

International expansion

Preparing for a trade show or trade fair with hub.brussels

My checklist

Introduction

Attending an international trade fair is a unique opportunity to increase your visibility, meet partners and conquer new markets.

This checklist has been designed to help you prepare for this event so that you can maximise your impact and get the most out of it.

1. Before the fair

Business preparation

A trade fair presents excellent business opportunities - provided you are clear about your objectives and ensure you keep them in mind.

☐ Define your business objectives I am attending the trade fair to...

(develop my brand image, test my offer on the market, identify my customer base, etc.). Don't forget to set realistic KPIs for each objective.

☐ Prepare a pitch for each visitor profile

Make sure you ask about the person's position before pitching your product or service to them, so you do not waste time with people who are less relevant.

Your pitch:

☐ Set up your meetings in advance

- Contact your targets
- Send them your brochure
- Plan meetings using the trade fair app (when possible)

☐ **Check out the competition**

- Who are my competitors in the country or countries in question?

- What are their strengths? My strengths?

- What are the average sales prices?

- Where are their products/services distributed?

☐ **Find out about the market in the country of the trade fair/trade show**

- What are the trends?

- What are the current regulations?

- How is the market evolving?

- Contact the General Delegates at hub.brussels to identify potential prospects to invite and meet, particularly for markets with which you are less familiar.

Go to <https://hub.brussels/en/international-network/>

- Check the country files available [here](#)

☐ **Identify your customer base**

- Who are the potential clients?

- How is the market segmented?

- What are their current needs?

- Are there any specific features in terms of business culture?

Communication preparation

90% of a trade fair is organised in advance. Your prospects should be informed well in advance of your attendance at the trade fair and your appointments should be made in advance. This is why good communication is so important.

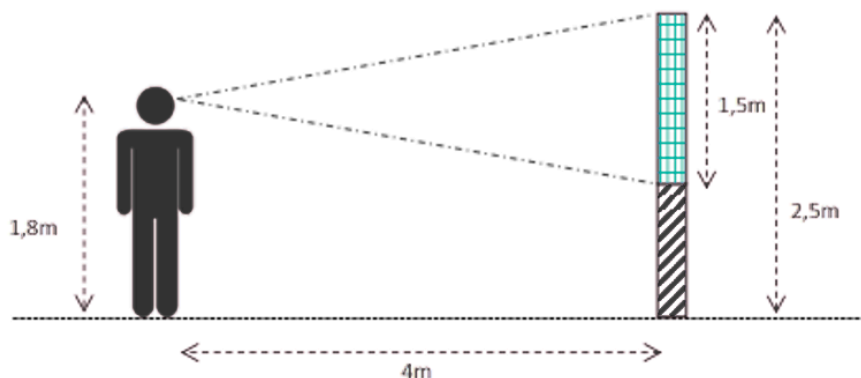
☐ Register your details on the exhibition platform

☐ Inform people in advance (3-4 weeks) that you will be attending the trade fair via different channels

- Social networks
- Newsletter
- Website
- Email signature
- Don't forget to mention your hall and stand number

☐ Think about the graphic design of your stand

- Put yourself in the shoes of your visitors
 - Avoid jargon
 - Avoid complicated patterns
 - Avoid excessive amounts of text
- Highlight a maximum of 1 to 3 key messages: what you offer, what makes you unique
- Bring a roll-up banner if the layout and space of your stand allow it
- Provide English subtitles if you are showing a video at your stand.
- Remember that the upper part of your stand (screen, reception desk, people on the stand) will hide part of the message → do not put important information in the lower part of the visual:



HR and logistics preparation

☐ Order your furniture in good time

☐ Book accommodation as early as possible

- Choose accommodation that is easily accessible by public transport from the exhibition hall
- Discover the offers available directly from the trade fair

☐ Avoid attending the trade fair alone

It is preferable to have at least two people: one permanently on the stand while the other explores the rest of the trade fair

☐ Have at least one person with (very) good English, the language of business

☐ Bring plenty of stock (if goods are displayed):

- Provide new or flagship products
- Choose sample formats that are easily transportable for both you and the prospect
- (food) Provide equipment (spoon, bowl, saucer, etc.) so that your prospects can sample your products

☐ Provide for:

- Equipment (stapler, marker, pen, sellotape, notebook) so you can easily sort contacts by priority and/or type (customers, distributors, partners, suppliers, etc.)
- Appropriate clothing
 - shirts, blazers, suits (or other formal wear) are not always a good idea It is often very hot in the halls, so it is preferable to be "comfortable".
 - a t-shirt or polo shirt branded with your logo can generate interactions even when you are not at your stand
- Sufficient business cards (paper or digital)

2. During the trade fair

The big day has arrived! Everything is ready to welcome visitors and future prospects. Take a deep breath and make sure you:

☐ **Appear welcoming**

- Don't stay seated behind your counter
- Don't just stay on your computer
- Smile when people walk past your stand
- Stand in the walkway to discreetly direct passers-by to your stand

☐ **Direct the conversation to the visitor**

- Try to get them to talk about themselves rather than you
- Ask them about their objectives/needs
- Ask questions and tell stories and anecdotes (they are more likely to remember interesting or inspiring stories than a pitch, no matter how good it is)

☐ **Plan follow-up meetings before they leave the stand**

☐ **Never leave your stand empty**

☐ **Don't wait until the end of the day to classify/rank visitors**

- Detail their profile
- Note what interested them
- Highlight what may have held them back, their doubts
- Indicate what you gave them

☐ **Be prepared to answer trick questions or statements**

- "Why should I work with you when there are very effective local players?"
- "Why should I work with you when you are still a small company?"
- "Your solution is too expensive for our market"

☐ **Take part in the activities offered by the trade fair**

- They are an opportunity to make yourself known beyond your stand

☐ **Spend the first day validating your assumptions**

- About your pricing
- About local constraints
- About the main players, targets identified in advance
- About the needs of the market

- ☐ Continue to talk about your presence at the trade fair on the various channels
- ☐ Invite your prospects to more “informal” events at the end of the day if you are in a shared pavilion

- ☐ Talk to the other exhibitors on the stand (if it is a group stand)

It's a great way to discuss best practice, tips and pitfalls

- ☐ Visit competitors' stands incognito
- ☐ Don't underestimate the last day

Prospect follow-up form for a trade fair

Objectives

This template can be used to record interactions with prospects at a trade fair

Business:

Name

Title

Date / Time

Documents distributed:

- ☐ Technical table
- ☐ Leaflet
- ☐ Official report

Evaluation:

Budget

Authority

Needs

Discussion results:

Action point 1

Action point 2

Action point 3

3. After the trade fair

☐ Review your attendance at the trade fair

- On your website (article, blog, etc.)
- On social networks

☐ Follow up quickly with leads generated at the trade fair

- Use personalised approaches and remind participants of discussion points
- Send brochures (in digital format)

☐ Distinguish between two types of contact

- Long term: those who requested information but are not ready to commit quickly
- Short-term: those who are ready to negotiate directly

If you have any doubts about a potential customer/partner, contact the General Delegates at hub.brussels; they have access to reliable commercial data that is not publicly available.

☐ Evaluate the trade fair

- Number of leads collected
- Number of post-trade fair meetings
- Turnover generated thanks to the trade fair (long-term)
- Lead conversion rate
- Quality of visitors
- Visitor flow to the stand

Criterion	Mark /5	Quick comment
Number of qualified contacts		
Quality of discussions		
Turnover generated		
Estimated ROI		
Visibility/Reputation		
Organisation & logistics		