

History of trade shows & exhibitions

It is believed that exhibitions or trade fairs began almost 600 years before the birth of Christ. While no precise record is available, The book of Ezekiel (in the Bible) written in 588 BC, contains many references to merchants trading in a "multitude of the kinds of riches with silver, iron, tin and lead".

Ezekiel also talks about the city of Tyre which was an important center of trade and commerce.

There is also a close connection between fairs and religious celebrations and holy days. The word "feria" comes from the Latin meaning "holy day" and the term is still commonly used to describe what we might otherwise refer to as an exhibition or trade fair.

Today, Trade Shows & exhibitions provide a forum for companies to display and demonstrate their products to potential buyers who have a special interest in buying these products. The compacted time frame and concentrated location of trade shows are cost-effective for exhibiting companies and convenient for buyers.

Since the 1960s, Trade shows and exhibitions are extensively used as prominent part of marketing strategy. Their relative importance is reflected in their promotional expenditures. Larger amounts are spent each year on trade exhibitions than on magazine, radio, and out-door advertising.

The primary role of trade shows in the marketing strategy is that of a selling medium. Depending on the type of product being exhibited, selling activities can involve booking orders or developing leads for future sales. If show regulations permit, they can even involve selling products directly at the exhibit.

Exhibitions provide a natural and nearly perfect platform for the delivery of solutions to the buyers. More and more exhibition organizers are providing learning content, demonstration theaters, and consultative opportunities as important features of their events. More and more exhibiting companies are taking full advantage of these opportunities.

Trade shows also serve as vehicles for advertising and publicity. Exhibits can be very effective three-dimensional ads as well as collection points for names for direct-mail lists. They can also command the attention of the news media, which regularly cover shows in search of stories on new products and new approaches.

Participating companies can also accomplish non promotional marketing objectives at trade shows. Market research data can be collected from show visitors. Competitors' offerings can be evaluated. And contacts can be made with potential suppliers and sales representatives.

Business-to-business trade shows - exhibitions in the areas of health care, computer products, electronics, advertising specialties, heavy equipment, agriculture, fashions, furniture, and toys - focus on goods and services within an industry or a specialized part of an industry. They are targeted to wholesalers and retailers with the intent of pushing products through the channel of distribution. Most attendees at these shows are actively looking for products and have the authority to buy. Consumer trade shows, like business-to-business expositions, also have an industry focus. They are different that they target the general public and, accordingly, are designed to stimulate end-user demand. The kinds of products exhibited at these open shows include autos, housewares, boats, antiques, and crafts.

Several trade show organizations provide information and assistance to exhibitors and those considering exhibiting. The Center for Exhibition Industry Research is an umbrella organization that represents the entire exhibition and convention field. It sponsors research on the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of trade shows and has a resource center and serves as a referral point for more specialized groups. The International Association of Exhibit Managers is the association of individuals within companies who are responsible for exhibit arrangements. Others, like the Healthcare Convention and Exhibitors Association, concentrate on the organization and promotion of shows for specific industries.

About the Author

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