell potential clients about your organization? Or are you introducing a great new product?



## 2. Explain What You Do

Start your pitch by describing what your organization does. Focus on the problems that you solve and how you help people. If you can, add information or a statistic that shows the value in what you do.

Keep in mind that your pitch should excite you. People may not remember everything that you say, but they will likely remember your enthusiasm.

*Ask yourself this question as you start writing: **what do I want my audience to remember most about me?***

## 3. Communicate Your USP

Your elevator pitch also needs to communicate your unique selling proposition, or USP.

Identify what makes your organization, or your product, unique. You'll want to communicate your USP after you've talked about what you do.

## 4. Engage With a Question

After you communicate your USP, you need to engage your audience. To do this, prepare open-ended questions (questions that can't be answered with a "yes" or "no") to involve them in the conversation.

Make sure that you're able to answer any questions that they may have.

## 5. Put It All Together

When you've completed each section of your pitch, read it aloud and time how long it takes. It should be no longer than 20-30 seconds. Otherwise, you risk losing the person's interest.

Try to cut out anything that doesn't absolutely need to be there. Your pitch needs to be snappy and compelling!

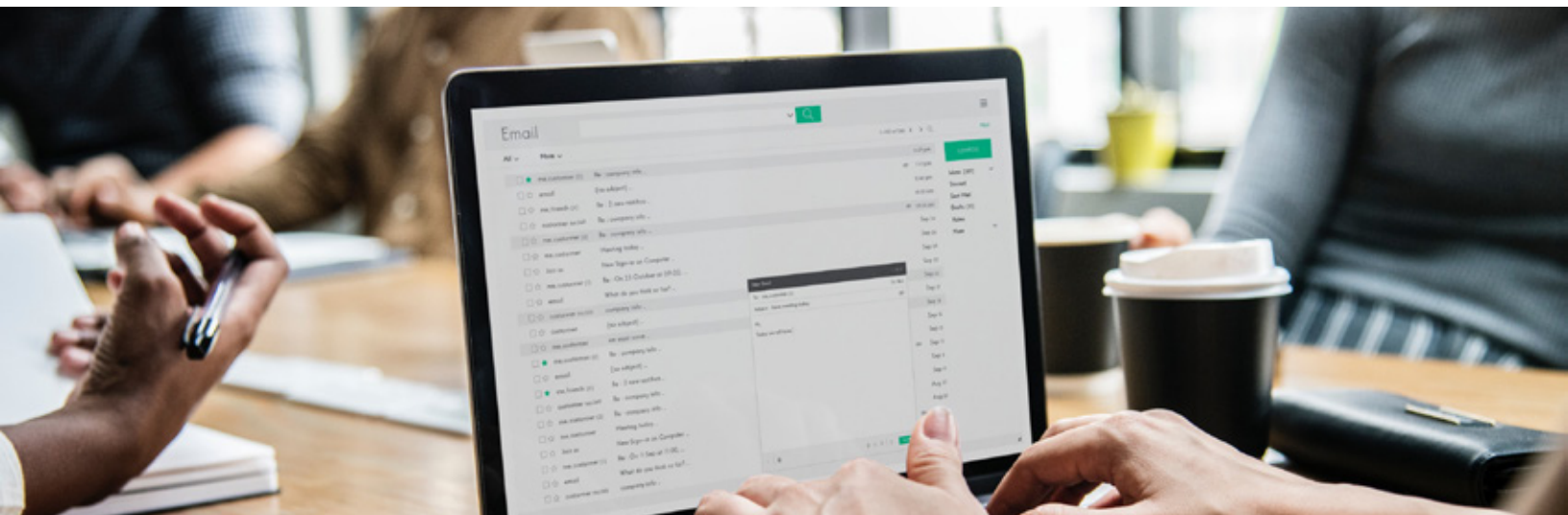
## 6. Practice

How you say it is just as important as what you say. If you don't practice, you may talk too fast, sound unnatural, or forget important elements of your pitch.

As you get used to delivering your pitch, it's fine to vary it a little. You want it to sound like a smooth conversation, not an aggressive sales pitch.

# What are your KPIs?

A Key Performance Indicator (KPI) is a measurable value that demonstrates how effectively a company is achieving key business objectives. You will need to develop key performance indicators to evaluate your success at meeting your objective from Step 1.



Define the questions you need answers to. Identifying the questions you need answers to will narrow your focus, because questions give the indicators context.

Identify your data needs. Determine what information and knowledge you need to acquire in order to answer those questions.

Evaluate all existing data. Compare what data you would ideally like to have with what you already have – that way you can easily see what's missing.

Find the right supporting data. Use industry information, demographic data, trend statistics, or whatever is relevant to triangulate and verify your findings.





## TIP

You and your team should have a product knowledge refresher before heading to the event



~ Step 6 ~

## Logistics

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Lots of shows have shipping partners.

Reach out to them early for info on shipping rates, documentation, labelling, and storage and handling arrangements. Build in some time for delays.

If you're attending a local trade show, you'll still have some planning to do. Don't underestimate the workload.

..... WATCH VIDEO .....



# Transporting your samples

## Local

In theory, staying at home is much less stressful, but when it gets busy on the trade show floor, you can't run back to the office for things you forgot.

Make your ground transport decisions early. Tips from trade show veterans include packing a bin of stationery supplies and personal items.

Some exhibitors keep smart phone-accessible master lists of every trade show detail. It'll help when you're scrambling to get in touch with a vendor or trying to find your printer's number to order another batch of brochures.

## International

Show samples will often be allowed to enter a country duty-free, but you still have to fill out the correct documentation to save yourself unnecessary hassle.

It might be cheaper and easier to print your display material on the ground, rather than lugging it with you or shipping ahead of time. Find a printer in close proximity and submit your finalized artwork for an advance printing quote.



## TIP

Book local  
transport  
early



## TIP

Print your  
display  
material on  
the ground



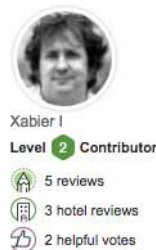


## Book your lodging

Official hotels often offer exhibitor discounts, so they fill up quickly.

Book as early as you can and if you're left with a secondary choice – like Airbnb or a bed and breakfast – read more than just a couple reviews.

A little lobby eavesdropping never hurt anyone. One of the benefits of staying at the most popular hotels is the chance of interacting with buyers and sellers outside of trade show hours. Keep your eyes out for expo veterans. They'll have all sorts of advice on choosing good shows. Some might even offer constructive opinions about your range of products/services.



**TIP**

Early birds  
get the best  
rates



## Choose your transport



Depending on where you've chosen to stay, many of your fellow guests might be rushing out the door simultaneously. In addition to booking your transportation in advance, you definitely want to install your signage and samples the day before the show opens.

On the morning of, walk out of the hotel with very little in your hands and a song in your heart. It's bound to be a long day, but it'll zip by if you know you're well prepared.

**TIP**

Travel light  
on the  
morning of





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151, Angle Avenue Jean Paul II et Impasse Duverger  
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