

Trade Shows and You

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM YOUR TRADE SHOW INVESTMENT

There are several good reasons for adding trade shows to your company's sales strategy, even if your business has been performing well without them. Participating in a domestic or international trade event can help you enter new markets, increase your sales in existing ones and raise your company profile with potential customers and partners.

Trade Shows and You will help you explore these possibilities and will give you a compact, practical guide to the major stages of a trade show: planning your show strategy, preparing for a show, working the show itself and following up after the show. So no matter whether you're an experienced exporter or an aspiring one, don't overlook the promise and potential of these events, which can help you extend your company's reach throughout the world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Getting Started	3
Benefits of trade shows	3
Identifying and evaluating shows	4
Setting your objectives	6
Preparing for the show	8
Research for foreign shows	8
Budgeting	8
Exhibit design and furnishings	9
Staffing your exhibit	10
Promotional materials	12
Pre-show marketing	13
Logistics and travel	14
At the Show	15
Types of visitors	15
Qualifying leads	16
After the Show	18
Following up	18
Evaluating your success	18
A trade show timeline	20
Nine to twelve months (or more) before the show	20
Six to nine months before the show	20
Three to four months before the show	20
One to two months before the show	20
During the show	20
After the show	20
Trade show resources for exporters	21

GETTING STARTED

Merchants have been going to trade shows for centuries. The origins of these events lie far back in the medieval fairs of Europe, where traders met in cities like Geneva to exchange wool, silk, spices, rare metals, pigments, furs, wines and much else. Since then, these fairs have evolved and proliferated until there are hundreds of them every year, and all for one very simple reason: they are very good at bringing sellers and buyers together.

But will participating in a trade show do the same for your company? And even if it does connect you with new customers, will your gains justify the resources you put into your participation?

It would be ideal if there were a way to guarantee a “yes” response to both those questions. Most companies, however, don’t know the complete answer until they’ve followed up the leads from the show and have added the resulting sales to the bottom line.

Benefits of trade shows

If the sales are large enough compared with the resources you expended on the show, that’s the most concrete and immediate benefit—you got a good return on your investment. But a successful show can do a lot more than boost your near-term profits. It can help you:

- become more visible in your current Canadian and foreign markets or, if you’re new to exporting, help you break into a new market abroad;
- introduce your company and its products to many potential domestic and/or foreign buyers in just a few days;
- make initial contacts with Canadian and foreign distributors, representatives and partners;
- strengthen your company’s brand domestically and internationally;
- carry out international and/or domestic market research; and
- find out how other companies are competing in international markets.

Your approach to a show will be designed to recognize some or all of these benefits. But whether at home or abroad, your company will get more from its trade show activities if a specific (and enthusiastic) person is responsible for making the process work. And if you plan to attend trade shows regularly, it’s a good idea to set up a permanent show team that will gain experience and expertise with the passage of time.

Identifying and evaluating shows

Looking for the right trade show begins with your industry's trade associations, since many of these keep track of the year's shows and can provide information about them. Trade publications for your sector can also be useful, as can chambers of commerce, convention centres and visitors' bureaus. Online research is invaluable as well, since there are so many websites now dedicated to the trade show industry. Some of them are:

- [All Conferences](#)
- [ExpoCentral International](#)
- [10times](#)
- [ExpoFairs](#)
- [EventsEye](#)
- [Tradeshow Calendar](#)
- [Exhibitions.co.uk](#)

The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service's online magazine, [CanadExport](#), also publishes up-to-date information about international trade shows of particular interest to Canadian exporters. Refer to the Trade Events section of each issue for details.

As you evaluate the possible worth of a show, ask yourself how this particular event fits into your overall business plan and into your current marketing strategy. This fit will be partly determined by the kind of show you're considering, which will usually fall into one of these categories:

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Major trade shows for a specialized audience	These shows are devoted to a specific industrial sector (such as automobiles) or a market (such as health care). Many are international and draw large numbers of senior executives who can make important sales decisions.
Major trade shows for a general audience	These large shows, which may be international, national or regional in scope, showcase all kinds of goods and services. Because they attract a general audience that includes both consumers and businesses, they may be less suitable for your company than more specialized shows.
Secondary trade shows	Less prominent than the major shows, these can still be important to their particular sectors or markets at both the international or national levels. They are often highly specialized and are usually open to business participants only. For companies that aren't quite ready for one of the major shows, these events can be a good investment.
Consumer trade shows	As the name suggests, these shows are for the public at large. Some are general, while others are devoted to particular audience interests, such as home shows or sports shows. Companies that concentrate on selling directly to end users may find these shows useful; otherwise, one of the other three types is likely a better bet.

Some of the factors to consider when evaluating the viability of a show are:

- the importance of the show to your company's industry and market;
- the costs of participating in the show;
- the expertise and track record of the show's organizers;
- the catchment area of the show (national, regional or international);
- its location relative to your desired market;
- the amenities it provides; and
- the business demographics of the audience, such as the presence of target groups with purchasing power.

Regarding the last point above: A show will be more likely to reward you if it attracts large numbers of top executives working in your industry—the people who make major decisions for their companies and who aren't likely to be second-guessed by head office. To find out if a show attracts these individuals, ask the show organizers for a demographic profile of the attendees at past shows and examine it carefully. Ask for a list of people who have registered for the next one, and check this list as well. The shows attended by the largest numbers of senior executives will likely repay your participation the most.

Setting your objectives

If the show is such a good fit for your business that you decide to attend, the next step is to choose a set of specific, measurable objectives that you want to achieve by going to the event. Having clearly defined objectives will help you create your budget, prepare a marketing plan for the show, plan your on-site activities, follow up show-generated leads and, eventually, decide whether the show was worth what you put into it. Having precise objectives will also reduce the temptation to spread yourself too thin and will help you limit your activities to what you can realistically afford.

The objectives of a trade show should be closely related to the expected benefits (such as the ones outlined earlier) and should be designed to maximize them. For example, you could participate in a show in order to:

- introduce your company, its products and services to new markets, including international ones;
- increase awareness of your existing products and/or introduce new ones;
- find sales leads, sell products, take orders and secure contracts;
- meet with potential foreign or local partners, agents or distributors;
- meet with existing customers;
- raise your company's profile and generate positive publicity;
- find out about new products and technologies;
- undertake market and competitor research; and
- evaluate the potential of a new market.

Once you've identified your objectives and selected your show, you can write a trade show plan. This can be built around a timetable indicating what is to happen when, and who is to do it. It should include the following activities and events (this is far from an exhaustive list):

- establishing a budget;
- booking exhibit space with the show organizers;
- arranging the design, construction and delivery of your exhibit to the event, including set-up and tear-down (if you rent an exhibit, you can dispense with design and construction);
- choosing staff to work the show;
- designing and organizing pre-show and in-show promotions;
- arranging travel and accommodations;
- ordering show services, such as cleaning and security;
- finalizing your exhibit design and selecting the builder;

- preparing plans and materials for lead generation and follow-up;
- ordering pre-show and in-show promotional materials;
- carrying out pre-show marketing, such as distributing promotional materials;
- shipping exhibit supplies and product samples to the show location; and
- setting up schedules for staffing your exhibit.

The plan should also include post-show activities such as:

- getting lead information to your sales staff and making sure leads are vigorously followed up;
- reviewing expenditures;
- reporting on whether show objectives were met; and
- calculating your return on the show investment.

CONTACT US

We can help you succeed internationally.
Speak with a Trade Advisor today to learn how.

 1-888-220-0047  tradeadvisor-conseiller@edc.ca

Preparing for the show

Having chosen a show, you can begin preparing for it. Your planning should cover everything you'll do before the event, what you'll do while you're there and how you'll follow up afterward.

Research for foreign shows

If you attend a foreign trade show to find customers in that market, it's highly advisable to research the market before you develop your sales approach, marketing materials and exhibit design. This will help you understand the local market's religious, historical and cultural sensitivities so that you can target your sales and marketing strategy appropriately. Ideally, you should work with an adviser who is thoroughly familiar with the culture and can steer you away from sales-killing mistakes. The staff you send to the show should, obviously, be well briefed on the local norms and know how to avoid violating them.

Budgeting

The costs of exhibiting at a trade show aren't trivial. You can expect to pay for any or all of:

- registration fees;
- exhibit space;
- show services, such as electricity, labour, janitorial services and security;
- exhibit costs, including shipping the exhibit to and from the show;
- equipment for demonstrations or presentations;
- marketing literature, including writing, design, translation and printing;
- pre-show publicity, such as releases in business periodicals and direct mail promotions;
- the production of samples and the creation of demonstrations;
- travel expenses, including local travel such as cabs;
- accommodation and meals;
- hospitality for clients and contacts;
- hiring temporary staff if necessary; and
- staff training.

If it's an international show, you'll also need to budget for:

- the translation and printing of your sales and marketing materials, including business cards;
- travel documents such as passports and visas;
- permits or carnets for moving your show materials and equipment through foreign customs;
- international carriage of your exhibit, equipment, marketing literature and other items; and
- the services of a translator in the foreign country, if needed.

This isn't a complete list, and your costs will vary according to the show and its location.

Exhibit design and furnishings

Your exhibit projects the image of your company and will provide new visitors with their first impressions of your firm. Being visible is a vital requirement, but so is striking just the right note when your visitors take a closer look. Try to see your presentation as if you were a newcomer who knows nothing at all about your company. What will a newcomer think of your exhibit when he or she sees it for the first time?

A successful exhibit presentation usually includes the following elements:

- clear identification of the company and what it does (the company image);
- visual attractiveness in the design, colour and lighting of the exhibit;
- clear access to the product display so visitors can inspect them easily;
- demonstrations of how the company's products are used in real environments and applications; and
- clear depictions of the product benefits and how they have solved problems for the company's customers.

Adding an interactive dimension to your exhibit will also pull visitors and help your team engage with them. Many exhibitors routinely go the digital route with games, puzzles, graphical demonstrations and other forms of interactive media.

On the nuts and bolts side, common exhibit designs and hardware include the following:

- modular displays, constructed of framing that can be configured in a variety of ways, then covered with fabric or plastic skinning and completed with shelving, tables and lights;
- pop-ups, which use lightweight framing materials covered with fabric or plastic sheeting;
- panels, which are fabric-covered, free-standing partitions you can arrange as walls for your exhibit;
- pipe and drape systems; and
- smaller exhibits, such as tabletop displays and pull-up stands.

There are several ways to obtain the exhibit facilities you need:

Custom design and construction	If you need a custom exhibit, contract with a firm that specializes in this type of work. Ask business colleagues or your professional association for referrals, or visit a trade show, look for exciting exhibits and follow up with the firms that built them. A custom exhibit gives you exactly what you want, although it's the most expensive choice. Remember that smaller, lighter exhibits are cheaper to ship, easier to set up and tear down, and cost less in terms of exhibition-area floor space.
Renting	Renting an exhibit may be a good option, especially for your first trade fair. You have to customize it to present your company's message, but this approach can be attractively cost-effective when compared to building a custom exhibit. Many of the companies that do custom work also rent out generic exhibits, or you could consider obtaining an exhibit from the trade show itself. This last option means there's no shipping involved, which simplifies your logistics.
The modular approach	Some companies sell pre-built modules you can assemble into an exhibit. This allows a degree of customization, while being less expensive than the custom approach.

Staffing your exhibit

Your exhibit team will be responsible for identifying prospects, recording and qualifying leads, promoting your products and performing the myriad other tasks that a trade show demands. When choosing team members, remember that a senior buyer visiting a trade show, if serious about purchasing a service or product, will usually want to negotiate with a peer. To cover this situation, include at least one senior executive who can engage these visitors at an appropriate level of authority.

In addition to a senior executive, and depending on the size of your company, the exhibit team may also need to include:

- an exhibit manager to make sure exhibit operations run smoothly;
- technical staff to provide detailed explanations of your product;
- sales staff to deal with visitors who want information such as prices, warranties and delivery;
- if it's a show that attracts potential foreign buyers, a staff member who can answer queries about export sales; and
- depending on the type and location of the show, an interpreter.

As soon as you've selected your team, set up a training schedule and begin working with it. The training should ensure that your team members:

- know the company's objectives for the show;
- remain approachable at all times while on duty (and they shouldn't do anything, such as read, that could discourage someone from visiting the exhibit);
- know how to generate, qualify, record and manage leads;
- are thoroughly familiar with your product line and can answer most questions about it;
- know who the target group is and how to identify people belonging to it;
- can carry out product demonstrations if applicable;
- can respond properly to media interest;
- know how to behave and dress appropriately when on duty and off; and
- thoroughly understand all scheduling, travel and logistics arrangements.

It is also vital to develop a compelling sales message that your staff will use at the show. This message should communicate the benefits of your product or service in 30 seconds or fewer. Rehearse this message with your staff until, by the day of the show, it's second nature to them.

Promotional materials

You'll need promotional and informational materials not only for the show itself but also to carry out your pre-show marketing strategy. Creating them will involve design, writing (with translation if necessary), artwork, layout and production. They may include any or all of the following print or non-print materials:

Media and press kits	<p>These will be a basic necessity during the show, so be sure to produce enough of them. Each kit should include background information on your company and an illustrated product catalogue or a description of your service. Photographs, testimonials and examples of how your product or service has helped specific customers can also be part of the kit. If you include information that may change over time, such as price lists or financing terms, produce these separately so they can be easily updated from show to show. Media kits can also be a good pre-show marketing tool if you send them to targeted prospects before the event.</p> <p>A special note: if you need translation services, for your media kit or any other purpose, be sure you hire competent people. A good translation will get your message across, but a poor one will be embarrassing at best and an expensive disaster at worst. Write your copy with translation in mind and try to express complex technical information in a clear, straightforward way so that the translator will have an easier job.</p>
Business cards	<p>When the show is in a foreign market, have your business cards printed on both sides, with one side carrying a translation in the language of the market. If you're going to a market where the exchange of business cards is an elaborate ritual, learn how to participate.</p>
Company literature	<p>This should be available at your exhibit, but some of your visitors may not want to carry your material around with them. To make sure they eventually receive your literature, obtain their contact information when they visit your exhibit and offer to send it to them.</p>
Video presentations	<p>If you provide a service rather than a product, a video presentation may be the best way to show visitors what your company is all about. This also works for companies with large or complex products that are too big for the exhibit space.</p>
Product displays	<p>If you have a large product line, don't try to showcase all of it, as this can weaken the impact of your exhibit. Your visitors will want to see your most advanced, interesting and useful products, and that's what you should take to the show with you. Displaying these items will keep everybody's attention on the innovative side of your company, which is what you want to achieve.</p>
Demonstrations	<p>Good demonstrations must be informative, engaging, well rehearsed and delivered by people who like performing for an audience. If you plan to have demonstrations at the show, make sure your staff can deliver what's needed.</p>
Promotional items	<p>Branded promotional products can give your visitors a reason to remember you. The traditional pens, letter openers or key chains are heavily overworked, though, and are too easy to forget or discard after the show. An item that will be remembered by your visitors as unique and valuable may be well worth some extra expense.</p>

Follow-up materials	These are company information packets, business cards, personalized thank-you notes and other items you'll send to your sales prospects right after the show. Be selective, though, since sending a mass of corporate literature won't impress the recipient and won't help you stand out from the crowd.
Company badges	All your staff should wear well-designed identification badges while on duty at the show. Some trade shows provide exhibitor badges, while others don't, so always bring your own.
Lead sheets or lead collection systems	Design a lead sheet that can record all the information you'll need for your follow-up phase. The design should include a way to note the quality of each lead. If you're going to use an electronic lead-collection system that scans information from a visitor's badge, be sure the collected data can be customized to meet your needs.

Pre-show marketing

The show organizers will include your company in their own promotional materials for the event, but this will provide little of the pre-show exposure you need. It will be up to you to tell your customers—both existing and potential—that you'll be at the show and that your exhibit will be worth a visit.

This shouldn't be a mass marketing campaign, though; rather, you should use carefully targeted messages, customized for senior executives when possible, to reach the right eyes and ears. There are several ways to do this, such as the following:

Personal invitations with material from the show organizers	These can go to both existing and potential customers. They often take the form of personal letters addressed to the senior executives of the target companies, together with the advertising material provided by the show organizers. The intent is to arouse interest in the show and, in particular, in the products you'll be showcasing there.
Invitational brochures	If you can afford it, you can send a personal invitation as above, but replace the organizers' materials with brochures of your own.
Entry vouchers	You can send not only a personal invitation and promotional materials, but also an organizer-supplied voucher for free entry to the show. The organizers will charge you only for the vouchers that are used, often at a reduced rate.
Media placement	Sending news releases to the trade press and other media may help you generate interest in your appearance at the show. Buying newspaper and magazine ad space, or paying for announcements in the trade press, is expensive but may be worth the outlay in some circumstances.

Logistics and travel

Everything and everybody must reach the show location with enough time for preparation, set-up and pre-show briefing. Planning this can be complicated even for a domestic show, and going to an international event demands even more attention.

When making your travel and accommodation arrangements, allow for the fact that some major events are so heavily attended that you may need to reserve your hotel rooms up to a year in advance. If it's an international show, your staff will need valid passports and, depending on the location, other documentation such as visas or immunization certificates. Find out exactly what's required and start the paperwork well in advance of the show date.

Make a list of your exhibit's components and the equipment you'll need to ship to the show and ask the organizers when you can begin sending your materials. Some trade shows have an official logistics company, which can help guarantee that your shipment will reach the event on time. Check the price of this service, though, since you may save money by arranging the shipping yourself.

If you do manage your own shipping, don't assume that your regular shipper or freight forwarder will know how to do the job, especially for international shows—foreign customs authorities usually have special regulations governing inbound shipments to a trade fair, and these regulations can be quite different from those for everyday imports. Some shipping companies specialize in trade show logistics, but be sure to check their expertise, track records, credentials and references before hiring one.

Finally, always confirm shipping arrangements and arrival dates to make sure that nothing has been overlooked and that your goods will reach the location on time.

If you and your staff need to carry samples or other merchandise to a foreign event (as opposed to shipping the items) you'll have to clear them through customs on your arrival. The easiest way to do this is to obtain an [ATA carnet](#), which is an international customs document you can use to temporarily import goods, duty free, into a foreign country. It's valid for one year and you can use it several times during that period.

You can obtain an ATA carnet from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. Carnets are issued by Chamber offices in Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, with fees determined by the value of the goods and whether you're a member of the Chamber.

AT THE SHOW

Your trade show team should arrive at the show location with enough lead time to:

- settle into their accommodations and shake off any jet lag;
- become familiar with the venue and its service areas;
- confirm that all supplies have arrived and that the exhibit will be ready on time;
- confirm communications arrangements, including mobile phone and Internet service;
- oversee the set-up of the exhibit; and
- confirm any bookings at the venue, such as meeting rooms or demonstration areas.

You should also hold a team briefing, just before the show starts, to review how to:

- promote the company's product or service (go over the 30-second sales message again);
- approach visitors and gather information;
- make presentations;
- distinguish potential clients from browsers;
- record visitor information; and
- follow up after the show.

Everyone should already know how to dress while on duty, but review the requirements just the same. Their attire should allow for any local cultural sensitivities. Remind people not to eat or drink in the exhibit space, that they should neither make nor receive phone calls and that all their attention should be concentrated on their visitors.

Types of visitors

Your team will encounter several types of visitors. The major ones are:

- **Trade show power users**

These individuals use trade shows to learn about important market developments and do serious networking. They are fully prepared to discuss what they need and some may be willing to complete sales transactions during the show itself. They are the easiest prospects to qualify.

- **Special-interest visitors**

These people know precisely what they are looking for and concentrate on finding it, although they are unlikely to transact purchases at the show. If your products match their needs, they will likely find your exhibit and your team can easily qualify them.

- **Market observers**

These visitors use trade shows primarily as a way of investigating the market. They don't interact much with exhibitors and have no intention of buying. If they do wander into your exhibit, your team should be courteous but not take up much time with them.


- **Non-prospects**

These come in several subtypes: people who merely want to chat, business acquaintances dropping by for a visit and the merely curious. Again, courtesy is essential but spending time on them is not.

Qualifying leads

Before your team can decide whether to qualify a visitor as a lead, the person must be drawn into your exhibit and engaged in conversation. Your staff members should:

- Smile and make eye contact, then ask if the visitor is enjoying the show. Don't ask "Can I help you," or "How are you today?" as experience shows that these approaches are counterproductive.
- If the visitor's answer invites it, deliver the 30-second sales message that describes your company's value proposition.
- Next, try to qualify the prospect, but do so quickly—there is no point in talking at length to a visitor who will never be interested in buying your product. Some of the things to find out are:
 - what needs and/or interests brought the visitor to the show;
 - whether the visitor's company has any special business problems it needs to solve;
 - whether the visitor can make buying decisions, or if he or she can influence these decisions;
 - whether the visitor's company can use your company's products or services in a significant way;
 - when the visitor's firm might need your products or services;
 - whether the visitor's budget can cover products or services such as yours; and
 - any other information that will help qualify the visitor as a sales lead.
- If the visitor seems to qualify on the basis of this information, obtain a business card or have him or her sign a guest book. If you're using an electronic lead collection system, scan his or her badge.
- If the visitor seems to belong to one of the non-qualified groups, thank him or her for his or her time and move on to the next visitor.



You should train your staff to (politely) limit the time spent even with a qualified prospect, since their primary purpose is to collect leads and information for later follow-up. The actual selling will normally take place after the show, since few of these events go on long enough to complete the normal sales cycle.

There are, however, exceptions to the selling-comes-later approach; for some companies and in some sectors, closing a sale at a trade show can be quite possible. If you can meet a potential customer several times during the show, for example, the sales cycle can sometimes be compressed to a few days. This is especially true if the person you're dealing with is a senior executive, and if one of your own senior staff is on site. These people can work with their respective head offices to hammer out a contract or at least secure a solid commitment on the part of the buyer.

AFTER THE SHOW

As soon as you reach home, your first task will be to debrief your team and begin following up with your qualified leads; these should be ranked according to their decision-making ability, their budget, their need for your company's products and any other relevant criteria. Your second task will be to evaluate the show as a business investment and find ways to do even better at your next event.

Following up

You should follow up with your qualified leads as soon as possible; the longer you delay, the less chance you have of making a sale. Mail, email, phone calls and personal visits (if feasible) can all contribute to a successful follow-up.

In these follow-up communications, try to personalize your approach by addressing specific issues that the prospect mentioned when he or she visited your exhibit. Mailing detailed product information that speaks directly to a customer's needs will also contribute to making a sale. If possible, provide incentives that will encourage action, such as special pricing or value-added offers that will contribute to the customer's bottom line.

These approaches will be familiar to most Canadian companies operating in the domestic and U.S. markets, since sales strategies tend to be similar in both places. Farther afield it may be a different matter, especially when you don't have an on-the-ground sales representative in the foreign target market. In this case, much can be accomplished by fax, email, letter and telephone, but further travel to the market will almost always be necessary.

Evaluating your success

Several months may pass before you can fully judge the show's success, largely because it may take that long to determine the results of all your leads. But once those results are in, here's a general method for figuring out your return on investment.

- How much in total did you spend on the trade show?
- What was your cost per qualified lead?
- How much sales revenue did these leads generate?
- What was your revenue per qualified lead?
- By how much did your revenue per lead exceed your cost per lead (that is, what was the gross return on each lead)?
- How does this compare with the return you generated from non-trade-show leads over the same period?

In addition to sales, the trade show may have brought you other, less tangible returns. Prospects who haven't turned into customers within a few months of the show aren't necessarily a lost cause, since they may someday buy from your company if you keep in touch with them. The show may also have raised your profile nationally and/or internationally, which is always a benefit. One way to assess this is to see if your company website recorded increased traffic after the show. If you measured your brand awareness before the show, do so again and see if the show has made a noticeable difference. If it has, you can likely add that to your list of show successes.

Your evaluation can also help you do better at future shows. Did your exhibit perform as intended? Can you sharpen the impact of your promotional materials? Can your demonstrations be improved? Should you assign more staff or fewer? Can you make your logistics more efficient? Are there unnecessary expenses you can cut? Was this the best show for you, or are there others that might be more fruitful?

Finding the right answers to these questions will strengthen your trade show program and ensure that it evolves as your company evolves. Properly planned and well executed, a trade show can be a valuable tool for expanding your business's reach, not just in Canada but around the world.

A TRADE SHOW TIMELINE

This is a generalized timeline that you can modify according to your company's needs and the kinds of shows you want to attend.

9 - 12 months (or more) before the show

- ☐ Establish strategies and objectives
- ☐ Research and choose suitable shows
- ☐ Determine your budget
- ☐ Identify the space you'll need and the type of exhibit you'll use
- ☐ Register for the show

6 - 9 months before the show

- ☐ Create your trade show marketing plan and sales messages
- ☐ Plan your exhibit and exhibit space
- ☐ Acquire travel documentation such as visas, passports and permits
- ☐ Make arrangements for travel and accommodation
- ☐ Identify customs procedures at the destination for samples and equipment
- ☐ Apply for financial support

3 - 4 months before the show

- ☐ Acquire your exhibit and display equipment (if it's a custom exhibit, you may want to start this process earlier)
- ☐ Produce promotional materials
- ☐ Arrange shipping for your exhibit, promotional materials and equipment
- ☐ Determine staffing needs

1 - 2 months before the show

- ☐ Select your show staff and train them
- ☐ Start dry runs of presentations and demonstrations
- ☐ Finalize and confirm travel arrangements and accommodations
- ☐ Finalize and confirm logistics arrangements for shipping equipment and displays, and verify that they will pass customs at the destination
- ☐ Do a dry run of the exhibit set-up and test all equipment
- ☐ Establish contingency plans

During the show

- ☐ Record pertinent information about visitors and qualify leads
- ☐ Debrief staff at the end of each day
- ☐ Assign staff to participate in other show activities, such as seminars and demonstrations that may generate leads

After the show

- ☐ Analyze leads and follow up to make sales
- ☐ Evaluate the return on investment for your participation in the show

Trade show resources for exporters

There are many online resources to help you plan and carry out your trade show strategy. Some useful ones are:

[Trade Show Advisor](#)

[Trade Show Strategy](#)

[International Trade Shows: The Comprehensive Guide](#)

SCHEDULE A CALL

We can help you succeed internationally.
Speak with a Trade Advisor today to learn how.

[Schedule a Call ▶](#)

For more information, please visit edc.ca

Ce document est également disponible en français.

EDC is the owner of trademarks and official marks. Any use of an EDC trademark or official mark without written permission is strictly prohibited. All other trademarks appearing in this document are the property of their respective owners. The information presented is subject to change without notice. EDC assumes no responsibility for inaccuracies contained herein. Copyright © 2016 Export Development Canada. All rights reserved.