



Australian Government
Australian Trade Commission

International Trade Exhibition Guide

A step-by-step guide for Australian businesses considering participation in international trade exhibitions



Guiding you from the decision to exhibit, through to the post-show follow up - all with the aim to maximise results!

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Introduction:

Why participate in an international trade exhibition?

Why participate in an international trade exhibition?

Participating in an international trade exhibition can be one of the best investments you make in your company's export building strategy.

Exhibitions:

- > are global market places of commerce and trade – thriving meeting places for buyers and sellers from around the world
- > are long acknowledged as a key cornerstone of international business
- > are powerful marketing tools
- > are meeting places for businesses with their customers
- > offer invaluable market research opportunities
- > are places where business is actually done

What can a trade exhibition offer your company's international profit building strategy?

Meet and obtain new clients

A well organised event will bring 100s and 1000s of targeted visitors through its doors every day. Essentially, that means a one-stop shop of meeting people who are potentially interested in your products and services.

At trade exhibitions, potential customers – often very senior people who are otherwise very difficult to obtain an audience with – are at their most receptive. New products and services are now on their radar screens and this all works in favour of you, the exhibitor.

Launch a new product or raise the profile of your existing product or service

How else can you get face-to-face with 100's or 1000's of people and make them aware of your product or service?

The right exhibition can really market your product to your target audience. Or you can treat it as a 'road testing' exercise – obtain feedback from senior people in your industry before engaging in further, and more costly, market building exercises.

Cost-effectively research your competitors, benchmark your product and check out the latest industry trends

You may be planning a new product but are not 100% sure of who and what your competition might be. Attending the right event will enable you to thoroughly check out what your competitors around the world are doing and also talk to industry insiders.

That's significantly cheaper (and more practical) than flying all around the globe to conduct the research on your own and to the same extent a trade event provides.

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Demonstrate your market commitment and increase your profile in the market

As the old adage goes, people judge you by the company you keep. If you are already active in a market, what better way to demonstrate your commitment and success than by standing alongside your current agent or distributor? This not only gives you credibility in the eyes of other potential buyers, but also demonstrates that you are seeking long-term profitability, not just short term opportunistic sales.

Capitalise on media coverage

Good quality trade events are well publicised and the local (and for larger events international) media are made aware of who's coming and what is being exhibited. Trade magazines especially use trade exhibitions to report on and uncover new products and trends. You can also be pro-active and 'lure' the media at the event with the right sort of media materials.

Build and make the right contacts

Remember, a trade exhibition is a sophisticated market place of your industry. It is a concentration of senior people, key decision makers, buyers and sellers who can potentially affect your business.

A flexible marketing tool that can be used at any phase of an export strategy

While the initial outlay in participating in a trade exhibition is substantial, the right event can deliver you cost-effective international opportunities. It is a very flexible marketing tool that can be used at any phase of an export strategy:

Market development

To research and explore the market, and to assess competition.

Market maintenance

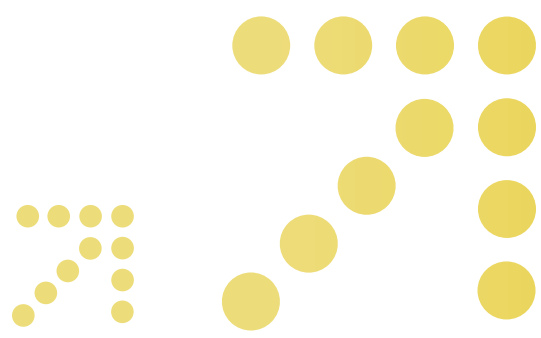
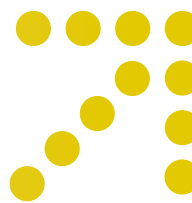
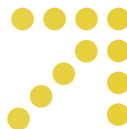
To consolidate and follow up on contacts made on previous visits.

Market expansion

To grow market presence, to demonstrate market commitment by supporting your distributors and agents.

Maximise your outcomes from participation in an international trade exhibition

- > Select the right exhibition for your product or service. There are 1000s of quality events held in 100s of cities throughout the world. Thorough research will ensure that the event provides the right opportunities for your business.
- > Successful participation takes long-term planning. Start your planning at least 12 months prior.
- > View your participation as a long term investment and incorporate it into your export plan.
- > Agree objectives for the exhibition (whether it is to research market competitiveness, appoint a local agent/distributor, launch a new product) and measure the outcomes of your participation against these objectives.



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- > Milk the event for all that it is worth. Use every opportunity to make contacts for your business. Work the event itself, and attend the various spin-off events (symposiums, presentations, networking evenings, specific product showcases, opening dinners etc) to ensure you leave no stone unturned. So for this reason, spend time in advance in establishing contacts and planning who you would like to meet.
- > Ensure you promptly follow up on all the promising new contacts and industry insights you have gained. Measure the outcomes of your participation against your pre-determined objectives.

How Austrade can help

Austrade supports companies attending international trade exhibitions in a variety of ways, from coordinating a group of companies as part of the Australian National Stand, to developing a tailored package of services to specifically match a company's objectives.

Australian National Stands are essentially an area within an exhibition dedicated to an Australian group of companies and as such flies the flag for a particular Australian industry. Such promotions are highly valued in the export community especially for those companies taking their first step into a particular country/market.

Benefits

These include:

- > being part of a united marketing front under an 'Australia' banner
- > assistance and support from start to finish
- > Austrade's official "government" support and endorsement
- > experienced overseas staff who will provide on site support and invaluable local knowledge
- > promotion and business matching services to ensure the right business contacts are aware of your presence at the exhibition

Should you decide to participate independently at an overseas event, Austrade can also provide business services to support your attendance and help extract the desired outcomes from your marketing investment. These services can include market research, product analysis, agent/distributor identification, appointments and follow-up can be arranged as part of your exhibition attendance and visit.

Whether you choose to be part of an Australian national stand or exhibit independently, Austrade's global network is ready to make your exhibition investment worthwhile.

“

Milk the event for all that it is worth. Use every opportunity to make contacts for your business. Work the event itself, and attend the various spin-off events.

”

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Financial assistance

The Federal Government's Export Market Development Grants (EMDG) Scheme provides \$150 million per year to assist over 3000 exporters to offset certain overseas export marketing costs. These eligible expenses may include:

- > exhibition fee
- > overseas representation
- > an allowance for airfares and accommodation
- > communication costs
- > product samples/promotion costs
- > literature and advertising
- > the costs of engaging short-term marketing consultants in Australia and/or overseas

Around 65 per cent of companies that receive the grant have annual turnovers of less than \$5 million.

Step 1: Making the decision to participate

- > Is participating in an international trade event the right tool for achieving your objectives?
- > What are your participation objectives?



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International trade exhibitions can be a highly effective and powerful export marketing tool in the right hands... BUT participating is a costly and time intensive outlay.

Proper planning and the right allocation of resources will go a long way to ensuring the event delivers you maximum results – so before you commit to participating in an international trade exhibition, you must first assess whether you're capable of achieving this.

Remember your success will ultimately be determined by three factors:

- > Resources – people, financial
- > Time – dedicating time to properly plan for the event is critical
- > Commitment – to an export plan and to the market of choice

The following checklist outlines some of the issues that should be canvassed before committing to an international trade event.

What is your export strategy?

- > What are your export objectives?
- > In what phase of export development are you currently operating?
 - Market development
 - Market maintenance/consolidation
 - Market expansion
- > Where does the exhibition fit into your export objectives for the country or the region?

Is participating in an international trade event the right tool for achieving these objectives?

Or could alternative marketing tools be more appropriate? Such as first commissioning market research, then undertaking a market visit with an appointment program or perhaps participating in a government or industry supported trade mission.

What is your product/service?

- > Is it ready for the international market, and for this particular market?
- > Have you investigated local labeling requirements/tariff or non-tariff barriers associated with getting your product/service into that market?
- > Do you have the supply capability to meet the export orders resulting from your participation? Or can your existing capability be expanded quickly enough to meet increased demand?
 - > Who is the target audience?
- > What is the breakdown of visitors ie trade, consumers, decision makers, non-decision makers? What is the geographic profile of visitors?
- > What is the event's size and track record?
- > What is its reputation in the industry?
- > What is the organiser's promotional strategy for the event?

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What are your participation objectives?

- > to assess market opportunities?
- > to gauge market competitiveness?
- > to road-test a new product/service?
- > to identify potential buyers/agents/distributors/partners?
- > to expand market presence?
- > to support existing relationships?
- > to increase brand awareness?

Can Austrade assist you?

- > Does Austrade intend to coordinate an Australian national stand at the event?
- > Do Austrade services in the market complement your participation in the exhibition?
 - o Austrade services can include provision of initial market intelligence, competitor analysis, pre-show marketing, assistance with identifying key players in the overseas market and appointment programs with qualified interested parties before or after the event. These complementary services can make your participation more focused and prepared.
- > Is the Export Market Development Grants (EMDG) scheme (delivered by Austrade) relevant to you?



What financial resources?

- > Do you have the financial capacity to participate?
- > Costs that you will need to budget for include:
 - o cost to exhibit, either at an Australian National Stand or in your own right
 - o air fares
 - o accommodation
 - o pre-show marketing/advertising, market research
 - o equipment costs
 - o promotional costs such as advertising in local media, samples and giveaways promotional literature
 - o freight costs – stand materials, literature, duties, product samples
 - o entertainment
 - o translation/interpreters
 - o additional activities – attending events associated with the exhibition
 - o follow-up activities

What staff resources?

- > Do you have the capacity to dedicate a member of staff to project manage your participation?
- > Do you have the right skills mix in your management team to not only manage the logistics of your participation but also to integrate the exhibition in your overall export strategy (ie plan marketing, pre-show appointment programs, commission any pre-event market research)

What time resources?

- > Is there adequate time to prepare for the event?
- > To maximise outcomes of your participation, a six month lead time is considered absolute minimum, twelve months is optimum

Do you wish to exhibit individually or part of a group stand?

- > At selected events, Austrade (at times in concert with state governments) organises National Stands. Being under an ‘Australia’ umbrella gives you the added imprimatur of government and leveraging off Australia’s positive image. As well as this, a lot of the coordination between you and the offshore event organiser is done by Austrade.

Contact Austrade and ask if Austrade is involved in the exhibition you are considering.

Follow-through capacity

- > Timely and thorough follow up on leads generated and contacts made from the event are crucial to the success of your participation .
- > Do you have the capacity (people/ budget) to execute follow up activities. Such as prompt letters/ emails to contacts made, return trips to the market, potential research to further assess and/or shortlist some of the partner/distributor leads identified from the event?

Step 2: Selecting the right exhibition

- > Information sources
- > What constitutes a “good” trade exhibition?
- > Checklist for selecting the right exhibition



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You have decided that participating in an international trade exhibition is right for building your export business – but how do you decide which one? There are literally thousands of events, covering every industry, in hundreds of cities across the world every year!

It's a relatively easy task to find an event covering your industry but the harder task is – how do you select the one which will deliver the RIGHT opportunities for your business?

The short answer is, conduct thorough research and speak to experienced people – such as Austrade, other Government agencies, industry associations and companies you know are involved in international events.

And keep in mind that it may be worthwhile attending an event as a visitor first, before becoming an exhibitor in a subsequent year.

The following is a broad checklist which may assist in selecting the right international trade event for your business.



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Information sources

On-line

The internet is an excellent source of trade show information, particularly for the United States, Asia and Europe.

- > Trade Show News Network
www.tsnn.com
- > M + A Publishers for Fairs, Exhibitions and Conventions GmbH
www.expobase.de
- > www.biztradeshows.com

Both tsnn.com.au and expobase.de have extensive databases with numerous search options.

The official organiser and show websites (once you know which event) are also a wealth of information.

Austrade, state governments and other government agencies support a program of international events every year. These programs of events, exhibitions, seminars and missions, are listed through their websites.

- > Australian Capital Territory Chief Ministers Department
www.business.act.gov.au
- > New South Wales Department of State and Regional Development
www.business.nsw.gov.au
www.smallbiz.nsw.gov.au
- > Northern Territory
www.nt.gov.au

- > The Queensland Department of State Development and Innovation
www.sdi.qld.gov.au
- > South Australia
www.expорта.sa.gov.au
- > Tasmania Department of State Development
www.development.tas.gov.au
- > Victoria State and Regional Development
www.diird.vic.gov.au
www.export.vic.gov.au
- > Western Australia Department of Commerce and Trade
www.doir.wa.gov.au

Austrade

Contact Austrade, the export promotion arm of your state government or your industry association.

Austrade events:
www.austrade.gov.au/events

At this website you will find information regarding Austrade's forward calendar of international exhibitions and outgoing trade missions, as well as domestic events – exhibitions, seminars and other events.

Austrade is annually involved with over 500 trade events around the world. This involvement varies from Austrade fully project managing an Australian National Stand to visiting the event and providing business services to individual participants.



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Our choice of exhibitions is based on the:

- > strategic value to the respective industry
- > level of export business potential for Australian companies
- > quality of visitors
- > credibility of the exhibition in the country

Remember, even if Austrade is not involved in the particular event you are considering, they can, via their international network, provide inside intelligence about events offshore, as well as advice on how to participate and how to maximise your participation.

Your business contacts

Take the opportunity to talk to any business associates or companies you know that have previously exhibited at international events. Ask them about their experiences and how they rated their participation. Don't be shy in asking – you'll find people will generally be pleased to share their experiences.

What constitutes a “good” trade exhibition?

Some points to consider when assessing an exhibition:

- > established and proven track record
- > well known and regarded by people in the industry and the market
- > availability of detailed and professional statistics and event report (a good web site is mandatory)
- > far reaching promotional campaign
- > excellent organisation – the official event's website, promotional materials, response time from the organisers and their helpfulness/level of service
- > testimonials from past exhibitors
- > big is not always best

Remember, there are now many specialised events covering vertical markets within sectors that may fit your product better than a huge general show in your industry.

Checklist for selecting the right exhibition

Determine your objectives

- > Market assessment?
- > Competitor analysis?
- > New product launch/product testing?
- > To establish contacts with potential customers/agents/distributors/partners?
- > To consolidate your presence in the market?

Event criteria

- > How many participants and exhibitors?
- > How many visitors?
- > Geographic spread of visitors?
- > How will this affect what you want to achieve?
- > Is it a regional or strictly domestic event?
- > Does it have trade only visitors or do public/consumers attend?

Content covered

- > How broad is the coverage of the event – or how narrow is it?
- > How niche is your product or service? If your product is aimed at a particular vertical market, a small niche event may be better for you than a larger, more general event.



Take the opportunity to talk to any business associates or companies you know that have previously exhibited at international events... you'll find people will generally be pleased to share their experiences.



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Format

- > Does the event have a symposium/ conference/demonstration session/ seminar that takes place as part of the event? How will this affect visitor flow?
- > Are there opportunities to present at one of these? If you are already active and established in the market it may be more advantageous for you to present to a high level targeted audience, rather than (or in addition to) exhibiting at the exhibition.

Participants and visitors

- > How do the organisers intend to promote the event?
- > What level of decision makers attend? What customer groups will be attracted?
- > Will your competitors be attending and in what capacity?
- > Will your targets be in attendance? Are you able to make appointments with them either prior to or during the show?

Cost

- > What are the costs outlined by the event organiser?
- > What is your budget for your stand, travel, staff and all your promotional activities and material?
- > What can you afford to budget for pre and post event promotional activities?

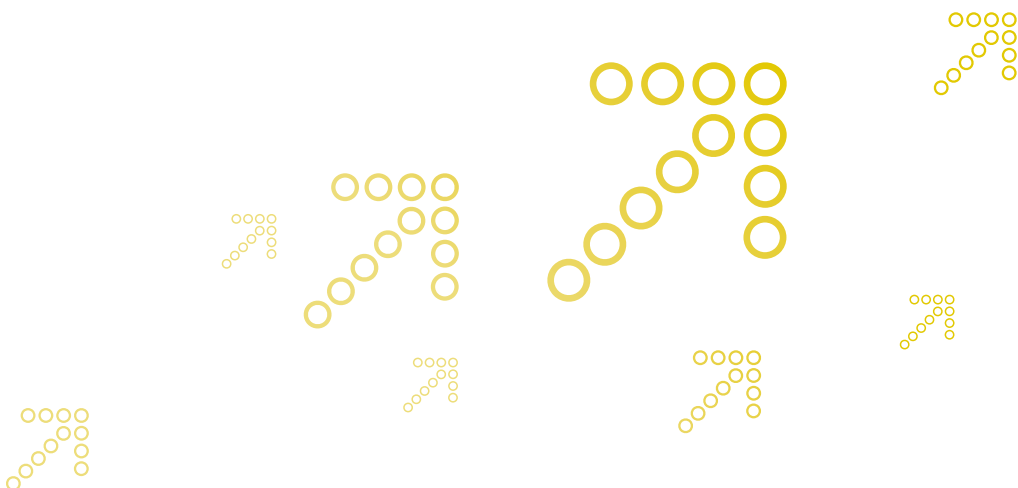
Government support

- > Is there an Australian National Stand being arranged for this event? If so, what package is on offer? (Participating on a national stand gives small and medium sized companies the opportunity to play above their weight. This can be especially powerful when one considers the trade event budget of the multinationals and large corporates who are competing for the same customer as you).
- > Or, if Austrade is not organising a National Stand, can they put you in touch with other Australian companies who are exhibiting?

Visit first

- > If you are in doubt about an event's exact suitability, it pays to first attend as a visitor. No amount of research can sometimes beat your own first-hand impression. Your research will quickly be confirmed or prompt more questions.
- > Remember, if you are only visiting the event, you may wish to consider using your trip to organise an appointment program before or after the event.

So remember, time spent in researching the right event for your business, will ensure you are well on the road to turning your participation into profit.



Step 3: Checklist for project managing an exhibition

- > Set objectives
- > Set budget
- > Your stand and booking space
- > Pre-show marketing
- > Other important logistical issues
- > Follow up



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You have committed to participating in an international trade exhibition. It's a major investment in your export strategy. You want it to deliver results and ultimately export dollars. Proper planning and good organisation are the cornerstones to ensuring the event's success for your company.

Planning ahead is the key to success

Twelve months is the optimal lead time to do justice to your investment. Naturally, it can be done in less.

Remember the key decisions – your strategy, objectives, budget and your stand – should be addressed first.

Knowing the key deadlines for the exhibition, logistical issues and planning pre-event marketing activities should commence at least six months before the exhibition.

It is also highly advisable to select and brief a 'Project Manager' from the outset. There are so many major and minor tasks to complete, a dedicated person is needed for the job.

The following points outline key issues you should consider to maximise the success of your participation. They are designed as a checklist to be worked through as you prepare for the big event.



Checklist for project managing an exhibition



Set objectives

Ask yourself what do you want your participation to achieve? Your objectives may be one or more of the following:

- > to assess the market and the opportunities for your product/service
- > to gauge market competitiveness or 'road test' your product
- > to identify potential customers/ agents/distributors/partners
- > to expand your market presence
- > to increase brand awareness
- > to support your existing relationships

Remember, setting these objectives is crucial – without objectives, you won't have anything against which to measure your success.

Set budget

Exhibitions are substantial investments. The following are all standard expenditure items:

- > stand costs – the actual space and your stand/display
- > equipment costs – ie hiring costs of furniture, equipment and electricals for your booth
- > pre-show marketing – advertising, market research, organising meetings with contacts
- > air fares, accommodation and visa costs (where applicable) for all staff

- > promotional costs such as samples and giveaways, promotional literature – including translation costs for these (where applicable)
- > freight costs – stand materials, literature, duties, product samples
- > entertainment
- > translation/interpreters
- > additional activities – attending events associated with the exhibition such as gala dinners, field trips and follow-up activities

Remember costs vary from country to country. Costs will also vary depending on the scale of your stand.

If you need any advice about costs, Austrade or your local state government export promotion arm and/or the event organisers can be useful sources.

Your stand and booking space

The next major decision to be made is booking your space at the event and deciding on your stand package. There are broadly speaking three options available to an exhibitor:

1) Purchase floor space only (ie cement) and construct a stand.

- > This option is for the more experienced exhibitor or for those companies who either have or want to create a purpose built stand/display. It will involve selecting and working with a stand design and construction company who will arrange the logistics on your behalf.

2) Purchase floor space and a walk-on package from the organisers.

- > This gives an exhibitor a basic stand with varying levels of packages including walls, carpet, lighting, fascia, furniture and power.
- > This is simpler and usually cheaper than the first option and is easy for those not familiar with exhibiting. The exhibit will be straightforward and will require the company to "dress" the booth according to the company's marketing requirements. You will then only need to liaise with the organiser regarding your equipment and furniture requirements.

3) Be part of a group or organised display.

Such as an Australian National Stand, industry association, state government promotion or in conjunction with another exhibitor.

- > This option is the most preferred by Australian companies. Companies are offered a single package which includes space, stand, furniture and fittings plus access to other benefits. The over-riding benefit is being part of a much larger display which increases overall visibility of your company within a large and busy trade event.

If you are uncertain about the different exhibiting options, speak to the event organiser, or seek advice from Austrade.

The location of your space within the exhibition venue is a crucial part of your planning. Try to determine and finalise this as soon as possible. Request a few options, ask questions about the space, physical layout of the venue, traffic flow and your near neighbours. Prime locations go quickly and as a first time, single space exhibitor, DO NOT expect the best location.

Austrade can also put you in touch with reputable stand designers and contractors, as can the event organisers. Generally, the exhibition organisers will have selected a nominated or 'preferred' stand contractor. You do not have to work with this contractor but you can expect that the nominated contractor will be reputable and have a good command of English.

Once you've made your decision about your stand, you'll need to pay a deposit.

Hints about designing and dressing your stand

Think about the purpose of the stand. Is it a place to hand out literature, receive enquiries or a place to hold important meetings? What activities will be happening on it? Food tastings? Wine tastings? Product demonstrations? Audio visual displays?

Always put yourself in the position of a potential customer. Would you be enticed to approach your stand?

Make sure you stand out from the crowd. The exhibits that get noticed are well planned, visually striking and thoughtfully laid out (not cluttered).

Remember, the 'look' of the stand should reflect your main 'message' and should be consistent throughout your stand.

Simple colour scheme and theme can be a good starting point. This can look professional and can be repeated through all aspects of the stand – staff uniform, promotional items, giveaways and all signage.

Remember your colours and theme can be as simple as using your existing company logo and corporate colours.

It pays to invest in quality promotional items – especially if you will be attending numerous exhibitions.

Once you have decided on your stand layout, you'll need to select and submit event forms to the organiser eg furniture, furnishings, power, water, plants, audio visual equipment.

Pre-show marketing

(For more detail on this topic see Step 4)

The purpose of pre-show marketing is to ensure your 'visibility' at the event, to promote your attendance to your current and potential customers and to ensure you meet and speak with the RIGHT people at the exhibition.

- Develop and implement your pre-show marketing strategy. It will include some or all of the following activities:
 - defining objectives for the exhibition
 - defining your target audience
 - implementing direct marketing activities
 - advising existing contacts of your presence at the show
 - arranging an appointment program during (and/or after) the exhibition



The purpose of pre-show marketing is to ensure your 'visibility' at the event and to promote your attendance to your current and potential customers.



- Target new contacts via a promotional campaign. This may include:
 - advertising in local and/or event media
 - mail outs, flyers, phone calls, invitations to events
- Follow up on direct marketing activities
- Develop press materials – press briefing kit
- Appoint a press contact within your own organisation. If finances permit, engage a professional PR person.
- Ensure deadlines are met for inclusion into the Show Catalogue – the event's main marketing tool. It lists all exhibiting companies and their products/services and is widely distributed.

Checklist for project managing an exhibition

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Other important logistical issues

Exhibitor manual

This is published by the event organisers and is the ‘bible’ for exhibitors. It is your absolute how-to for the event and will answer most exhibitors’ questions. It contains everything from the address of the venue, recommended suppliers and even how to hire a pot plant.

Exhibitors do not have to use the suppliers listed in the manual. They are merely a recommendation from the organiser. However, bear in mind, that it is often easier knowing who to contact and how much it will cost when in a foreign country.

Read the exhibitor manual as soon as it arrives. Don’t wait to get it – ring the organisers and ask when you can expect to receive the manual. NOTE: Some manuals are now on-line!

Complete your forms on time!

A note about forms

The manual will also contain many, many forms – each for an activity or service or product you may wish to use/hire.

- DO adhere to all the deadlines for the forms. If you miss them penalties may apply or, you may simply miss out on vital equipment or inclusion into certain publicity – such as the Show Catalogue.
- A wide selection of equipment and services can be hired from the manual including furniture, equipment, lighting, electrical, TVs, videos/DVDs, refrigeration, display cabinets, telephones – right down to rubbish bins and pot plants.

- While prices might seem high, consider them in light of the cost of buying the equipment either in the market (or freighting it over), and the convenience and the time saved by hiring.

Promotional literature and promotional items

Organise and order sufficient quantities of business cards, brochures, corporate materials, price lists, giveaways and stand display items. In the case of food, consider the quantity of samples required.

Arrange translation of materials where necessary. Check translated materials for grammatical/contextual correctness and for any potential to cause offence.

Ensure that all your ordering is done in accordance with freight deadlines.

Check your display materials for any cultural sensitivities. If you need any advice about this, speak to Austrade.

Freight

An extremely crucial item. You need to ensure that your freight arrives in advance of the opening day of the exhibition. Without it, you won’t have a display!

Before sending anything, check out the importing regulations for the country of destination. Freight forwarders, Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) and Austrade are useful starting points.

The majority of freight is moved by air, rather than sea.

Engage a freight forwarder who specialises in exhibition freight forwarding. They will be experienced, familiar with the procedures of exhibition freight and understand the need for getting your items there on time. The show organisers can provide you with recommendations.

Regardless of who you appoint to move your freight from Australia, they will have to deal with the nominated freight handler at the venue. This company has the SOLE rights to move all in-coming freight. They set all the freight deadlines and guidelines – take the time to understand them.

The on-site forwarder will clear your freight, store it until the exhibition and deliver to your booth the day before the exhibition.

This all-inclusive service is naturally at a higher cost than standard freighting. But remember it saves a lot of time and avoids potential costly problems.

If time permits, and you have large quantities, shipping is a cheaper option.

Insurance

Arrange travel, company liability and equipment insurance.

Travel and accommodation

Determine any visa requirements.

Don't leave your accommodation and travel bookings to the last minute. Demand for local hotels is very high around exhibition time, and you may end up a long, long way away from the venue (or in unsavory surrounds) if you don't book well in advance.

The Exhibitor Manual will contain a list of recommended hotels as well as accommodation packages. Some large events will also have a preferred airline offering flight packages. It's worth investigating these options.

Staff selection and training

A minimum of two staff should attend the exhibition (this is considered a minimum for a standard 9 sqm stand. A larger stand will require more staff)

Ideally they should be senior and authorised to make decisions.

They must be well briefed on the market, the event, the product and on your company's objectives for the event – as well as the expected end result.

Where English is not widely spoken it is highly recommended to employ an interpreter.

Capturing leads

Develop a system for capturing leads and an automatic system for follow up. This may be as simple as an inquiry notebook with business cards stapled to the corner or more technical, with an electrical business card scanner or visitor pass scanner.

By now you should have developed a profile of your business targets. Ensure that all staff on your stand are well briefed on this, and that there is a team approach to the lead capture system.

**Follow up
Last but not least!**

Good follow up will translate participation into success for your company. Ignore it and you may as well have stayed at home!

Develop in advance an automated and prompt follow up campaign such as pre-written letters/emails

- > Send them within a week of the show.
- > Ensure you deliver on promised information.

Consider staying on in the market after the exhibition. It's good to 'strike while the iron is hot' and visit the contacts that you are serious about.



Good follow up will translate participation into success for your company. Ignore it and you may as well have stayed at home!



Step 4: Planning pre-event marketing activity

- > **Setting your objectives for the event**
- > **Setting a pre-event marketing budget**
- > **Assessing your marketing options**
- > **Execution and follow up**



It is vitally important that a marketing strategy is planned as soon as you commit to the event. A well planned and well executed pre-show marketing strategy is crucial to your company's success at any trade event.

International trade events are busy and competitive environments. Having a pre-event marketing plan in place as early as possible will ensure that you are heard above the 'noise' and on the radar screen of your target audience – so that they will want to visit YOU at the event.

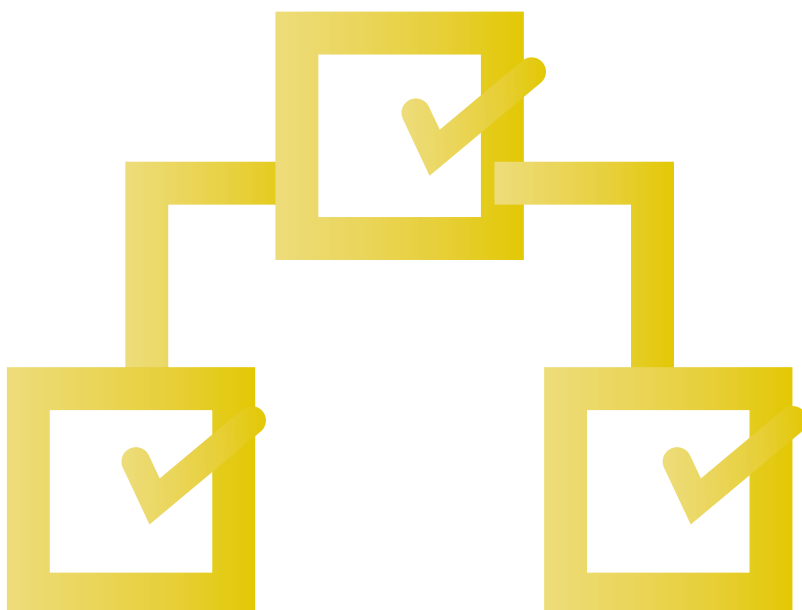
It's basically a simple four-step process:

- 1) Set your objectives
- 2) Set your budget
- 3) Assess your marketing options
- 4) Execute and follow up

When considering your strategy, always ensure that you communicate one key and simple message: What your product is, what solution it offers, and why it is superior to the current offerings.

Setting your objectives for the event

What do you want your participation to achieve? The answers will largely determine your strategy and determine what marketing mix is best suited to your business at this event!



Your objectives may be one or a combination of the following:

- to assess the market and the opportunities for your product/service
- to gauge market competitiveness or 'road test' your product
- to identify potential customers/agents/distributors/partners
- to expand your market presence
- to increase brand awareness
- to support your existing relationships

Setting a pre-event marketing budget

Always include a pre-event marketing budget when you set the overall budget for the trade exhibition. Don't view pre-show marketing as an adjunct or as an optional extra, it is just as important as your participation in the event itself and should be treated accordingly. Some of your marketing costs will be incurred in the country where the event is taking place. So allow a contingency for increases in costs and currency fluctuations.

Assessing your marketing options

There are a range of pre-event marketing tools at your disposal, but the ones you implement will largely depend on your objectives in participating.

Identify your target contacts and/or audience

Which may be:

- Groups of people (e.g. hotel catering managers)
- Individuals (e.g. senior fresh produce buyer at a major supermarket chain)

If you need assistance with identifying market contacts or target groups, speak to Austrade, who can assist with qualified contacts. Or review the show report or visitor profile of the event.

Direct marketing

Direct marketing is essential.

Prior to your participation ensure that you advise your existing contacts of your market visit and your booth number.

Also promote your participation and product to potential customers. This may be via direct mail or e-mail (e.g. letters, flyers) and/or phone calls.

Give them a compelling reason to visit you – e.g. invite them to a cocktail function, new product demonstration, your presentation at one of the conference sessions, etc. Remember to always include the 'benefit sell' message in your materials – why your product is superior to current offerings and provides a business solution to them.

Always follow up to 'sure up' their interest.

Appointment programs

In addition to your direct marketing campaign, it is wise to ensure that you have an appointment program with your key contacts in place (either at the event or afterwards) well before your departure.

It may not be possible to meet all your key or potential market contacts at the event, or you may find that the event environment is too busy and distracting for detailed discussions between you and your potential customers. Prior planning will ensure you actually get to meet your key people.

Event directory and advertising

You cannot afford not to be in the official show catalogue. All event organisers, publish an Event Directory – the 'bible' of the exhibition listing of all participating companies, their product/services, and their location at the exhibition. Entry into this is at no extra cost to you.

If your budget allows, investigate opportunities for advertising in the Event Directory, or key trade journals in the market. Of value are the big circulation broadsheets running features on the exhibition.

Media/PR

Prepare a media pack. This should contain media releases, contact details, how to find you at the event and company and product profiles. Make your release compelling and relevant to the market/region of the event. Engage a professional if you are able.

If possible, locate a professional PR person in-market to either write your release or check it for its local relevance. It's also more powerful if your release is distributed by a local PR person. They are known to the local media and can follow up more easily.

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Obtain a media contact list and the media schedule for the event from the organisers. Or another option is to enlist the assistance of Austrade to find out how you can best target the local media. Austrade can also put you in touch with good local PR people.

Other promotional avenues

Functions ie cocktail parties – inviting your key contacts and industry insiders to a cocktail event may be a good PR strategy to raise awareness of your company. As major trade events are temporary ‘hubs’ of your industry, a cocktail function can be a complementary promotional vehicle for your company.

Investigate what concurrent activities the event organisers have planned. Can you arrange a speaking or presenter opportunity at one the event’s concurrent symposiums/conferences? This can be a particularly effective vehicle for gaining profile if your company already has a foothold in the market.

Execution and follow up

Once you have put together your marketing plan – including a detailed budget and timeline of activities for execution – include follow up on each marketing activity as an integral part of the plan. You will then be on the road to ensuring event success (and ultimately export building success) for your company!

How Austrade can help

Austrade is well placed to assist in maximising the outcomes from your trade event participation. Austrade, via its international network and people on the ground, can assist you with services such as:

- > assessing the market opportunity for your product/service, and the competitive environment
- > identifying potential customers/ partners/agents, approaching them on your behalf, briefing them on your product/service and assessing their interest in meeting with you

- > organising in-market appointment programs
- > organising promotional events with groups of potential customers – ie cocktail parties, demonstration events. Austrade can assist with everything from venue selection and catering, to identifying invitees, mail outs and following up interest and RSVPs putting you in touch with reliable and bona-fide local service providers eg PR people, translators, interpreters.



Step 5: It's Show Time!

- > **Arrival on site at the exhibition venue**
- > **Visitor flow and buyer behaviour**
- > **Work the event**



The months of preparation will culminate at the opening of an exhibition. How well you have prepared will ultimately dictate how successful the exhibition is for your company.

Just to recap on a few of those crucial planning points:

- > have a 'show' strategy in place
- > brief and train staff on this strategy
- > arrange appointments with key buyers beforehand
- > have a system of capturing leads and an automatic system for follow up

Arrival on site at the exhibition venue

A representative from your company should aim to be on-site at the exhibition two days before the exhibition opens (at a minimum it should be no less than 24 hours before opening). Your representative should be the person most familiar with all your company's arrangements for the exhibition and have the power to make decisions.

You should have an idea when you arrive at the exhibition venue whether or not

everything is going to plan, or if there are changes that need to be made.

The first rule is to expect change. The second rule is to be adaptable.

Valuable activities before the exhibition opens include:

- > Obtain a floor plan from the organisers and make a note of the exhibition organiser's office, freight forwarder's office, stand contractors, the business or media centre and other suppliers you may be using.
- > Check your display to ensure that everything you have requested has been done. If not, request and arrange for changes to be made asap as these can take time during the busy time leading up to the opening (particularly things like graphics and structural changes to your stand).
- > Make sure you have the numbers of your key contact people before you arrive so you can contact them quickly.
- > Make contact with your freight forwarder. Take copies of your commercial invoices and documentation. Ask to see where

your freight is and/or request a time for it to be delivered to your stand (at your convenience!!!)

- > Take time to know the location of essential services, fire exits, refreshment lounges and medical centre, and convey this to the rest of your team when they arrive, along with copies of the floor plan you have made.
- > Conduct a final staff briefing ensuring that everyone knows the objectives and processes for capturing leads and schedules.

There may be time after all this to slip away and call contacts in the country to reaffirm your appointments and instil confidence that you've arrived and will be there.

Visitor flow and buyer behaviour

The same way people have certain behavioural patterns, so too do the crowds at exhibitions.

An event organiser may aim to bring people to the event but how, when and why buyers attend will be beyond everyone's control.

This is not to say you should have an identikit and personal file on all your potential customers. In most cases you won't know who you're looking for.

But it's in your interests to know a little about the potential audience at an event, and in particular, how to get them interested in your product.

For example, if the food service industry is your target, and you're keen to meet the chef or Food and Beverage Manager of the local Hyatt Hotel, then appreciate their commitments outside the exhibition. You can see how knowing the schedule of people can greatly assist your approach to an event.

Organisers can give you a feel for visitor attendance, especially if other events are happening at the same time as the exhibition (eg. conferences, seminars). Public holidays, local events and festivals, transport strikes, even the weather can all have an influence on visitor attendance. Grab a local paper as you arrive at the airport.

But it's not always possible to research it. The best sources of customer gossip are other exhibitors, your local contacts and where possible your agent. By keeping an ear to the ground a lot can be learned in the corridors of an event.

Spotting the 'genuine article'

How do you know if you're speaking to a genuine inquiry or lead? Do they look the same? Do they have the same job title?

The principles of selling and therefore 'knowing' who's hot and who's not is somewhat universal and intrinsic to the sales person. Your team may know this from their own experience.

The simple trick to achieving this aim is once again – preparation. You and your team should be able to build a profile of the sort of person you want to do business with and what job function they must fulfil.

The sort of person many Australian exporters are looking for at an exhibition is a reliable local partner to represent their company's interest in the market. This is one of the primary reasons for exporters attending exhibitions.

Understanding the differences in local partnerships and types of international business arrangements is an important first step in profiling your potential 'target'.

For example, an agent acts on your behalf in market, promoting and facilitating introduction to potential customers. They operate on a retainer, salary, commission (or all three) and do not take legal possession of stock.

A distributor on the other hand does take legal possession of goods, carries stock and usually performs after sales service.

You can start to see that deciding on your preferred method of representation in-market (something which may differ from market to market) will be the beginning of recognising who your local partner might be.

Here are some questions to consider:

- Do you require someone with technical or product knowledge?
- What type of customer are you looking for and can this person target them?
- Will your agent/distributor carry competitive products?
- What servicing or warehouse facilities do they have?
- Are government contacts important for business?

Work the event

If you think business will walk through the door of your booth, even with the best razzle dazzle display in the world and streams of business visitors walking around an exhibition – think again.

With a wide assemblage of products and people, from the market and around the world, a captive business opportunity is at your door – why not go out and look for it!

It pays to take a step outside your stand and go for a walk. (This is another good reason to have two people from your company attending the exhibition.)

It's also good to swap roles for a while – put yourself in the shoes of the visitor and buyer.

And if you think of a supermarket giving you, the consumer, the chance to see a wide range of products with various prices to choose from, then you should start to see exhibitions in much the same way.

An international event is a perfect chance to 'check out' what's what and who's not in the market.

What to look for?

Look for booths which catch your eye – what makes them different, what mechanisms are they using – colour, music, presentations, graphics, the approach by their staff?

Take time to look through the show catalogue beforehand and earmark products, companies and competitors you wish to visit.

A walk through an exhibition, dropping by booths of products you are interested in seeing, or meeting people, is a terrific way of conducting on the spot research. Leads can be generated quite simply by this process. This type of informal street level research is a must and one of the main advantages of a trade exhibition.

But while you walk around be conscious that the people you may approach are just like you – there to sell a product and have invested money to do so. Most are open to discussing partnership or other opportunities, but some may not. Similarly, if it's a competitor it may pay just to stand back and observe rather than speak directly to someone.

General tips for success

- Effective lead capture – have a system in place for identifying and recording leads. Group or classify the leads you made into three categories – high, medium and low value – and follow up on the high value leads before the event finishes. Collate and review all the contacts made and file them in a safe place. Be sure to identify the HOT prospects, especially those which require immediate follow up at the exhibition. These will be leads that cannot wait until after the event.
- Presentation – consider the appropriate business dress for the industry/country and wear comfortable shoes. Keep your stand tidy and presentable. Keep staff on their feet and at the front of the stand, encouraging visitors to stop and make inquiries. Be active and proactive.
- Staff on-site – ideally two staff who are well briefed on the export country, your product and who are decision makers in your business should attend the exhibition. In certain countries it is highly desirable to employ an interpreter to translate the language of the host country. Look after your staff, give them regular breaks and roster people to ensure they have variety through the event.
- Position – move your display and staff towards the aisle and traffic flow.
- Invite people to your stand – for drinks, hospitality, or meetings.
- Work the event – many exhibitors forget that potential business can be found among other exhibitors at the show. Take a walk and look around the exhibition – but don't leave your stand unattended! There's huge market research potential in an exhibition – new product ideas, assess competitors, latest industry news.
- Devise a plan of attack – visit target stands each day. Divide and conquer – one member of your team on the stand, one scouting the halls. Fellow exhibitors can generate "hidden" business.
- Be ready to export – visitors to an exhibition are looking to do business now, not when the exporter is ready to supply.

Step 6: Getting the most out of trade exhibitions- Turning your practice into profit

- > Devise a follow-up plan prior to event
- > Post event report
- > Post event de-brief
- > Ongoing
- > Allocate and action



The show is now over. You've come away with a swag of promising new contacts and gained valuable insights into what your competitors are doing, as well as what your potential customers are seeking. These contacts and your market intelligence are only the first stage in building your business in the market. It's the work you do post the event that will be the key to your ultimate success.

So with opportunities in your mind, and the hot new leads in your hand, there is one all important task ahead that will make or break the event's success for your company – FOLLOW UP.

Lack of prompt and dedicated follow up is akin to flushing your valuable investment down the toilet. It's THE aspect of your participation that will ultimately turn your investment into export dollars and profit.

Follow up professionally and promptly.

Devise a follow-up plan prior to event

Prior to even attending the event, ensure you have a planned and semi-automated follow up campaign in place:

- > Decide how and how soon and by whom contacts made at the event will be followed up. Naturally, this will be subject to change, but it helps to have a plan in place that you can then simply institute.
- > Ensure you have pre-written letters/ emails that can, with minimal editing, be sent out to your interested contacts. It's much more efficient to have a 'pro-forma' in place before you leave, rather than have to focus on writing complete new letters at the conclusion or during the show when you are busy and tired.

Post event de-brief

Hold a post-event de-brief. Do this at the conclusion of the show, or within 24 hours. It's important to do it while all is still fresh in your mind and you are still focused on the exhibition. Collate all the details of the contacts made and ensure none 'fall between the cracks'.

Allocate and action

Assess follow up requirements and allocate the tasks. Analyse the contacts and prioritise the follow up.

Action follow up requirements:

- > Send any letters, emails or any telephone follow up within a week of the show. If you wait longer, chances are one (or several) of your competitors may get in first, or your potential customer may lose interest.
- > Ensure you deliver on promised information

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- Organise follow up meetings with interested parties. It's worth extending your stay in the market to meet with the leads and contacts that you are most serious about. There's nothing better than immediate face-to-face follow up, especially while you are still fresh in the mind of your potential customers. If possible, arrange to meet at their premises. This will provide some valuable insight into their credentials.

Post event report

Write a post-event report to:

- Measure success against your objectives and investment
 - Highlight immediate follow up action
 - Note lessons learnt and improvements for next time
- Consider your short, medium and longer term market strategy in light of the event and detail this
- Consider how you are going to tackle the next steps – and what people and financial resources will be required. You may need to commit more resources from within your own organisation and/or enlist external assistance such as Austrade

Ongoing

Undertake on-going follow up tasks such as:

- detailed assessment of your leads – verification of their bona fides, assessment of their suitability for your product/service
- relationship building
- how Austrade can help

You may lack the necessary intelligence and resources to sift through the volume of contacts made at the show, qualify the interest and take matters to the next stage. Or it may be difficult to verify the bona fides of some of your serious contacts from Australia. Or you may need some assistance with organising a follow-up visit program when you return to the market.

Austrade has a range of services that can assist you in furthering your market strategy, including:

- contacting key leads from the show to qualify their interest
- forwarding your company literature to confirmed positive contacts
- investigating and verifying the bona fides of the contacts you are serious about

- helping you prepare preliminary business proposals in the local language
- providing you with advice on business language/customs in correspondence, proposals etc
- putting you in touch with reputable and experienced service providers in the market such as accountants and lawyers
- arranging follow-up meeting programs for you
- arranging the visits of your key potential customers to Australia
- providing advice on how to set up an overseas office

Financial Assistance

Investigate Austrade's Export Market Development Grant (EMDG) Scheme. You may be entitled to some financial assistance via EMDG. This grant provides a partial rebate on eligible export marketing costs, including exhibitions. Contact Austrade for more information.

Exhibition Checklist

Deciding to Participate:

- Participation in the event will help achieve my export strategy
- Have the financial capacity to participate
- Have the capacity to dedicate staff
- Have the time to adequately prepare for the event
- Product/service is ready for the international marketplace

Selecting the exhibition:

- Have researched on-line, talked to the event organiser, contacted Austrade and spoken to some previous exhibitors
- Event appears to be a quality exhibition
- Size, visitors, format, content, cost and support at the event will help me achieve my objectives

Preparation:

- Space booked and location confirmed
- Stand organised
- Read the exhibitor manual
- Completed my forms
- Promotional literature and items organised
- Freight
- Insurance
- Travel and accommodation
- Staff selection and training
- Developed a "profile" of my business targets
- Identified a local partner - importer, distributor, agency arrangement

Pre-Event Marketing:

- Set objectives
- Determined a project budget and allocated funds
- Identified my target market/audience
- Direct Marketing Plan
- Sent invitations
- Arranged Appointment Programs during the exhibition
- Event Directory and advertising
- Media/PR

Show Time:

- Obtained a floor plan
- Familiarised myself with the venue
- Staff briefing
- Lead capture
- Presentation
- Checked out the exhibition
- Ready to export

Follow up:

- Follow up plan devised prior to the event
- Post event de-brief
- Allocation of tasks
- Follow up actions
- Post event report

Talk to Austrade about leads and contacts and your strategy for follow-up.

For more information on Austrade International Exhibitions:

Phone: 13 28 78 Email: exhibitions@austrade.gov.au

Website: www.austrade.gov.au/events