

TRADE SHOW PLANNING TIMELINE

Phase 1: 12+ Months... Set Your Strategy

1. Identify the role trade shows will serve, as part of your overall marketing and sales strategy. Then, secure buy-in within your organization.
2. Develop a detailed trade show budget and forecast your return on investment.

Phase 2: 9 to 12 Months before Show

1. Set specific objectives for your show such as number of product sales, leads generated, publicity secured, etc.
2. Identify your booth space needs, along with your exhibitor resources for booth accessories, banners, marketing collateral, equipment, and promotional items.
3. Register and reserve your display space with the event sponsor and request full details on exhibit requirements.
4. Develop a trade show marketing plan that utilizes a mix of promotional methods to reach prospects. Your plan should be divided into three sections:
 - a. Pre-Show Marketing,
 - b. At-Show Marketing, and
 - c. Post-Show Marketing

Phase 3: 6 to 9 Months before Show

1. Write a compelling sales message that gets across the key points you want to communicate at your exhibit in 30 seconds or (preferably) less.
2. Determine your exhibit design, layout and graphics needs. You can hire a company to handle design and production or take a more hands-on approach by using web-based exhibition design software to create the look and configuration of your display before handing it over to an exhibit producer. Take your time to select an exhibit firm that meets your needs, based on capabilities, design talent, cost and delivery timing.
3. Identify high-impact tradeshow giveaways and promotional strategies you will use to attract visitors to your display area.
4. Determine the literature and marketing materials you will need at the show - and begin design and printing work.

Phase 4: 3 to 6 Months before Show

1. Order your giveaways or promotional items.
2. Continue working with vendors on your display booth, exhibit items, and marketing materials. Confirm delivery dates and adherence to your trade show planning timeline.
3. Determine staffing requirements, develop booth schedules, and plan training sessions.
4. Identify how you will ship your display and other items to the show.
5. Begin making travel arrangements.
6. Launch pre-show marketing initiatives. Invite your buyers to see you in your booth at the show. Offer an incentive for visiting your booth.

Phase 5: 1 to 3 Months before Show

1. Put together follow-up packets to send immediately following the show to your leads.
2. Continue pre-show marketing activities
3. Make all travel arrangements.
4. Register booth personnel for exhibitor badges.
5. Finalize production of booth display, promotional items, and marketing materials.
6. Confirm shipping date.
7. Schedule dinners or other meetings to be held at the show with prospects, distributors and/or customers.

Phase 6: 1 Week before Show

1. Confirm shipping arrival dates for your booth display, promotional items and materials.
2. Double check that all action steps on timeline have been covered.
3. Print out exhibitor badge confirmations in order to avoid long lines waiting to register at the show.

Phase 7 – Follow-up Activities: 1 Day to 1 Week AFTER Show

1. Analyze leads, send follow-up packets, and make contact as appropriate.
2. Evaluate success of trade show participation compared with objectives from your tradeshow plan.
3. Review your budget compared to your actual expenses for the show. Determine your return on investment.
4. Make recommendation whether to participate in the same trade show next year. Include suggested changes, enhancements, and other trade show ideas.

<http://www.trade-show-advisor.com/trade-show-planning-timeline.html>