

Top Tips on Exhibiting at Business events for the first time

The Liverpool BA Team have been holding B2B events for over 20 years so we have seen hundreds of companies exhibiting in that time and have witnessed a very wide variety of stands and displays - some impressive but others less so. There have also been widely differing approaches in the way that exhibitors engage with visitors and you can tell when something isn't going to work!

We have decided to share some of our observations and experiences...



Over a 20 year period you would expect that there would be some changes but the events industry has seen some revolutionary developments, especially in marketing activities and display equipment.

Two decades ago, marketing a B2B event would often involve having thousands of leaflets sent out by post and would request those interested in exhibiting to fill in a form and return via some form of reply paid facility. Move forward to today and much of this marketing activity is online and digital, with many events allowing exhibitors to book and pay via a website and making it simple for visitors to register for events and workshops. And social media has become a major method of marketing and promoting events.

What do you want to achieve by exhibiting?

There are lots of factors you should consider when deciding whether or not to exhibit at a business event. At its simplest, you can view a business exhibition as a shop window for the day, with the opportunity to promote your business to visitors and fellow exhibitors.

But in order for you to get the most out of exhibiting, you should think about what you want to achieve and what are your priorities. For example you might want to improve your profile as a start up business or increase awareness of a new product range. Or simply to increase your personal contacts or develop better links with particular types of business.

Your target outcomes should be reflected by what you do at the event and how you promote your attendance.

Display Options and What size space?

If you already have display equipment (such as roll up banners) or have a stand alone type of display then you might be restricted as to what size of space you will need. For example if you have invested in a 4m wide by 2m high promotional display then this will probably be the space that you require.

If you have one or two roller banners (typically 1.8-2.0m high and 0.8-1.0m wide) then you have a lot more flexibility.

Roller banners are probably the most common and affordable display option, costing £50-£125 each - varying in terms of quality and durability.

What type of promotional items to use?

In common with lots of other event products, the range and affordability of promotional items and giveaways has changed dramatically in recent years. Many products that used to have large minimum orders are now available in short run quantities and this allows you to try some things out without over spending.

The most popular giveaways still tend to be things like pens, pencils, coasters, mugs, stress balls etc. but one thing to bear in mind with these promotional items is their longevity - mugs and coasters will have a longer lasting effect than pens and pencils (which eventually run out). And although mini chocolates with your own printed wrappers may disappear quickly from your stand, the wrappers are probably thrown away just as quickly (so if you did buy some of these, make sure it is not the only promotional item that you have).



Some exhibitors value their promotional items so highly that they are reluctant to give any away - and this defeats the object of having them in the first place. Bear in mind that many people are polite and may feel self-conscious about taking something off your stand, especially if you are busy talking to someone else. So maybe put a sign on your stand along the lines of 'Please take a pen with our compliments' and at the bottom something like 'and it would be great if you left one of your business cards in our box'.

Do's and Don'ts

Visibility of your Stand

When you are thinking of what to put on your stand, take a step back and look at it as though you were a visitor to the event. Pretend you were scanning the room just to get a quick view of what types of companies are there and any offers that may be available. If you were say 10m away from a particular exhibition stand then you should be able to tell what that company does and if there are any offers available (and roughly what they are). This raises a number of issues such as is the type you are using on displays etc big and legible enough and does it convey the message that you want? Do your pop up banners and displays work with a table in front of them, or does the table obscure important text or messages. If you are running a special promotion or offer, are you advertising this on your stand and is it clear and visible.

A friendly Welcome

You have invested in an exhibition stand and want maximum return. So you send out four of your keenest sales staff and tell them to get as many people to the stand as possible. But put yourself in the visitor's shoes again and you would realise that the impression being given will be one of tigers ready to pounce.



At the other end of the scale, we have seen exhibitors with one member of staff on the stand but they are sitting at the table with their head down concentrating and working on their laptop. We have also witnessed an exhibiting company sending two people to be on their stand - they arrived with just enough time to set up their display, put some leaflets on the table, and as the event was starting they moved to the back of their stand and positioned their chairs to face each other so they could talk more easily. **They might as well have put up a sign saying 'Do Not Disturb'!**

Obviously it is much better to be somewhere between these extremes with one or two people on your stand that look friendly and ready to talk to visitors without putting them in a headlock.

Target New Prospects but Don't Forget Existing Customers

An important reason for exhibiting at events is to grow your business contacts and networks. But many exhibitors also use the event as an invaluable opportunity to engage with their existing customers but also to reconnect with lapsed or infrequent customers. How often will you get the chance to do something like that in the space of one day?

Promoting your presence

Although larger exhibitions may last several days or even weeks, the vast majority of B2B exhibitions take place over the course of one day. So the day itself is obviously important but don't miss out on all of the opportunities before and after the event.

For example one of your objectives might be to increase your links with local accountants so you should do as much as possible (enlisting the help of your event organisers) to invite and engage with local accountants in the run up to the event and encourage them to visit you on your stand (even better if you have some sort of special offer just for them).

Similarly after an event you might wish to make some sort of post event offer to the contacts that you made and anyone else that visited (again asking your event organisers to assist in this process).

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