

Exhibitor Tips

Christchurch | Wellington | Auckland

The
Food
Show

Careful planning and promotion are essential for your successful participation at The Food Show. The following tips are provided to assist with your planning and ensure that you receive the maximum benefits and returns on your investment.

Pre-show planning

Setting objectives

Objectives are necessary to give direction to your effort, establish budget requirements, stimulate sales performance, measure results, and establish value. They must be measurable in quantity and quality, achievable in a defined period of time, and consistent with your company's goals, policies, and marketing plan.

Consider what you want to achieve

- Sell products or services.
- Generate leads.
- Close sales.
- Solicit new distribution channels.
- Enhance existing customer relationships.
- Build brand awareness.
- Demonstrate a technically complex product.
- Develop product awareness.
- Outshine the competition.
- Perform market research.
- Launch or test a new product.
- Gain media exposure.
- Create a mailing list.
- Increase market share.

Set specific objectives

- Why are you participating?
- What products/services will you feature?
- What features and benefits are key?
- What results do you want to get?
- What will you do to achieve these results?
- What is the message you want to impart about your company and product?

10 Steps to success at The Food Show

Each component works together to create synergy and success

1. Read your exhibitor manual (available approx two months prior to each event) and any other communications from North Port Events.
2. Set realistic objectives.
3. Plan a strategy and a budget.
4. Determine resources necessary to achieve objectives.
5. Establish methods for evaluating results.
6. Train staff.
7. Integrate publicity and promotion plans.
8. Use the organisers and their resources effectively.
9. Prepare post show strategy and follow up leads after the show.
10. Review and use lessons learned to improve for next time.

Benefits of pre-show promotion and publicity

You've invested time and resources to develop an effective stand and train staff, don't leave visitor attendance at your stand up to chance. By promoting special incentives and your participation in the show, you can guarantee success before the show even starts. The walk-in traffic will be a bonus.

Pre-show promotion:

- Encourages visitors to put you on their list of exhibitors to see.
- Differentiates your company and the products you'll be launching at the show as well as new features, applications, etc.
- Enhances existing customer relationships and loyalty.
- Generates editorial coverage and PR.
- Produces enthusiasm and anticipation for the event.
- Creates awareness for your company.



Ways to leverage your presence at the Show:

1. Our website

The Food Show website attracts large numbers of page impressions and unique visitors prior to, during and immediately following each show.

There are a number of different ways exhibitors can leverage off The Food Show website, including listing any of their new products or special offers. The pages on which these appear are two of the most visited ones on the website prior to the show. Don't miss this key promotional opportunity – forms for these promotional offers are available in the Exhibitor Manual.

2. Complimentary tickets

You will receive a small complimentary ticket allocation with your stand booking and you can also order more tickets from the organisers at discounted exhibitor rates.

Effective ways to use your tickets to support your campaign include:

- Send complimentary tickets to customers and prospects with a personal letter highlighting why they should come to the show, what they'll see at your stand, where you'll be located and where to call for more information. Send an extra ticket for them to pass on to a colleague.
- Include a printed announcement of what you'll be demonstrating at the show.
- Invite potential trade contacts.

- Insert tickets into invoices, order fulfilment, and other business correspondence.
- Use tickets as competition giveaways (i.e. on your Facebook or Twitter pages).

A carefully thought out campaign, dovetailed with existing advertising, PR and direct mail campaigns can reap excellent rewards.

3. Direct mail

Plan a campaign of phased mailings, spaced about three weeks apart. Mailing examples:

- a. A letter of invitation from your MD or letter with a floorplan showing your stand location.
- b. A reminder postcard.
- c. A copy of your advertisement.
- d. A formal invitation to your company's special event, product launch, demonstration or seminar.

4. Advertising in relevant magazines

Consistent advertising builds awareness, generates stand traffic, and predisposes your audience to your sales pitch. Independent surveys indicate a direct correlation between stand traffic and the number of exhibitors running advertisements in magazines. For example, link in your existing advertising with your participation in the show. Simply add a tagline saying "see us on stand ### at The Food Show" and include the exhibition logo.

5. Communication

Let all your networks know they can see you at the show (including social networks such as Facebook and

Twitter). Have a sentence on your monthly accounts, on your email signature, or your newsletter that says "See us on stand ### at The Food Show". Remember: other forms of advertising are great for telling your market about your product, but the Food Show is where they can see it, try it, and buy it. So let as many people as possible know that you'll be there.

6. Logos

Show logos are available from The Food Show website. The logo can be used to enhance your participation. Use the show logo in conjunction with your company logo on ads, t-shirts, stickers, flyers, or customer newsletters. Add it to your company website or your email signature.

7. Press releases

Often North Port Events is asked by media for specific stories about exhibitors at the show – so please send your press releases to us for consideration. Use the online form to upload and if you have any questions, contact Bibi at bianca@nthport.co.nz.



At the exhibition: exposure opportunities

Press coverage

Journalists and media visit The Food Show looking for topical stories, new innovations, surprising inventions, significant trends, etc – so make sure you're prepared to meet them with press kits available at your stand. Include only information that would be helpful in writing an article. Try not to include too much information – a press kit is not a sales kit. Imagine you were explaining your products or services to a stranger and put the most important info first.

A typical press kit folder contains:

- Fact sheets about your products.
- Photographs of your product in use with a caption.
- Case studies or testimonials from your clients.
- News and feature articles about your company and products.
- Background information on the company founder, company history, patented processes, current CEO, or other important issues.

Staff selection

The more visible your presence at the show, the more visitors you will attract to your stand. However, your success largely depends on the collective talent, product knowledge, and energy level of the sales staff on your stand. Take the time to select the right exhibition team and then train them on what the company hopes to accomplish at the show.

Selection factors:

- Personality.
- Attitude towards exhibitions.
- Previous performance and experience.
- Product and industry knowledge.

Staff briefing

In addition to general sales training, all stand staff should be fully briefed before the event on what they will be required to sell or communicate and to whom at the show.

The exhibition briefing should include items such as:

- Your show objectives.
- Target audience.
- Stand location.
- Personal responsibilities.
- List of other stand staff.
- Show hours.
- Equipment to be demonstrated.
- Enquiry handling procedures.
- Competitions/incentives/giveaways.
- Duty schedule.
- Dress.
- Products/services on display.
- Accommodation arrangements.
- Personal targets.

Staff dress

If you choose to create a uniform look for your staff, be specific. If you decide to use matching sweaters or colourful shirts imprinted with your company's logo, make sure you are also specific about the colour and type of pants, skirts, and shoes your staff must wear to complete the look. And we recommend comfy shoes for those long hours on your feet!

Consider dressing your staff in fun costumes as another way of making your stand attractive. You can turn your staff into a network of moving advertisements for your company. Your staff can be made easily identifiable anywhere on the exhibition floor. Your dress code can be used to promote a team atmosphere among staff. If your staff are in uniforms or costumes, you eliminate the inevitable bad wardrobe choices like sloppy shirts and old jeans.

Be careful. The high visibility created by uniforms and costumes makes it essential that your staff are on their best behaviour at all times, on and off your stand.



Good stand design

The aim of your stand design should be to attract maximum attention from prospective visitors. Good design will help you achieve your show objectives and also reflect the professionalism of your organisation. Exhibition stand design is a specialised function and should be undertaken by professionals with experience in this field. Your designer or stand contractor should receive a carefully prepared written brief that clearly states your show objectives.

If designing your own stand, consider the following:

- Your company identity and corporate image should be well projected.
 - Effective lighting will literally highlight your display in the exhibition.
 - Lighting that creates movement effects – such as mirror-balls and rotating spotlights – can be eye-catching and attractive.
 - Easy access to your display as well as access onto your stand will facilitate interest.
 - Do not create unnecessary physical barriers.
 - Demonstrations and activity on your stand will attract visitors.
 - Remember to use the word “NEW”. It is possibly the most powerful word in the exhibition industry.
 - Avoid a confusing or messy display. Keep the message simple.
 - Resist the temptation to cover your shell scheme walls with leaflets, brochures and posters.
 - Professionally produced signs or display panels should be prepared prior to the show.
- Keep messages and signs high. Visitors and furniture can block visibility.
 - Use upper and lowercase lettering. Signs all in upper case are more difficult to read.
 - Ensure staff are readily identifiable and easily distinguished from other visitors.
 - The biggest sin in any advertising is not to invite the prospect to register interest. Don't forget the call to action.

Demonstrations

The competition is right next to you. The noise level is high. Your audience is easily distracted. They have varying levels of technical knowledge. Can a demonstration really be effective?

Yes! Demonstrations are a key element in show strategy, but effective demonstrations require practiced skills and expert interactive communication with the audience:

- Be aware of visitors' first, and frequently lasting, impressions.
- Practice your demonstration. You'll be better able to respond to questions.
- Know every aspect of the equipment or product before the show. Your level of preparation is a reflection of you and your company.
- Position yourself so that you can see the audience and the product. Keep people from standing behind you where they can't see you.
- Make eye contact. Convey commitment and interest with your eyes. Acknowledge newcomers to the demonstration.

- Use body language to convey confidence and conviction. Use gesturing for emphasis and impact, or to compare and contrast what you are demonstrating.
- Anticipate questions and prepare answers prior to the show. Know who on your staff can answer a question when you can't.
- Restate questions so everyone can hear and, if necessary, tone the question down to make it less difficult to answer.

Recognising the needs and motivations of visitors

Visitors are likely to fall into one of six categories:

1. The Go-Getter – these visitors have a clear agenda of what they want to achieve, they are happy to be approached, and are keen to discuss their requirements knowing the information they obtain will help them make an informed purchasing decision.
2. The Reluctant Interviewee – these visitors don't like being sold to. They are wary of giving away too much about themselves for fear that they are handing over control. These visitors require careful handling. They mustn't be pushed too hard for information, but gently encouraged to volunteer it.

3. The Introvert – many people are introvert by nature and feel self-conscious stepping onto an exhibition stand. Introverts will often hover on the edges of a stand, reluctant to commit themselves to stepping in, but when engaged in conversation will be happy to discuss their needs. The staff member, however, will need to be careful not to scare off the visitor with their initial approach.
4. The Time-Waster – time-wasters are more than willing to discuss just about anything – in slow, drawn-out detail. Unfortunately, they usually have no authority to buy and no money to spend. It is a good idea to pre-arrange with other staff members some methods of extracting yourselves, or each other, from the clutches of such visitors – politely!
5. The Free-Loader – these visitors are more interested in your free giveaways than your displays and take up valuable space that may be required for serious business discussions. You should have a firm policy on how to handle such visitors.
6. The Old Friend – exhibitions are great places for bumping into old friends and acquaintances. As a result, precious sales time that should be spent forging and developing new business is all too easily frittered away catching up on old times. Socialising should be saved for the evenings.

9 ways NOT to greet visitors

It is critical for your staff to create a welcome atmosphere that makes it appealing for visitors to want to stop by. What you don't do can be as important as what you do.

1. Don't sit. You give attendees the impression you don't care or you're lazy. Visitors won't interrupt your private time, as they see it.
2. Don't read. You aren't able to make eye contact with visitors as they walk by your stand.
3. Don't eat or drink. It is just plain rude and messy. Potential customers are too polite to bother you when you're eating. Remember there is an exhibitor lounge where you can get away for a break.
4. Don't ignore visitors. If you're busy when someone approaches, either acknowledge him/her or try to include him/her in your conversation. If you're talking with a colleague, break it off immediately.
5. Don't talk on the telephone. Time on the phone is time away from potential prospects and tells everyone you have better things to do.
6. Don't be a border guard. Don't stand where you become a barricade or block the visitor's view. Stand near the aisle and off to the side.
7. Don't hand out literature freely. Your catalogues and brochures end up in a bag with everyone else's literature. Be discriminating about who gets literature. Better

yet, mail them out to qualified prospects after the show.

8. Don't underestimate prospects. Get out of the habit of sizing up somebody simply by the way they look. Qualify them – don't classify them.
9. Don't cluster with friends and other staff. Don't be a "street gang". Nobody will approach a group of strangers – it's too intimidating. Make yourself more approachable.



Security tips

Nothing will ruin a successful exhibition experience more than the loss or theft of expensive equipment or products. Here are some basic steps you can take to prevent theft:

- As exhibition organiser, in conjunction with our security company, we provide a measure of security. Despite our best intentions, however, we cannot guarantee the security of your products. Only you and your staff are responsible for your valuables.
- Escort your merchandise and/or goods to your stand yourself, if possible. The greatest risk of theft or loss occurs during set up and dismantling. Be especially alert during these times.
- Don't identify the product or manufacturer on the outside of freight cartons.
- Mark cartons numerically to indicate the total being shipped (e.g. 1 of 6). Include your company's name and stand number on your cartons. Make sure your freight forwarder has your information.
- Under no circumstances should goods such as VCRs, TVs, laptops, and other electronic devices ever be left unattended – they are particularly vulnerable to theft.

After the show

4 steps to effective follow-up

If sales leads are to be followed up efficiently and converted successfully you will need to take the following four steps:

1. Prioritise leads according to urgency.
2. Follow up leads immediately.
3. Pursue leads on an ongoing basis.
4. Track leads to provide a measure of return on investment.

Industry statistics report that 8 out of 10 exhibitors NEVER follow up on a show lead. Don't fall into this trap. Make a point of following up with each one of your qualified leads or the entire effort could have been worthless.

Convert leads to sales after the show

Research shows that leads from exhibitions are more likely to be converted into sales than from any other media, but remarkably, as many as 83% of all exhibitors never follow up with prospects, according to the Centre for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR).

In addition, 45% of qualified leads are followed up on TOO LATE. This defeats the primary purpose of participating in the event and ruins potential results.

Don't allow those leads to grow cold and stale. Your after-show efforts will cement sales and maximise your return on investment.

Separate "Hot" and "Warm" leads

Don't sabotage your efforts by giving unqualified leads to the sales force. Give your sales people only the qualified "Hot" leads right away.

Get someone from your staff to call your "Warm" leads right away for further qualification and evaluation. Remember to thank them for visiting your stand and offer to send information.

Follow up all leads immediately

Follow up leads formally within a week after the exhibition, even if it's just an email or a simple thank you letter to keep the lines of communication open. This makes your company look more responsive and professional. You can be sure your competitors will be doing the same thing.

Within two weeks of your first round of letters, contact prospects personally. Say you are calling to make sure they received it, ask if they looked through the information, answer any questions, and try to set up an appointment or close a sale. This is when the sales will be made and the investment in the exhibition will be justified.

FACT: 75% of visitors remember exhibits they've seen up to a month after the show.

Ensure continuous follow-up

Make sure sales people continue to follow up on leads enquiries and requests for information for at least 12 months after the show. Sales within the first three to four weeks represent only one-third of the potential response from a show. Many exhibitors lose the additional two-thirds of sales that can take place up to 24 months after the show due to a lack of follow-up.

Keep your prospects LIVE

While “warm” prospects may have no immediate need for your product or service, a change in circumstance or specific event may prompt a visitor to think about you. It is important to keep these prospects live, contacting them on a regular basis with details of new products that may be of interest – that way you can keep their interest until such time as they are ready to buy.

The value of post-show promotions

While you cannot rely on prospects to call you, you can increase the chances of them doing so by remaining visible within the marketplace after the event. Advertising in relevant magazines will remind prospects of your products and services in the weeks after the show and help to ensure that when they are in a position to purchase, they purchase from you. This will include all prospects who visited your stand but failed to leave their details. No matter how efficient your stand staff are, there will always be some visitors who slip through the net. Keep reminding your prospects with advertisements, direct mail, phone calls, and appointments.

Track sales to evaluate show effectiveness

Build deadlines into your lead tracking system. Set a date for final review and issue a report with results and analysis. You can do everything else perfectly but without this, your efforts will fall far short of your objectives.

Final analysis

When you have time to analyse results, and allow for sales follow-up, you should prepare a final exhibition report or audit.

This should document:

- What was achieved against set objectives.
- Detailed breakdown of costs.

It should draw conclusions and make recommendations on:

- Viability of set objectives.
- Choice of event.
- Choice of stand location.
- Proficiency of planning and budgeting procedures.
- Effectiveness of planning and budgeting procedures.
- Proficiency of stand designer/contractor.
- Effectiveness of show-linked promotions.
- Performance of stand personnel as a group and individually.
- Efficiency and follow-up of leads.

It should contain samples of any promotions undertaken in connection with the event (direct mail, advertisement, etc) and photographs of the stand. This will help you to raise the standards for next year.

We trust that this information will be of benefit to you and the success of your participation in The Food Show.

Good luck!

