

PREPARING FOR AN EXHIBITION



Exhibitions are a highly-effective way of raising your profile. This guide looks at how you can improve your results by ensuring your message reaches the widest possible audience.

Exhibitions take a lot of organising; the stand design, its position, what marketing material is available and who will be dealing with visitor enquiries at the show. You might be thinking about special promotions or special offers to help create extra interest. These are all essential elements of a successful show and need careful planning. However just thinking about the immediate execution of the show and its follow-up means that opportunities to promote your company *outside* of the exhibition hall are sometimes missed – opportunities that with a little forward planning could help ensure your marketing campaign has a far greater visibility than might otherwise have been the case.

Your marketing starts when the organiser's does

A common mistake is not utilising the facilities put in place by the show organisers to promote the event. The main attraction for any exhibition is not the seminars, demonstrations or features – it's you, the exhibitor: That's what most visitors are coming to see. It is therefore your information that is of the greatest value to both the organiser and you.

Organisers go to enormous lengths to publicise their events through direct mail, advertising, email campaigns, PR campaigns, websites, flyers and news sheets. All of these channels provide incredibly useful marketing opportunities for you. And the best part of it is...they are usually free.

To capitalise on these opportunities, you need to be prepared. This means having useful material to hand that you are able to supply to the organisers as part of their build-up to the show. Remember, we are talking up to *six months in advance* of the event itself, so you need to be well organised. Useful material means interesting and relevant stories, of the sort that might persuade someone to visit your stand at the show. An example might be, a new product to be launched at the show, a special offer for the duration of the event or some other kind of promotion. It could even be news about a new service or product you've recently started supplying. Anything that would make you think "I'd like to find out more about that" is a potential winner.

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Exploit the channels to your advantage

The first step is the simplest one: When your exhibitor manual arrives ...*read it all!* It is a fact that many exhibitors do not spend nearly enough time looking at what marketing channels the organiser has provided for them and how they can be used to their advantage. For example, they'll often publish exhibitor stories on the show's website; send out email marketing newsletters in advance of the show and run a show blog site. The larger shows often have printed show newspapers and magazines. All of these are potential outlets for your company news. Read through the exhibitor manual and find out what information they need and when. And don't just stop at one story – send two or three good stories, supported by good quality photographs, together with information on any promotions you'll be running.



Use the power of the internet to boost your visibility

Search Engine Optimisation, or SEO, is a phrase we hear a lot of these days. Although it's a complex subject in its own right, simply getting your stories published on the internet will help search engines find your company website.

Don't forget about Social Media – Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn are the most popular services used by businesses. Setting up an account is free, and posting your stories (including keyword links) will help make your website show-up in searches better. Don't forget official show sites on services like Facebook and LinkedIn can be used to meet visitors even before the show opens, meaning that when you do eventually meet, you're dealing with a qualified lead rather than a prospect.



And finally... don't forget the media

The trade press likes to cover exhibitions because a busy journalist or editor can meet a lot of companies in a short space of time. However with the best will in the world, an editor is not going to visit every stand and unless you signal your presence at the show, there's a good chance you'll be missed.

The best way to do this is to make sure you have provided the show's press office with a press pack. The press office is used as a base by visiting journalists, so it's a convenient place for them to pick up information about your company via your press pack. Again, it's startling how many companies fail to utilise this free promotional opportunity. Don't be one of them: Many key magazines will be writing show reviews, which means editors will be looking for interesting products to write about. Make it easy for them and you could be rewarded with publicity that travels further and lasts a lot longer than the show and its immediate impact.

What's in the press pack?

Editors and journalists will be visiting the show in person, so it is extremely important that you prepare plenty of press packs in advance of the show and deliver them to the Press Office before the show opens. During the show, it is a good idea to pop into the press office from time to time to make sure they haven't run out.

Make it stand out...

A nicely-presented press pack containing one or more interesting press releases is perhaps the most effective way of getting your products noticed by the media.

...but keep it simple

Try and be creative in your approach, but not over-the-top. A thoughtful promotional item included in your press pack might help to sell your story, but a bagful of cheap gimmicks probably won't; A simple company brochure can help give useful background to your press release, but a weighty collection of irrelevant marketing material will ensure it stays on the shelf.

CREATING A PRESS RELEASE FOR YOUR COMPANY



Press releases are a really effective way to publicise your involvement in an exhibition and promote your company. The trade press likes to cover exhibitions because they are an efficient way of gathering information about new products and services. In the run-up to the show, and at the show itself, editors and journalists will be actively searching for stories to print about new products, new services and newsworthy events. But unless you make this information easily accessible to them, it's likely you'll miss out on this opportunity.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD PRESS RELEASE?

There's no magic formula to writing a successful press release, however there are a few ground rules that will help your story get noticed. You should ideally keep your story brief (300-500 words) and focused on the product or service you are writing about. Put the most important facts at the top and try to make your headline really descriptive and catchy.



Don't forget to add your contact details at the bottom!

Include a good quality photograph to support your story - it really helps!

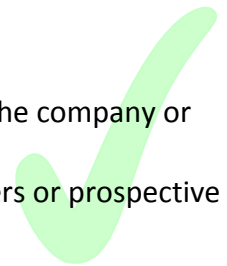
PRESS RELEASES ARE NOT...

- Sales brochures
- Adverts
- Spec. sheets
- Company histories
- Personal resumes
- Irrelevant facts and figures



PRESS RELEASES ARE STORIES ABOUT...

- New products
- New services
- Interesting events within the company or the industry
- Issues relevant to customers or prospective customers



SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Is your story interesting? If you want to get your company mentioned in the press, you must have something interesting to say; Put yourself in the mind of the reader – try to think of what they will find most interesting about your product or company.

Don't Delay Most magazines will need your story 6-8 weeks ahead of publication, so it's never too early to start thinking about what you want to say. Don't forget that some magazines will be previewing the show, so they'll need stories even earlier than this. Organisers also produce newsletters and news bulletins for editors, so the sooner they get your story, the more chance you have of getting it published.

Make your own headlines! News is not just about products: What about that big contract win? What about that new machinery you just bought? There are very few businesses that don't have a good story to tell.

Spread the word: Let existing customers know you'll be at the show - why not add a show banner to your website to help publicise your presence? Send pre-registered tickets to existing prospects and customers. How about adding a promotional message to your outgoing emails? You could even use your own company blog to keep customers up to date on your preparations and what you'll be exhibiting. Exhibitions are a great opportunity to strengthen ties with existing customers as well as new ones.



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Here are some of the key checkpoints to remember.

1. As soon as possible, think about the products and services you will be exhibiting at the show and how you can use news stories to promote them.
2. Decide who will be producing your press releases, press packs and any marketing material you will require. If you use a PR company, you should brief them as soon as possible. If you intend writing your own material DO NOT delay. You have much less time than you think!
3. Make sure you have adequate supplies of brochures, flyers and any promotional items you may need. Don't forget to organise enough press packs and deliver them to the Press Office **BEFORE** the show opens. If placing your packs on the shelf – please be considerate of others and don't remove or cover their literature.
4. If you have a news story, send it to the show's press officer so it can be used in pre-show promotional material, newsletters and news bulletins to editors.
5. Let the organisers know in advance if you are planning any kind of event at the show such as a product launch, press briefing, prize draw or special promotion. The show's press officer will help publicise your event through their website, news bulletins and newsletters. They'll usually keep a diary of press events so they can advise a time when your event won't clash with someone else's.

CAN WE HELP?

EIDO Public Relations Ltd. has many years experience in technical and industrial PR, and helping clients get the most from their marketing. We are happy to offer advice on writing publicity and press releases, and we also offer a number of services at specially discounted rates for exhibitors at certain events. Please see www.eido-pr.eu/special_offers.asp



Professional editing - If you already have something written but want to have it professionally edited for style and content, this service is available for a very modest one-off fee.

Press release writing & distribution - Simply supply us with the background to your story and an idea of what you'd like to say and we will produce a professional press release for you and distribute it to trade publications relevant to the show. If you're not sure about what you could say, then get in touch - we'll be very happy to help identify a suitable story for you.

Email newsletters & mailshots - Keep customers and contacts informed about your products and services through an email newsletter? We offer a complete design and distribution service for all kinds of promotional email.

We are here to help you - Please call us or email enquiries@eido-pr.eu for more information and free, no-obligation advice on any aspect of your PR and marketing.

ABOUT EIDO PUBLIC RELATIONS

Eido PR is a specialist technical PR and industrial marketing agency that can help you connect with new customers in the UK, Europe and Asia. We have extensive direct experience in engineering and industry, allowing us to write about technical topics clearly and with real credibility.

We offer a wide range of consultancy and marketing services and we'd be delighted to talk to you about your needs and how we can help you achieve success. Please visit our website www.eido-pr.eu for more information,

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