

Advance Planning Schedule for Trade Shows and Events

Want to have success at your trade show and/or event? Don't wait till the last minute, the key is to start planning and making arrangements early. Follow this monthly planning schedule to stay on track and ultimately benefit from trade shows.

Pre-Show Planning

Ten Months in Advance

- Review your exhibitor kit.
- Reserve your booth space. Mail the required paperwork and deposit.
- Study the show's rules regulations. Go over the schedule and itinerary.
- Book your hotel and travel reservations. Research hospitality suites and/or conference rooms.
- Analyze prospects demographics and then develop appropriate exhibiting goals and strategies. If possible, try to relate your message to the show's theme.
- Discuss show plan and your exhibit display with all involved team members.
- Layout a rough plan covering pre- and at-show promotions, exhibit structure, graphics, booth staff, show services, hospitality, & transportation. Begin making cost estimates.
- Start contacting exhibit and graphics consultants.

Five to Six Months in Advance

- Update your advertising agency or department.
- Finalize booth design. Make sure there are no questions and all team members are on the same page.
- Check our company literature for appropriateness and availability.
- Order all the supplies, equipment, and products that your booth staff will need.

Two to Three Months in Advance

- Finalize your plan and budget. Create a production schedule and show goals to distribute to all personnel involved.
- Send in required forms, including show labor, rentals, security, and other services.
- Submit all show management forms involving product information, program listing, show attendance invitation forms, and promotion materials.
- Choose your booth staff and confirm their availability.
- Announce your booth number in pre-show advertisements to increase exhibit traffic.
- Develop editorial liaison and news releases for trade publications.
- Make any necessary shipping arrangements.

During the Last Month Before the Show

- Setup and test your exhibit to ensure that all problems are eliminated.
- Give written instructions to all team members, covering the show schedule, plans, and expectations.
- Conduct pre-show training programs. Your staff should be as prepared as possible.
- Call and confirm hotels and travel reservations.
- Review supplies, literature, products, and shipping arrangements.
- Obtain cash and checks for on-site payments
- Develop a VIP customer list.
- Finalize any news conference or press release activities.

At-The-Show Activities

- Conduct staff meetings off the floor to document progress and make any changes.
- Reserve a space for the next year—bring a deposit check with you if required by show management.
- Check all arrangements for dismantling and shipping your company's display and materials.
- Make sure you check all bills or work sheets with service contractors—it's virtually impossible to make adjustments later.
- Ensure that all return bills of lading are prepared correctly.