

Developing and Adhering to an Effective Time Schedule

Especially for major national shows, participation decisions are made a year in advance and market planning starts almost immediately.

Develop a timetable that maximizes all of your marketing efforts for the entire trade show schedule. Work one year in advance and make adjustments as you make new participation decisions. Work with your marketing communications department to coordinate all other communications programs with those of the trade show program.

Remember that you will be employing corporate managers in the implementation of the trade show marketing program. Wait too late and the pressures of their other responsibilities will lead to exhibits which do not reach full potential.

Outside vendors: public relationists, copy writers, booth designers, promotions suppliers, special event planners are almost always involved. Reduce errors and higher costs by implementing the marketing plan as early as possible.

Use the following guidelines as minimum deadlines for marketing responsibilities:

Weeks 16 and 15

- ☑ Review exhibit objectives with all who are involved in the company's marketing programs.
- ☑ Investigate and re-evaluate the show audience.
- ☑ Read the show manual and notice show and local rules that may affect implementation of your marketing plan.
- ☑ Draft a detailed task list, schedule and responsibility outline in connection with the exhibit, required graphics, VIP treatment, advertising and promotional program, press and staff needs.
- ☑ Fine-tune the preliminary show budget.

Weeks 14 and 13

- ☑ Review the plan with everyone in the company. Make sure all agree which products are to be exhibited, that they will be available on time and what contingencies are to be put in place.
- ☑ Begin recruiting booth personnel. Pick the most successful ones. However, recognize that trade show selling skills are not always transferable from other selling environments.
- ☑ Make arrangements for special events; for example, hospitality functions, training seminars and sales meetings.
- ☑ If not already started, begin working with the exhibit house and any other outside suppliers which produce printed materials.