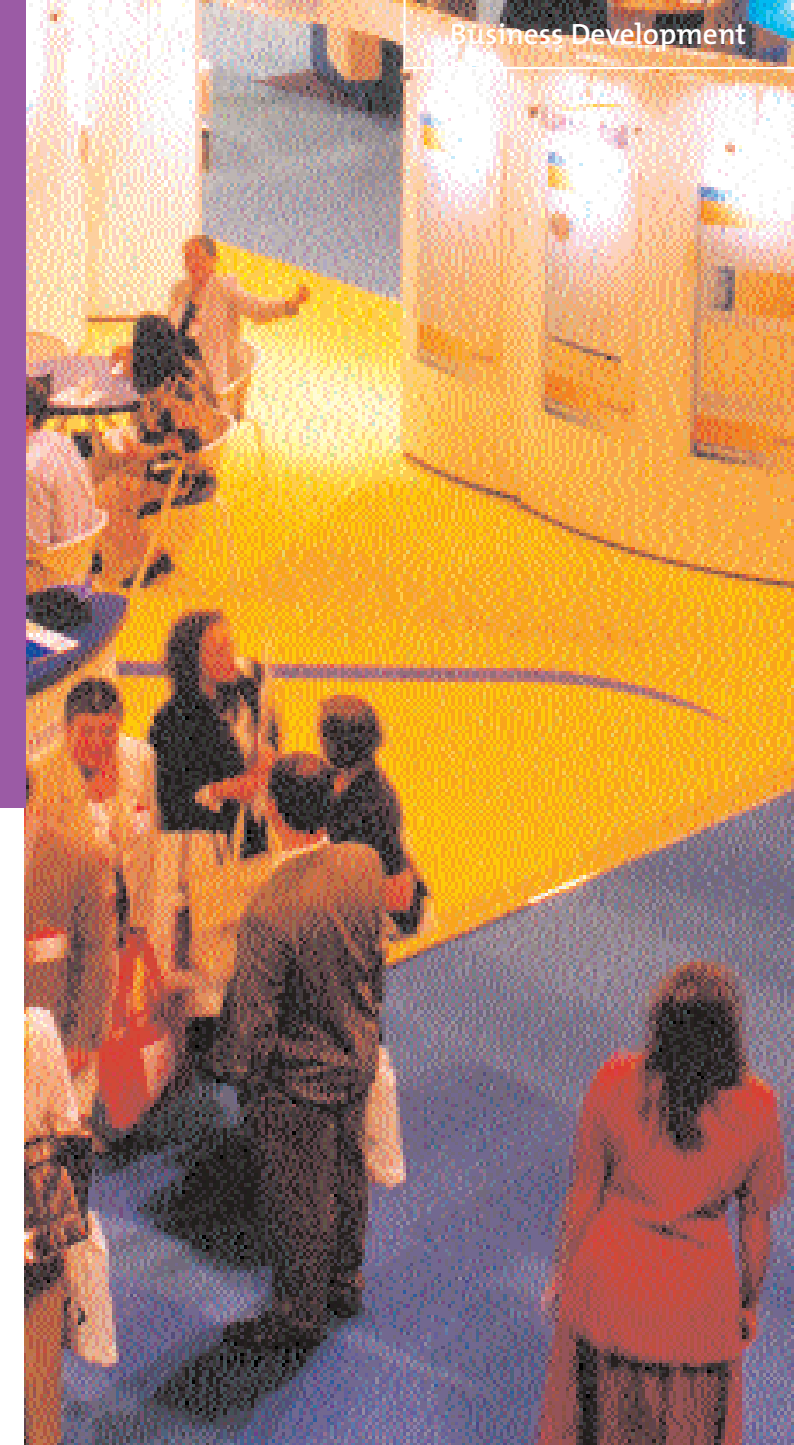


Exhibitions can be a great way to meet customers, but attendance needs careful advance planning

# no business like show business



“For those prepared to try their hand at ‘show business’, there is a wide choice – everything from a local enterprise show to major international events”



**T**rade fairs and exhibitions offer a powerful way of getting your message over to specialist buyers and potential clients. They can be excellent launchpads for new products or services.

But they can also be expensive in terms of buying stand space and then filling it – depending on the size and profile of the show. Good planning is therefore essential.

Firstly you need to source some appropriate exhibitions for your business. You can contact exhibition or conference centres in your area, or check the website at the end of this article.

## Types of exhibitions

For those prepared to try their hand at ‘show business’, there is a wide choice – everything from a local enterprise show to major international events. There are three key categories:

- **Consumer shows.** Attended by the general public, these include exhibitions focusing on homes, boats, camping, caravans, leisure activities, or buying property overseas. The idea is that you can sell direct to the public, although many visitors may be window shoppers rather than serious buyers.
- **Specialist trade shows.** Here the public is not admitted and the selling is done ‘business to business’. These can offer

powerful access to key specialist buyers.

- **Local shows.** These could include fetes, craft exhibitions and agricultural shows, and can be less expensive to attend.

## Plan well in advance

Good advance planning will help you make the most of the opportunities exhibitions can offer.

Display space at exhibitions can vary from a small corner in the lobby outside a seminar room in a hotel to a large stand at a major exhibition centre such as the NEC in Birmingham or the SECC in Glasgow.

You don’t want to waste your money on attending the wrong show, or buying too much space. So before signing up, ask yourself these questions:

- Can I afford the cost of participating?
- Does my business fit with the target audience?
- Is the venue accessible for attendees?
- Do I have something powerful to exhibit?
- What are my aims and objectives for attending this show?
- Are my staff trained to deal with all potential inquiries?

## Costs

You may not need to pick up all of the costs of attending a show yourself. Local enterprise agencies

sometimes organise joint delegations to foreign trade fairs, sharing the costs around and sometimes providing grant assistance.

You could also book a stand jointly with another company, perhaps a supplier or customer, where you can combine forces to get your message across.

## Costs can include:

- Creating an exhibition stand or display materials
- Travel and accommodation for you and your staff
- Business-generating time lost back at the office
- Square-foot rental of space at the exhibition
- Entertainment and publicity at the exhibition.

## At the exhibition

Research shows that buyers obtain their information about new products in three key ways: from advertisements, from sales reps, and from attending exhibitions where they can meet companies offering innovative products and services.

Trade fairs can see you standing shoulder-to-shoulder with international players in your sector. If you prepare carefully, you can get your message across just as powerfully as the major brands. You can also pick up valuable marketing tips just by touring the stands of your competitors.



You should anticipate what questions attendees may have about your products or services and make sure your staff are able to deal with queries politely and efficiently – to give the best impression of your company.

It’s also important to quickly follow up any leads you get at an exhibition, otherwise these potential new customers may go elsewhere. Try to keep track of what happens with the leads you get – this will help in assessing whether the exhibition has been worthwhile.

Participation in trade fairs or exhibitions can be an effective way of marketing your business. And although it’s important to keep a close eye on costs, the outlay could be recouped through new business contacts gained, the cementing of relationships with current customers, and the exposure generated through your company’s presence.

 For further information go to: [www.exhibitions.co.uk](http://www.exhibitions.co.uk). This Trade Fairs & Exhibitions UK website is the official site for the UK exhibition industry. It offers a comprehensive listing of all the consumer, public, industrial and trade exhibitions to be held in major venues around the UK.

## exhibiting can help you:

- **Publicise your company**
- **Create awareness**
- **Meet a captive audience known to be interested**
- **Identify new sales ideas**
- **Look at what competitors are doing**
- **Meet important clients or prospects**
- **Generate new business**
- **Launch a new product or service**