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How to get the most out of trade shows

What are trade shows and why attend?

Trade shows are a forum to meet key industry players and develop or enhance business relationships. They are an excellent opportunity to meet with a large number of targeted clients in the one place at the one time.

Trade shows are held either in person, or virtually, throughout the year, each targeting different audiences and designed to achieve different objectives. They may target specific members of the trade distribution system (wholesalers, tour operators, frontline retail staff), specific market segments (youth, luxury) or particular industries (business events).

Events may be more time and cost effective than conducting individual sales calls, however often your appointment time will be limited. At most trade shows you will need to pre-arrange appointments with trade buyers in order to give a short presentation on your product.

If attending trade events, especially those held overseas, it is a good idea to incorporate individual sales calls, pre or post the event, into the visit. Refer to *Section 12 – Relationships are key* for further information.

Trade shows require an organised and targeted approach, with clearly set goals and committed staff to ensure you meet your trade marketing objectives.

Whichever events you choose, be prepared to commit to participation in the same event for a minimum of three years. The awareness of your product will significantly increase each year, as will your own expertise and knowledge of how to work the show.



For a listing of events see: trade.visitbritain.com/trade-events/



Tips for preparing for a trade show

- **Get with the programme** – know the event program inside out to ensure you don't miss out on any opportunities. Understand all the terms and conditions and maximise the process for making pre-scheduled appointments
- **Deadlines** – don't miss any!
- **Booth / appointment space** – obtain accurate information on the dimensions of your booth and its exact location to enable you to plan your display accordingly
- **Order and deliver your marketing materials** – often trade shows have freight partners
- **Prepare to stand out in the crowd!** – Consider a company uniform or brand feature that carries through your attire. See if there is an event dress code
- **Book your travel arrangements well in advance** – often discounted accommodation offers will be available
- **Ensure your booking systems and website are up-to-date** – Consider where the trade show buyers may look for information about your business and products. Is your website the best it could be?

Know what you want to achieve at the trade show

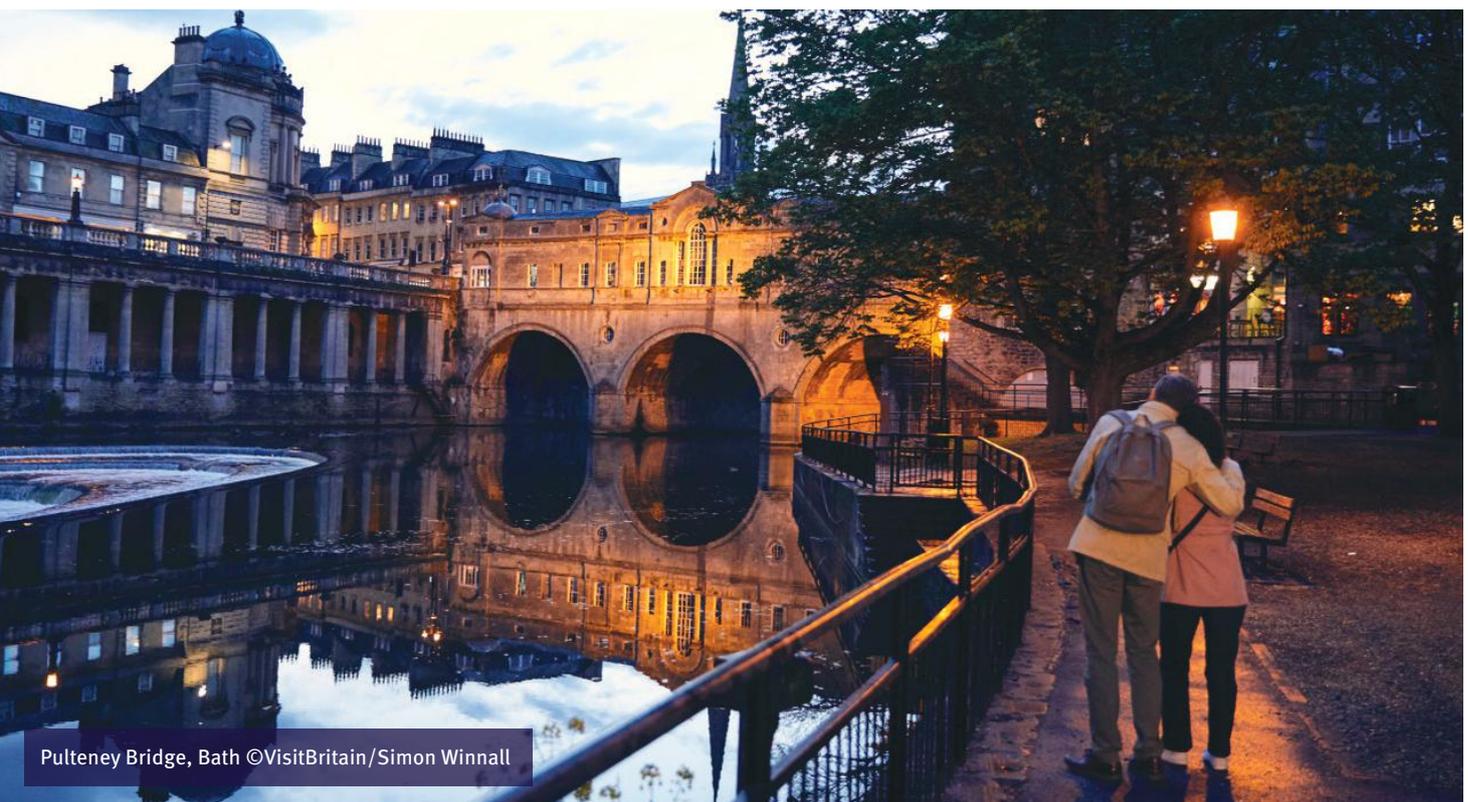
Make sure you set measurable goals such as:

- Making a specific number of new contacts
- Meeting a set number of existing clients
- Gaining competitive information
- Discovering trends in the market place
- Supporting existing trade partners

Develop a strategy to achieve these goals, including ensuring you are well prepared, that you conduct successful meetings and that you follow up after the trade show.

Invest the time in pre-trade show research

- **Ensure you have reviewed your booking system reports** identifying sales by distribution partner and comparing them with the previous year. Clearly identify the partners where you can see growth, and the partners whose sales have declined. This will form the basis of your discussions with existing clients, and also assist with your appointment preferences for the trade show
- **Know in which brochures you are and/or listed online for sale**
- **Review the delegate lists** and identify new partner opportunities
- **Determine how your product may fit within the partner's existing product selection/portfolio**
- **Know as much background information as possible about the partners and the current market conditions**
Refer to *Section 5 – Know your markets*
- **Know where the partner sits in the distribution chain**
Refer to *Section 8 – The travel distribution system*
- **Talk to your reservations and sales teams** to gain specific partner feedback (both positive and negative) that can be addressed in your meetings.
- Overall, **be informed and be knowledgeable** to demonstrate to the partner that you are enthusiastically monitoring their business with you.



Pulteney Bridge, Bath ©VisitBritain/Simon Winnall

Meeting preparation pays off

- **Make contact with distribution partners prior to the trade show via email**, ideally before they select their trade show meeting preference
- **Ensure distribution partners are well versed in your products and have your seasonal contract rates**
- **Maximise the pre-appointment scheduling opportunities** by accurately reviewing the list of distribution partners and ranking your meeting preferences based on your prior research. If available, use online messaging to fill gaps in your appointment schedule
- **Prepare your presentation**, remembering to keep your message short, sharp and measurable. Bullet points work best as they allow you to tailor your presentation during your partner meetings
- **Use visuals to showcase your product and focus on delivering a professional presentation.** Ensure your images are of a high standard and accurately represent your product, proof read your presentation and practice its delivery, keeping in mind different distribution partners
- **Know your destination.** In addition to selling your own product, you are also selling the destination. Ensure you know as much as possible about your region
- Be aware of the **international planning periods**. Each market has a different time of year in which they plan brochures and undertake their marketing. There are also key holiday periods that differ between countries so understanding these is imperative.
Refer to *Section 5 - Know your markets*.
- **Make a great first impression** by being prepared for each individual meeting – have pre-prepared notes specific to each partner
- **Ensure you are prepared to capture key contacts and information** – design an easy to use template to use in each appointment. This can also act as a prompt in discussions
- **Review the products that you are offering and consider tactical offers or product bundling to boost interest in your products**
Refer to *Section 11 - Consider your product*.
- **Consider giving partners a promotional item/gift as a further reminder of your product** - Face to face only



What should I take to trade shows?

- Your delegate name badge that you will receive at registration – otherwise access will not be allowed
- Your appointment schedule – don't miss an opportunity to slot in a key appointment
- Pen / Paper (or electronic device/ required chargers) – don't rely on your memory at trade shows, they are a busy few days
- Business cards (lots) – you can never have too many
- Stationery kit (pens, paper, stapler, staples, scissors)
- Your presentation on an iPad, Laptop or similar
- A reference copy of your marketing material (e.g. brochure)
- Water – replenish frequently!
- Energy boost type snacks for you and your delegates

**Some items above may not apply when attending virtual trade shows*

How do I conduct the perfect appointment?

- **Arrive early and be organised.** Make sure you have everything set up well before your first appointment
- **Know who your client is** before they sit down. Use your research and have a clear outline of the information or questions you need to ask your trade partner, in front of you. Make sure you are fully aware of the different markets and cultural expectations
- **Typically you have 15 minutes** so use the time wisely – listen for 80% and sell for 20%. Make sure there are opportunities for the trade partner to ask questions throughout the meeting. Bear in mind that you might not do business during this meeting, but be prepared to follow up – see below.
- **Pinpoint one truly amazing thing about your product or region and open with that.** Focus on your compelling selling points and what really makes you stand out from competitors
- **Make it relevant and don't deliver a rehearsed spiel.** Use bullet points to allow you to tailor your presentation to each trade partner and their market so it is relevant to them. Partners want to feel that you really want their business, not just that you are repeating the same thing over and over
- **If the trade partner is already sending you business then thank them for it.** Review the sales with them, ask for any customer feedback and update them on changes or new products. Don't be afraid to ask why their sales have increased or decreased
- **Make your product memorable.** Even if the trade partner only walks away with one piece of knowledge, as long as it stays with them, you have succeeded. Remember, you will be providing the partner with detailed information in your follow up
- **Remember to ask questions.** This is your product development opportunity to ensure you are meeting the trade partner's needs and to ask the hard questions. What can you do to improve the business? What are their clients looking for? Are they aware of your product or even the destination?
- **Avoid the use of slang or colloquialisms and be mindful that English may be your trade partners' second language.**
- Use the **correct commission levels** in your discussions. Make sure you understand where they sit in the distribution chain. Refer to *Section 8 - The travel distribution system*.
- **Take notes!** It is perfectly okay to take notes at trade shows – it demonstrates your commitment. You can use your pre-prepared template for this
- **Invite trade partners to experience your product through trade educationals**
- **Don't give out brochures or heavy information packs** – use your follow up to further showcase your product, or consider providing USBs with your information
- **Understand your outcomes.** It is important that you have a clear idea of what you want to achieve from each appointment (remember your goal setting). You should be aiming for leads, awareness and relationships in order to successfully promote your product. Conclude each appointment by summarising your follow up actions and agreed path
- **Seek opportunities for further discussion** – invite the trade partner for a drink or coffee during any free appointments / breaks and or networking opportunities
- **Ensure your booth is attended at all times** – you don't want to miss that great 'passing by' opportunity
- **Review your progress and make any necessary changes to your strategy** – this can be done either during breaks or at the end of the each day



Don't forget the value of networking opportunities

There are often multiple opportunities available during trade shows that allow you to build or consolidate business relationships outside the scheduled business appointments. The organised social functions are prime occasions, as well as breakfast or quick catch-ups in the hotel lobby before the show, or even walking around the trade show floor. For further tips on networking see *Section 12 – Relationships are key*.

The appointment is only as good as the follow up

- **Following up is the most critical component of any trade show.** If you don't have the time to follow up, then consider not participating in the trade show
- **Timing is imperative** - follow up should be done either during or immediately after the trade show
- **Personalise and thank you** – each trade partner should receive an individualised follow up specifically referring to the content of your appointment and always thank the partner for the business and their ongoing support. Use your meeting template to prompt you and personalise your follow up – make reference to your discussions during the trade show
- **Categorise your trade show appointments/ leads in order of priority** and complete your follow up in this order
- **Send all the material and information that you promised as soon as possible**
- **Continue to promote and update** your latest marketing collateral and information online
- **Post trade show planning should include a multiple contact plan** until you meet the buyer again. Keep the buyer updated and focus on strengthening the relationship. Consider using your social media channels, such as Facebook and Twitter to boost your social media activity
- **Ensure your follow up includes all partners in the distribution chain** – if the buyer partners with a local tour operator ensure you also follow up with the tour operator directly as well as the overseas buyer
- **Prepare and distribute training material to buyers** – this extends the reach of your appointment to the front line reservations teams
- **Remember to also follow up with complementary sellers and industry associations** – continue to work together and seek out joint opportunities.
- **Be in regular contact with your DMO** to jointly promote the region and the products offered and to seek out opportunities
- **Be patient** – understand that it takes time to establish a relationship and to be selected for brochure/online inclusion. Some relationships may not come to fruition even within the first year. If not, it's important to stay connected to the buyers, as the opportunity might arise later on
- **Add new contacts to your database and track if business is generated from them.** Keep your buyers updated on their sales achievements
- **Update your teams** on the outcomes of the trade show and any required actions specific to each buyer
- **Measure your trade show success against your pre-set goals.** Consider such questions as what worked, what you could improve on next time, did I meet the right people, what did I learn from others, what did I learn about the competition?



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