

Catalogue **FACTS**

The Publishing Events guide to exhibition catalogue marketing

Exhibitions are a dynamic, exciting face-to-face marketing opportunity. As an exhibitor, you are not only meeting your key customers of the future, you are also usually alongside most – if not all – of your direct competitors. How can you make the most of this opportunity?

All exhibitors develop their own marketing strategies at exhibitions, individually tailored to further their corporate aims. However, the one key item that your customers at the event are virtually guaranteed to take away with them is the exhibition catalogue.

How exhibition catalogues are used

- At the event, exhibition visitors use the floor plan, product guide, list of exhibitors and seminar/conference programme in the publication to research suppliers and find their way around.
- On their journey back from the exhibition, and later in their office or home, they study the profiles of the exhibitors – and read the advertising – in more depth.
- During the months and years after the exhibition, event visitors use the catalogue as a research tool and buyer's guide.
- In companies, exhibition catalogues are also used by other decision makers and influencers who did not attend the exhibition.

At many exhibitions, a basic editorial listing in the catalogue is usually free. But there are also many other creative ways exhibition marketers can exploit the potential of this medium to lift your company above your competitors – often at a relatively low, or even no cost.

Show catalogues are a popular method of sourcing suppliers (as opposed to other more general trade directories or product guides) because the exhibitors profiled within them are – almost by definition – the key players in that particular business sector.

Benefits of marketing by exhibition catalogues

- Reinforce the success of a recent meeting with a key customer or prospective client.
- Build a brand in front of hundreds or thousands of prospective clients who have spent time and money to find out more about new or existing suppliers.
- The catalogue is an exclusive marketing opportunity. Not only are exhibitors entitled to an editorial entry by virtue of their stand at the event. Advertisements in the catalogue are usually also restricted to exhibitors only.

So, once you have booked your stand, make the most of the catalogue! After all, the organiser is producing it for your benefit.

Contents

- Creative ways to put yourself ahead of your competitors
- Practical tips to ensure your company profile is published accurately
- How to obtain multiple editorial listings – legitimately!
- Strategic brand marketing in exhibition catalogues
- How to negotiate the best advertising deals

The advice in this guide on how to market your company effectively in exhibition catalogues and show directories was compiled by specialist event guide producer Publishing Events Ltd.

Selling your company through exhibition catalogues

Use this practical checklist of exhibition catalogue marketing **do's** and **don'ts** every time you book a stand at an event. Remember that the event catalogue is an exclusive opportunity to promote your company directly to your key customers...



Do remember to return your editorial entry!

Every year, thousands of exhibitors do not send in their editorial entry form to the catalogue publisher on time. Unfortunately, some exhibitors later find their company is not profiled in the exhibition catalogue.

Tip! Complete the editorial entry form and send it back immediately you receive it. In that way, there can be no risk that the form is left in your 'Pending' tray and never see the light of day again!



Don't ignore any part of the editorial entry form

Most catalogues 1) ask for your company's contact details; 2) give you the opportunity to write a short profile of your company and/or its products; and 3) allow you to be listed in a product guide, or buyer's guide. Study the form carefully therefore, and then make sure you supply details for all the sections available. After all, it is free publicity.



Do plan the trading name(s) you wish to be listed under

Your trading name at the exhibition is not necessarily the same as the company name under which you booked the stand. You need to make this clear on the editorial entry form, otherwise the latter will be used.

Tip! If you wish your company or trading name to appear 'out of alphabetical order' make sure this is also clearly stated on the form.



Don't exceed the maximum words for your editorial entry

Keep your company editorial profile to the maximum word length stated. Because if you do not, your profile will be edited to length for you in a way that is perhaps not of your choosing (e.g. from the bottom upwards).



Do use all (legitimate!) means to get as many free editorial profiles and listings as possible

The rules for including editorial entries in the catalogue vary, from exhibition to exhibition. But in some catalogues, you are allowed to have separate entries for several of your main brands, trading divisions, products, and/or affiliate companies. Use this facility to the maximum to ensure you have as much free coverage as possible.

Tip!

Even if the event organiser limits the number of full exhibitor profiles to the number of separate stands you have booked, in practice you can usually be included in the a-z summary list of exhibitors free of charge. This list of exhibitors is often also used on the visitor signage boards at the event itself. These extra references to your trading or brand names are important, because many of your clients or prospective customers will use this summary index to find you at the event. They may only look for you under one brand name or product group. If this name is not listed, they will assume you are not represented at the event, and may visit one of your competitors instead.



Don't leave it to a junior staff member to write your exhibitor profile

Use a professional copywriter or experienced marketer to write your editorial profile. Make sure this person covers the obvious angles: your products or services, and why these are relevant to the visitor.

Tip!

Exhibitor profiles are often only read properly after the event, sometimes by people who either cannot clearly remember meeting you or have not met you at all. This means that your written company/ product profile must be self-explanatory. Simply to say: 'Come and see us on our stand' will not be very informative after the event.



Do double check your completed editorial entry form

It is essential to ensure a senior member of your exhibition marketing team checks the details of an editorial entry before it is sent it off. For instance, exhibitors often write down the wrong contact details on the editorial entry form, and then wonder why these have appeared in print, or on the exhibition website.



Do select all relevant product categories

In the product/buyer's guide section of the editorial entry form, select as many categories as possible that are relevant for your business.

Tip!

If there is an upper limit on the number of product categories allowed, be careful not to exceed this maximum, because if you do, your entry is likely to be edited down in a way that you may not like. (For example, the catalogue editor may unknowingly delete references to your most important product lines!)

“Make the most of your investment in your stand at the exhibition. Stand head and shoulders above your competitors by maximising your presence in the exhibition catalogue.”

Don't forget to plan your catalogue marketing strategically

Create a theme or strategy that you can carry through both in the catalogue – and at the event itself. Use the catalogue to reinforce and develop your key corporate message. Remember – however you promote your company in the exhibition catalogue, it will go on working for you for months and years ahead when customers use the publication as a reference tool and a buyer's guide.

Do anticipate your direct competitors' actions

The exhibition catalogue plays two roles – a visitors' guide at the exhibition; and a buyer's guide after the event. Readers use the catalogue both to contact companies they have visited at the show, and to source new suppliers whom they have not met. Find out what trading names or brands your competitors are likely to be promoting at the event. How are they likely to be promoting themselves in the catalogue? How can you counter that? For instance, in many catalogues the same companies book the same advertising positions, such as the inside front cover, or outside back cover, each year. How could you use your promotion in the catalogue to stay one step ahead of your competitors?

Don't submit an illegible or incorrect editorial entry form

If the handwriting on your editorial entry form is not clear, you risk having incorrect or incomplete details about your company published. Some catalogue publishers will do their utmost to contact you if your entry is obviously incorrect, or is illegible. However, with the best will in the world, it is not always possible to do so.

Do remember that payment for most catalogue advertising is after publication

Unlike the cost of your exhibition stand, most catalogue advertising is paid for after the event has taken place. This will help your budgeting.

Tip! Sometimes catalogue publishers will even be flexible on timings of invoices, to ensure that you can include the cost of your advertisement within a convenient budgeting period.

Don't leave it too late

Book up your special promotion in the catalogue early. If you are looking to secure an extra promotion in the catalogue, some of the best deals are done early on. Catalogue publishers, like any other business, need to plan ahead. Help them out, and they will do their best to help you by giving you the most advantageous positions, at the best possible prices.

Don't get lost in the crowd!

Make the most of your investment in your stand at the exhibition. Stand head and shoulders above your competitors by maximising your presence in the exhibition catalogue. Brand building in an exhibition catalogue may not cost as much as you think.

Display advertisements in the catalogue are one of the most widely used ways of giving your company added 'lift'. Why not take a full page opposite, or close to, your editorial profile? Or you could secure what are usually regarded as the most desirable positions, such as the outside back cover, inside front/back cover, or a page opposite the speaker/conference programme or floor plan. Often these 'special positions' are booked early (in some cases up to a year or more in advance), so it is important to contact the catalogue publisher in good time if you are interested.

Don't forget that your editorial entry may also be used on the show web site

Often editorial entries for show catalogues are also uploaded to the show web site for publication during the run-up to the exhibition. This information gives visitors a taste of the types of companies they can expect to see at the exhibition. The information may also remain on the web site after the event is over. This provides even more reason for you to fill in your editorial entry form accurately, and return it promptly.

For more information about exhibition catalogue marketing, telephone +44(0)20 7841 5962.

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Publishing Events is a specialist producer of event guides and directories.

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