

EXHIBITIONS – ORGANISING YOUR OWN

So you have your idea for an exciting event?

You know the industry inside out. You have interest from your members, customers and the general public.

So you can't wait to get cracking!

Wedding Shows, Awards Dinners, Agricultural Shows, Annual Conferences, Trade Shows or the full National Exhibition experience. However large or small your Event, planning is key.

Phil Clarke from Calendar Lady Promotions shares his top tips:

Planning the Event of the Year ?? There are many things that could catch you out.

Here's a quick guide, to help your show run smoothly.

- 1. Timing** - Picking a date in the year is key. For example, don't book a Skiing show in February. Half your Audience may already be on the slopes. October/November may be better. The holiday is booked and people are starting to look for the best kit and clothing.
- 2. Location** – Clearly an important one. For a small event like a local wedding show you'd obviously book somewhere in your town. If you have 25 Exhibitors and possibly 50 Brides-to-be. Book something that has capacity for 50 Exhibitors and 100 couples. You may get late interest and you wouldn't want to turn down a paying customer. For a National event, book somewhere in the middle of the country. Imagine getting invited to an Events in Inverness and Cornwall - that's a trek and a half.
- 3. Parking** – Large Exhibition Centres like the NEC have this all covered. But smaller venues may have parking limitations. Car is the vehicle of choice for many. You may have booked a nice Hotel with a large conference hall, but if parking is limited to 50 cars, then you're headed for trouble. A site visit in person is essential. Drive there when it's open and busy. Try and park as a visitor and an exhibitor. Does it work for you ??
- 4. Pricing** – No point hiring a hall for £300 then getting 30 Exhibitors paying £10 each. Your event needs to make profit. Equally, if you charge £100 per table and you only get 2 takers, the event won't be happening. Do your research and see what the going rate is. If it's your first one and the average rate is £30 a stand go in at say £25 and when it gets a good reputation you can push it up a little. If you have a guest speaker, it is reasonable to spread the cost of them across the ticket price. For visitors, it's normal to offer Free Entry, you want as much foot fall as possible.
- 5. Promotion** – This is your Event, your baby. Once you've got the date and venue. No one is going to shout about it unless you do. So go all out to fill the place. Push, Post and Promote on Social Media. Things like Trade Shows are made for these platforms. Tag in industry targets, ask them to share posts. Going back to the Wedding Show example, advertise your posts by tagging/copying in local photographers, car hire, beauty salons, cake makers, suit hire etc. industry magazine are still popular with online presence as well as paperback. Then do a bit of everything else (within your budget). radio, newspapers, flyers, posters, mail shots, bulk email and not just once, people need a reminder. Just like child birth it's a case of push, push, push !!

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6. **Exhibitors** – Look after your Exhibitors, these are your paying customers. Give them the stand location that they ask for. Allow them to arrive early and get set up. Fuss around them and make them feel important because they are!! Make your own decision if you get more than one of the same supplier, either limit it to just 1 or allow a couple of each. Then remember, if for example it's a gardeners show no one wants to see 2 compost suppliers next to each other, especially the compost suppliers. Put them at opposite ends of the venue.
7. **Launch** – Email reminders should get more frequent nearer the launch date for visitors, exhibitors, and any potential targets. Don't be afraid of sending a mailer every day in the last 3 days.

Get to bed early the day before and plan to be the first person on site. Soon the doors will open, and WE HAVE LIFT OFF!!

Good Luck

Additional

Exhibitors Merchandise - You will find that your Exhibitors will want a table for their goodies. This will consist of Business Cards, Flyers, Brochures and also Logo Branded Giveaways like Pens, Keyrings, Mugs, USB sticks etc. These nick-nacks are a wonderful way for them to put their contact details into the hands of potential customers. If they are offering tea, coffee or water, they will need space for this and an electric point. Again, the NEC, O2 and large Arena have electric on each stand. But smaller places will need a kettle plugged in somewhere.