

EXHIBITING TIPS AND TRICKS

Whether you have exhibited elsewhere before, or if the INTERNATIONAL CES is your maiden voyage into exhibiting, this section should offer some advice to help you plan your participation. These tips will help you decide, "What do I do now?" Exhibiting can be stressful at times.

BEFORE THE SHOW... Decide what your goals are. Knowing your objectives is key. It will help you decide such things as exactly what to show, who to bring to sell your product/service, and how to present it. What are you trying to do: launch a new product, increase market share, gain company or product recognition? Answering this question will help everything else fall into place.

Set measurable goals. Avoid words such as "increase" or "improve" unless you attach specific numbers. For example: obtain 300 qualified leads, or get mentioned in three publications.

Set a budget. Know your budget and stick to it. No one likes to explain to management why the department is \$10,000 over budget. Be sure to know what the rules are about supplying your own equipment or services. Knowing the Rules & Regulations will help ensure that any steps you take to stay within your budget are also within the rules of the show. You can also choose to add a 10% contingency before you present the budget to management. Explain that this is only to be used for items that unexpectedly go over what you've budgeted.

Obtain and evaluate your exhibit space. Is your space an in-line, corner, island, or peninsula and where it is on the floor? You also need to be aware of any obstructions (such as support columns) or lighting (lobby booths have a lot of natural light) that may affect your booth space.

Choose your exhibit personnel. How many people should I take? This depends on the size of the booth. Generally, at least 60% of your booth space should be left for customers, and only 40% taken up by your exhibit and staff. You don't want to crowd a small booth, but you want to have enough staff to handle attendee questions. Be sure to take staff who are knowledgeable of your product/service and are "people" people. Also remember to inform your show staff of the work schedule and dress code on-site. It's a good idea to have a pre-show meeting with your staff before you leave for Showsite to get them excited about the show, and then have a meeting every day at the show to keep spirits up and reiterate the goal of exhibiting. This is a good time to go over booth etiquette, how to approach attendees and the value of COMFORTABLE SHOES!

Secure housing. Now that you've secured your exhibit space you will want to secure housing for your staff. After signing your Exhibit Space Contract/Application, you will receive an Exhibitor Manual containing housing and registration information. Complete and return your housing forms as soon as possible since housing requests are accepted on an as-received basis.

If your first choices are not available, the housing bureau will assist you in finding alternate locations.

Know the payment schedules. There are payment deadlines you must meet for your exhibit space, any services you order and any marketing opportunities that you reserve. There are also cancellation deadlines. Keep these in mind to avoid late penalties or cancellation fees. Print out a list of all deadlines and post it in your office where you will see it daily. Check off items as they are completed.

Read your manuals and all newsletters. These are vital sources of information. The Exhibitor Manual contains order forms for services such as furnishings and utilities, as well as logistical information such as show color scheme and a targeted move-in/move-out schedule.

CES produces a monthly Exhibitor Newsletter. It gives you in-depth coverage of new programs, special events and updates on new procedures.

Know the INTERNATIONAL CES Exhibit Rules and Regulations. Before you begin to construct your booth, know what the rules and regulations are. Make sure your booth fits into the guidelines for height, noise, etc. for its specific location on the exhibit floor. Don't wait to be told on-site that you are in violation of a rule.

Make arrangements for all furnishings and services. At CES, the cost of exhibit space includes only the raw space, and pipe and drape for in-line spaces. You will have to make arrangements for all furnishings, decorations, utilities and auxiliary services. Review your Exhibitor Manual thoroughly to see what services are available. Carpet, a table, a few chairs, a waste paper basket and a company ID sign are the bare essentials for a 10' x 10' space. Decide what type of display you want and what type of image you are striving for, then sit down with the Exhibitor Manual and order away, but make sure you stay in line with your budget!

Order all essential services early! By doing this, you will avoid additional costs (there are substantial discounts if you get that paperwork in on time) and ensure that you will receive your services in a timely manner.

Take advantage of all the marketing opportunities available to you! You want people to know you are going to be at the 2004 INTERNATIONAL CES, don't you? A great way to do that is by utilizing pre-show promotions. The Exhibitor Manual and official CES website, www.CESweb.org, will give you the details on all available opportunities. A great variety of promotional opportunities are available, with many free options that all exhibiting companies should take advantage of. This is also a good time to think about what type of attractions you want to have. A small gift with your company name and/or advertising statement or some type of entertainment that draws people to your booth can be excellent tools for putting your people in touch with the attendees.

Put the Official Program to work for you. Every attendee will receive a copy of this guide on-site. Your company will be listed alphabetically with booth location and company information, and you will also have the opportunity to list your company and product categories. Be sure to fill out the form on time (this form can be accessed through the "For Exhibitors" Section of the 2004 INTERNATIONAL CES Website, www.CESweb.org). The deadline to get your listing into the print version of the 2004 CES directory is November 1.

Get your graphics and written materials done early. This will allow time for edits and corrections. You want to avoid getting on-site to find out that your company name has been misspelled. Locate local vendors for sign and graphic production just in case there is the need for a last minute change.

Complete your Exhibitor Registration Form and return by the deadline. This should be done once you've selected your booth personnel. The Exhibitor Registration Form is located in the Exhibitor Manual and on www.CESweb.org. By taking advantage of advance registration, you can eliminate the last minute stress of waiting in long registration lines on-site. Request to have your badges mailed to you prior to the show and distribute them to your staff before you arrive on-site.

If you elect to have your badges held for on-site pick-up, pick them up on Wednesday when registration opens and lines are short. Have a pre-determined location for your staff to meet and get their badges (not your booth, as badges are needed to enter the show floor).

Make your travel arrangements as soon as you can. Schedule flights to allow plenty of time for set-up and tear-down.

Determine when you should ship your display/products. This will depend on how much you are sending, the company you are using as your shipper, and the city from which you are sending the shipment. If you are outside of the U.S., you need to be aware of potential customs delays. Your Exhibitor Manual can help you determine what time frame is needed for shipping. Ship early to ensure that your shipment arrives before the start of the show.

Pack office supplies. Remember to take anything that you would need in any office such as: pens, scissors, packing tape, staples, stapler, staple remover, rubber bands, envelopes, letterhead, order forms, lead forms, calendar, paper clips and set-up tools. There is a store in the ServiceCenter, which can provide these, but save the money and ship your own.

Remember to take your tickets, credit cards and traveler's checks with you. You should also bring your hotel and rental car confirmation, copies of all contracts for services/booth space, waybill receipts with all shipment numbers for tracking any lost items, and a list of hotel numbers, flight information and mobile phone/pager numbers for all staff members working in your booth. These will be helpful in case the hotel has lost your reservations, your carpet is the wrong color, your display is missing or you need to contact a co-worker.

Plan accordingly...

6-12 Months

Plan budget

Book space

Determine show objectives; investigate and evaluate show audience

Create marketing message; select and reserve marketing opportunities

Book hotel rooms

Plan public relations campaign

4 Months

Obtain Exhibitor Manual and read carefully

Start designing your display

Start recruiting sales staff - use your best sales and technical people

Plan VIP guest events

3 Months

Establish work schedule

Make travel plans

Set up any needed outside suppliers

Plan printed materials for on-site distribution

Determine how leads will be collected, distributed and tracked

3 Weeks

Confirm staff recruiting and distribute company and show information

Check on production of display material

Order product samples, literature, etc. from within your company

Confirm pre-event advertising and press releases

Order necessary show services

Finalize any VIP guest events

Confirm shipping information and provide to vendors

Prepare training materials for staff at the show

2 Weeks

Collect supplies, tickets and copies of service orders sent to show in advance

Bring credit cards for payment on-site

Before the Show Opening

Travel to site, pick up badges

Confirm arrival of display, equipment, literature and supervise set-up

Assemble display

Locate all necessary service areas, offices, etc.

Conduct pre-show staff briefing and outline goals

Place press kits in press room and online

During the Show

Conduct daily meetings to assess progress and process leads

Make arrangements to dismantle your display

Reserve next year's space during rebook appointment

After the Show

Distribute and follow up on sales leads and orders

Send thank-you letters to visitors and company employees

Prepare a thorough evaluation of your show participation

Knowing your timeline is crucial. Missing deadlines can be costly. The above timeframe is a guideline. A list of 2004 INTERNATIONAL CES deadlines is included in the Deadlines Section of this manual to help you customize a time frame specific to your company's needs.

AT THE SHOW Try to arrive early. This will give you time to go to the convention center to make sure your shipment has arrived and to locate your exhibit space. Now is also a good time to familiarize yourself with the location of the service desks, the show operations office, the show office, the 2005 space selection room and the first aid station. You might also want to take note of other important service locations, such as concession stands, restrooms and taxi/bus stands.

Make sure your staff members have obtained their badges. Encourage all staff members who haven't already picked up their badges or who aren't pre-registered to do so during slow times to avoid long lines. Times to avoid registration are the afternoon prior to show opening and opening day. If you have 50 or more badges to pick up, please keep in mind that you can set an appointment with the registration staff to review your badges and pick them all up at once. You can then distribute them to your staff at your pre-show meeting.

Check into your hotel. Familiarize yourself with the services the hotel provides. Does it have a business office for you to check/send e-mail, fax or use a computer? Do they have room service and what are the hours? Where is the location of the convention center in relation to the hotel?

Know the schedule of other events and meetings. There may be a conference or seminar that you or colleagues want to attend, and you'll want to make sure that the booth is covered.

Start putting your booth together. Whether you have an in-line booth with just tables and chairs or a custom island booth, there will no doubt be work to do. Make sure everything that you ordered is delivered and any service ordered is being installed. Stock your booth with the office supplies you brought.

Know your 2005 Space Selection time! All exhibitors are assigned a time to book space for next year's show. The detailed information is mailed to all exhibitors in early December. If you get to the 2004 show and aren't sure of your time, visit the Sales office the day prior to show opening. If you are late, you will have to come back during a make-up session, costing you additional time away from your booth and, quite possibly, a great booth space.

Meet with your booth staff before the opening of the show. Instruct your booth staff about proper booth etiquette, such as not to sit, eat or drink in the booth. Review your company-approved dress code. Remind staff again of the importance of COMFORTABLE SHOES. It's a good idea to require all staff to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to show opening, so that attendees don't wander through an empty booth.

Order and use your lead reader. This is a great way to track those people who entered your booth. If you don't have a reader, make sure to gather attendees' demographic information through your lead form, so that you can contact potential buyers when you return to the office.

Be prepared for tear-down. After the show closes - not before - on the last day, you can begin to pack up your booth and get things ready for shipping. The drayage contractor will return your empty containers and packing material, so you can repack your merchandise. Remember to label everything and to properly fill out your waybills. Keep an eye on time. You still need to check out of your hotel before your flight leaves, and you won't want to miss that flight. It is important to remember that the nature of exhibiting is unpredictable and allowing yourself enough time from start to finish may help you through any unexpected timing delays.

Now, you've had a great show and you are on your way home. You think it's over, right? Wrong. There are still things to be done. You will want to make sure your shipment arrives back to your office and/or storage facility.

You need to get your leads together and distributed to, the right people for follow-up. You will want to analyze how successful your exhibit was. Once this is done, you can relax, right? Well, not really, because then you will have to start planning next year's strategy. Oh, it's not that bad. Once you get through your first show, the others will seem like a walk in the park.