

SETTING GOALS | Exhibition Guru

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Once you have identified your target audience and made the decision to exhibit, the real work begins. This entails pulling together a clearly defined set of objectives that you want your participation in the exhibition to achieve.

Your objectives could include:

- Selling products
- Launching new products
- Researching the market
- Generating sales leads
- Increasing brand awareness/profile
- Reinforcing or establishing company image
- Networking
- Education

Your objectives need to fit into your company's overall marketing plan and you must be able to evaluate and measure the extent to which they are achieved. They should be set down in writing and form part of your overall exhibition strategy. They must be able to be qualified and quantified and should be referred to continually. For example, sales targets should be monitored daily during the exhibition and readjusted.

When setting objectives, consider the following:

- Don't use an exhibition as a one-off opportunity to position or present a corporate image.
- Don't participate just because your competitors do so, or because you are the biggest or leading company in your field. You should always have a specific goal.
- Be prepared to learn from your mistakes and to modify your approach next time or even during the event itself.
- Don't use an exhibition as an opportunity to travel or take a holiday at the company's expense, or to catch up with clients or colleagues you haven't seen in a while.
- Carry out a formal evaluation of your own and your competitors' activities and performance.
- Isolate one message that will become the major focus of the exhibit.
- Incorporate effective company identification in the design of your stand, by using a logo, slogan, branding or colour. Remember that an exhibit is three dimensional, and try to appeal to all five senses.
- Visitors are looking for solutions to their problems, so adopt a solution-driven approach.
- Follow up leads after the promotion has ended.
- Put in a system to measure your results so you can change objectives in the future to maximise your participation.

- If your budget won't allow you to follow through on your main objectives, don't exhibit. You will just waste time and your objectives won't be achieved.
- An adequate budget must be set in order for an exhibit to be successful.

An excerpt from: Exhibitions: A Complete Guide
by **Gary-Fitz-Roy**