



# TRADE SHOWS AND SALES EVENTS

## MAXIMISING SUCCESS AT TRADE SHOWS & SALES EVENTS

Trade shows and In-Ireland Events such as Networking Events, are an excellent way to meet key market buyers to establish, develop or enhance business relationships. They present a great opportunity to meet with a large number of travel trade partners within a short period of time under the one roof.

Trade shows are held both domestically (In-Ireland) and internationally (In-Market) throughout the year, and each targets a different buyer audience, except for Meitheal which is the largest Trade show for Tourism in Ireland held annually in Spring, hosted by Fáilte Ireland.

### Type of Trade Shows

Some trade shows may target specific members of the trade distribution system like tour operators, members of the Incoming Tour Operators Association (ITOA) and Online Travel Agents (OTAs), specific market segments (for example Youth, Adventure, Luxury) or particular business segments for example (Meetings, Conferences or Incentive Travel).

Trade shows can prove more time and cost effective than conducting individual sales calls, but on the negative side, your appointment time will be limited by comparison with individual sales calls for example. Typically Trade Shows support the generation of new business leads or help support existing business relationships, but most leads generated at trade shows, may require more detailed development and perhaps follow up one on one sales calls to convert business.

#### TOP TIP

##### Optimising your Trip

When attending trade shows, especially those held overseas, it may be a more efficient use of your trip travel to add on individual sales calls to other buyer prospects not at the show, while you are in that market area, either pre or post the event.

### The Format of Trade Shows

Often a “speed dating” scheduled appointment format is used, where you are matched with a list of pre-arranged appointments affording you a short period of time to present your product. The appointments can be pre-matched by way of a technology based app scheduler system, by the event planners and hosts or in the



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case of some in-market events such as ITB and World Travel Market, the Irish Industry trade attending must plan time out to conduct their own research to identify and reach out to buyers who may be attending to request meetings and manage their own diary schedule of meetings.

Regardless of the model of meetings (some requiring much more research and time planning than others) an organised and targeted approach is crucial before, during and after a trade show. Clearly defined goals and solid research are vital.

The following highlights some tips for what is required:

1. Prior to attendance at a trade show
2. On-site at a trade show
3. Post trade show.

Please note that these are generic principles for trade shows. Many shows have different formats. You therefore need to become familiar with the structure and process of the specific show you are going to attend before you decide on your approach.

For advice, contact your local Fáilte Ireland representative and they will put you in contact with the relevant Business Development or Business Tourism Unit staff to guide you.

## 1. Trade Show Preparation

### Trade shows: the right fit?

Before booking your slot at a trade show, investigate first what the target market is and how relevant it is for your needs.

Meitheal Ireland's largest in-destination global travel trade show, hosted in Spring each year over 2 days with additional pre and post event Fam trip itinerary opportunities for buyers, created and hosted by Fáilte Ireland with Industry partners participation. Over 300 International buyers and 400 Irish Industry attend. The buyers are invited by Tourism Ireland in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland and are fully hosted in the destination by Fáilte Ireland. The event facilitates them to come to meet Irish Industry (trade) to grow their business and confirm business with suppliers, while gaining updated insights on new experiences, programme brand and product news. This event has an online technology tool and App system, to facilitate appointment matching, where you are requested to upload your business profile once your place and payment has been confirmed, buyers are then afforded a period of about a week, to reach out to Irish trade attending to request appointments. You then choose to confirm or decline the appointment request (the

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latter if you do not feel the buyer or their market is a match for your business offering). Following this, there is a second window of time afforded where your remaining available appointment slots allow you reach out to other buyers who have not yet requested a meeting with you to meet, so you fill your allocated schedule of appointments.

ITB the biggest European annual trade show and sales event that takes place in Berlin, Germany in March each year. The event runs for 5 days, the first 3 are trade only; the latter 2 are open to consumers. This event does not offer a pre-arranged appointment matching service but has an event-based business profile directory allowing buyers and suppliers attending to register themselves so they are available in a directory to be searched and contacted (similar to the LinkedIn model) to request meetings, but there is no appointment scheduling facility as part of the technology. The event also offers a very good 3 day Convention of educational seminars and summary research and 'trend' talks which takes place in parallel with the Trade show. ITB Berlin has a huge number of Tour Operators, Corporate Travel Agents, DMCs and PCOs in attendance, but if you have not researched and secured meetings in advance of the show, you are unlikely to pick up business leads/meetings as the event is so big every buyer attending comes into a hall only to meet their appointments.

Other trade shows target niche segments such as the luxury market, youth adventure or golf.

*For other event examples of In-Ireland and In-Market events check the Fáilte Ireland Trade Portal <https://tradeportal.Failteireland.ie/>*

*For advice on how to register with the Trade Portal and request attendance at events see resource on the 5 steps for getting involved in events.*

## Tourism business description

Once you register for a trade show, you will be asked to provide a business description. This description is very important as it is read by potential customers attending the trade show and will:

- Either enhance or damage their first impression of you
- Be used for them to judge whether they would like to meet you and /or
- Be kept as a reference for potential future business discussions.

As different shows can target customers from different sales channels, the description should be tailored to suit that specific show, highlighting the



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service/product most appropriate to that market.

For example, a trade show that targets leisure tour operators should have a leisure/holiday slant, whereas a trade show that targets Destination Management Companies DMCs or Professional Conference Organisers (PCOs) should have a slant appropriate for business groups. A lazy description will cost you sales!

## Study the attendee list

If possible, try to secure and review the trade show attendee list in advance, either via the show organiser, the show website, or Fáilte Ireland representative. In the case of Fáilte Ireland Events the buyers attending will be available on the appointment matching technology system once they are confirmed to attend and the system is open for appointment matching. Your Fáilte Ireland local contacts, can share with you sample past event lists if you want to get a better sense of the event. If the typical buyers attending are a possible match for your sales development strategy they can put you in contact with the Business Development Unit or Trade Events team to advise you further on this.

## Compile a database

Compile a database prior to the show of suitable contacts – incorporate the following:

- Past enquiries and business from that market
- Any complaints / issues that may come up in the discussion
- Details you have garnered from their website about existing programmes that may be relevant to you.

Always e-mail contacts in advance advising them of your participation at the show. Depending on the format of the show and whether it operates on a pre-appointment basis or if you have a stand, try to make appointments in advance and/or advise attendees of your stand number.

## Promotional Material

- Ensure that the promotional material you plan to use and distribute is of excellent quality and relevant to the trade show attendees
- If you plan to ship brochure supplies to the trade show venue, make sure and do

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so well in advance to ensure they arrive in time and that they do not get lost

- Be prepared to offer to post brochures to your contacts after the show, as they will be reluctant to carry them in their luggage.

**This is an ideal “excuse” to follow up with them afterwards and stay front to mind!**

## Prepare an incredible sales pitch with strong visual aid tools

- Take time to plan, design and rehearse a great sales pitch
- Emphasise one amazing aspect of your product / offering. They are meeting a lot of people - tell them something to make them remember you
- Remember to thank them if they are already delivering business to you.

### Preparing your pitch

- In 30 words or less, ensure you can describe your **B2B Offering** (*include your business name and the title of the offer – if it differs from the business name*).
- Note what your USP is – what makes you different/more appealing to a buyer than other competitors?
- Reference other experiences/things to see and do make your area a compelling place to visit?
- Consider the top four questions you need to explore with the buyer so understand their needs and you can demonstrate how your offer meets their business priorities?

## Know your environment

- Book a hotel close to the show location to avoid lengthy and expensive taxi journeys. You could do without the stress and expense.
- Some shows provide shuttle buses to and from the event, so check and see if your hotel is on the route.

## Plan personal sales calls

- Plan sales calls and meetings around attendance at the show, if appropriate. This can give added value to the cost of travelling overseas.
- Bear in mind that you can organise calls in other locations outside the immediate show catchment area as well (for example when going to Chicago, prearrange days in New York, Boston or Minneapolis).

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## Contact your Fáilte Ireland local representative

Make sure to engage with your local Fáilte Ireland representative in planning your participation at the show. Local and up-to-date knowledge is invaluable and can be critical to the success of your attendance at a show, so your Fáilte Ireland contact can also introduce you to the relevant Tourism Ireland In-market office contact if the event is in market and being hosted by Tourism Ireland.

## Experience is key

To ensure the best outcome, send an experienced staff member who:

- Understands the trade show's target audience
- Is highly skilled at carrying out consultative sales appointments
- Is able to negotiate if necessary.

## Language

A staff member who can speak the language of the market is an added advantage. Remember that promotional literature in English may be of little use in non-English speaking countries, so consider translating brochures and spec sheets.

## Set clear goals for the event

This is perhaps the most important aspect! Before the event, you need to decide:

- How many new contacts you plan to meet
- Which existing contacts you would like to meet with
- What competitor or market information you would like to gather.

## Rule of the game at trade shows and events

Where possible if you are considering attending a big Global Trade Show Event for the first time in market you might be best advised to consider attending it as an observer in year 1, by purchasing a standard day entry ticket directly from the Shows website (if the show allows, such as is the case at ITB Berlin) and contacting Fáilte Ireland to advise them you are planning to do this. In this way, we can have

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someone from the Ireland stand met you and orientate you about the event, so you can see the scale of the event, orientate yourself and see how the appointments and Convention or Networking event process operates, and afford you time to talk to other trade on the stand (if they have time between appointments) about how it works for them while also seeing other destination stands and partners in action. Below are some basic practical tips on getting ready for the event

- Clothing and footwear – comfort essential, but professional, consider your brand/logo on clothing!
- Brochures – don't carry too many, don't allow them to be wasted – consider sending PDF brochures for your follow up
- Prepare a client contact sheet – key data you want to capture (the Fáilte Ireland Converse Appointment system allows you make advance notes on this and save online)
- Bring a map – collect a map of the event layout from the event website or on arrival. It is also important to bring a map of Ireland as some buyers may not know Ireland at all, so you need to orientate them about Ireland's location in Europe and where on the map you are located in relation to the main access points, iconic sites and key urban hubs
- Check out in advance the layout of the venue and distance to walk/move between appointments. This is more critical in overseas events, but regardless of the event, it is good to know if you are walking between appointments or are you sitting and is the buyer moving?
- Be punctual: arrive well in advance of your first appointment, start promptly, and finish promptly.

## TOP TIP

### **Put yourself in the buyer's shoes (consider their mind-set)**

In planning your approach, pitch and engagement for trade shows and events, we can often get caught up in what we need to communicate and get across and fail to consider the buyer in all of this. The following are a few possible buyer concerns that you need to be mindful of in planning for your Trade Show sales meetings

- Concern about shorter customer lead time trends - will I get availability?
- Trying to minimise the workload of contracts for coming year? Negotiating

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contract terms?

- Keeping Itineraries and routes they operate and programme for Ireland easy - Information on Location and Access – how to reach you and how far you are from other key urban hubs /access points is key
- Seeking Special Offers - what you offer must demonstrate this and it must be genuine!
- Value-add pricing options. What can you offer?
- Learning about new products suitable to their market to provide fresh itinerary ideas – to stay ahead of competitors – what have you that is different and unique?
- Building relationships with existing partners – Have you ‘new news’ to share (about experience onsite or in the area) of value to buyer and their customers?

## 2. On-Site at the Trade Show

<p><b>Don't waste this opportunity – network!</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have invested time and money in attending this show, now make sure you get the maximum value from it</li> <li>• Arrive early, and be organised</li> <li>• When potential customers walk up to you, be proactive, create eye contact and start a conversation.</li> </ul> <p>Remember that some of the best opportunities at trade shows come from chance encounters</p>
<p><b>Network and cross-sell with fellow exhibitors</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Network with fellow exhibitors when they are free as they may have the opportunity to sell your product during or after the show</li> <li>• They are also great resources for market and customer information.</li> </ul> <p>Don't see them as competition! We are all selling Ireland and there is plenty of business for all of us!</p>
<p><b>Research other stands</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During quieter periods, visit other stands and carry out a competitor analysis</li> <li>• Collect brochures – always useful for ideas and to see what's new or different to help you with future planning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Attend suitable</b></p>	<p>Attend hospitality and social events outside of the show hours.</p>



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<b>Hospitality /Networking events</b>	<p>These are great for networking and may generate new leads</p> <p>Remember that these are networking events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do not just chat to your peers and colleagues</li><li>• Do not drink too much alcohol!</li></ul> <p><i>See resource on Successful Networking for Sales.</i></p>
<b>Generate and record your Leads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collect business cards and record all leads, making a particular effort to record leads from customers who express a serious interest in your business offering</li><li>• Process any enquiries or requests for information via your office.</li></ul>

## TOP TIP

### Structuring your Sales Meeting

To get the best from a limited meeting time opportunity the following approach can help to ensure you don't talk too much and to keep the meeting on track

H - Hellos and introductions

E - Establish needs

L - Listen carefully

L - Link offer to client's interests

O - Objections – address them and outcomes – agree them, follow with thanks.

## 3. Post the Trade Show

<b>Follow Up</b>	<p>To create a professional impression, make sure and follow up no later than one week from returning to the office:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prioritise your contacts and individualise your responses</li><li>• Input all contacts and information relating to the customer into your database under the relevant categories and schedule further follow up contact as required throughout the year</li><li>• Send a follow-up communication to appointments that did</li></ul>
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	<p>not materialise and schedule telesales calls with them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get the master attendee listing from the show to update your database and include them on relevant future mailings</li> <li>• Ensure that you put measurement and evaluation mechanisms in place to assess the success of the trade show attendance</li> <li>• Maintain and build relationships with contacts made – schedule an ongoing programme of communication.</li> </ul> <p><b>Remember - If a potential buyer follows up directly with you – you must respond! It reflects very badly if you do not respond.</b></p> <p><i>If you are in a situation where you are no longer interested in engaging with that buyer you can politely thank them for the email, state why at this point in time that there may not be opportunities to work together and perhaps suggest other options in the area, if appropriate.</i></p>
<p><b>Tips for follow up</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't send a blanket impersonal communication – it is a waste of time and can annoy potential clients</li> <li>• Don't send general information. Ensure that the information and material you forward are relevant.</li> </ul> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A tour operator may want to receive FIT leisure information</li> <li>• A DMC may wish to receive information about gala events.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Use a team approach</b></p>	<p>Adopt a team approach. Share information with your colleagues that may assist them to service customers in a more meaningful way (e.g. knowing that tours series require more menu variety)</p>
<p><b>Be patient!</b></p>	<p>It is unlikely that sales will materialise immediately after a trade show. So treat this as the first stage in nurturing a long term partnership with your new contacts.</p>