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Attention exporters: Take your show on the road

Not a week goes by that a particular business sector, industry or product type isn't being featured in a trade show. In fact, it is quite likely that more than one event will be competing for the same audience at the same time—potential clients and customers, media, and exhibitors of course. Whether it is called a trade show, an exhibition, an industry expo or some other creative name, the goal remains the same: bring businesses and customers together to encourage commerce.

In some countries, trade shows and similar events are primarily opportunities for participants to showcase their goods and services in front of a captive and interested audience. Very little business or deal-making takes place at these events. This is often the case in North American trade shows and exhibitions. Transactions, purchases and contracts may be the end result of the show but they are more likely to take place in a follow-up meeting or by some other form of communication. In other countries such as Germany, business is actually conducted at trade shows and negotiating a business contract is not uncommon. This distinction is also present within different industries and business sectors as well. Attending such a trade show without accurate promotional materials, price sheets, order forms, contracts and polished presentation and negotiation skills will have a detrimental effect on your company's image.

An exporter must know what to expect from a trade show prior to attending, and plan accordingly. Objectives will vary depending on the nature of the event. Researching relevant events is a logical point of departure. Organizers of these shows are usually pleased to send significant amounts of information to prospective exhibitors and attendees. This information might include the number of years the event has been hosted, attendance figures and the number of exhibitors. More
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Leave them hungry for more: Trade shows can be great for business.

Depending on one's line of business, trade shows can be critical components of the overall international marketing strategy or they can be irrelevant. However, the proliferation of these events illustrates that there are opportunities to present virtually any product and most services at an organized gathering somewhere in the world. The key is finding the best opportunity to complement the export strategy.



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