

Successful exhibiting

Exhibiting at a Conference can be extremely rewarding, but it is not just about turning up and watching the business flood in. With careful planning you can ensure that you get the most out of your investment and take full advantages of the opportunities at our events.

Below is a guide with tips for helping you plan a successful participation at a Green Power Conference.

What you can achieve

Gain new Sales leads- Conference delegates are an extremely focused group of people with strong business interest in the event that they are attending. By exhibiting and being present you can impact on these buyers and grow your sales. Contacts generated at conferences have a high conversion rate.

Launch new products or Services- Draw attention to your products and brand by using the conference as a launch pad for new developments, products or services. With delegates and the media in attendance, new stories of interest always create a buzz.

Enter new markets- Exhibiting is one of the most cost and time effective ways of entering new markets. It is a great opportunity to research and network whilst gaining exposure to a new qualified database.

Building customer loyalty- Face to face contact at conferences and continued support of a market helps develop loyalty as well as cementing your position as a continued presence.

Position company brand- Being seen at industry event establishes your company in the eyes of the delegate as a strong brand and creates an image of your company's abilities and strength. Showing your company at high level events creates valuable impression as an industry leader.

Building relations with the media- Many events are run with the support of trade press and industry journalists. Opportunities for Editorial coverage and developing better relations can be crucial to your companies' success. Associations also play a strong part which may also offer networking opportunities and free publicity.

Finding new distributors and agents- Delegates are often retailers and are looking for exciting new opportunities and companies to represent. Showing your brands in a conference environment can catch their eye and keep you one step ahead of the pack.

Planning ahead of the show for success

Set achievable objectives- Aim for realistic targets and goals. Look at the type of delegate and time spent you will be there.

Confirm your exhibits- Prepare well in advance to ship goods or prepare print materials with your sales team. Ensure that your stand is suited for the event and check the time allocated before and after the event to set this up.

Publicise your presence- Prepare mailings to key customers and if using advertising, alert your client to your presence and location. Press releases detailing your presence and reasons to be there are free. Ensure that you have used the web to have links on your site as well as the event organizers where possible.

Select and brief staff- If a member of your staff will be manning the stand, ensure that they are aware of your objectives and their role. For longer shows or ones with abnormal hours then ensure adequate cover for all times.

Prepare a system for handling and administering enquiries and leads- When busy, leads and enquiries can be lost or forgotten, ensure that you have a system where every meeting can be systematically pulled up to ensure you can see the progress of the day as well as what is to be done in the follow up after the event.

Have clear communication in the team- If a team is involved then ensure that clear communications are prepared for your team so that contacts, leads and suppliers are handled correctly and all messages reach the appropriate person on the stand during the event.

Following up qualified leads- With a clear administration of leads, ensure that these are followed up with the correct information immediately after the show. Conference leads are genuine industry executives and in general have come to see you for business and not for the fun of it.

Budgets

Working with media and gaining free editorial- Impartial Editorial coverage is fantastic promotion for your company, so help the media by having press packs including up to date information and press releases. Make life easy for them and produce everything on a CD, this way there are no heavy documents to carry around and journalists can access everything easily to write about you as well as being able to quickly include photos.

Evaluating the need for brochures and gimmicks- Look at your budget and judge what will create the best impression. For brochures look to show benefits as well as features and if it a small event perhaps look at the cost of a gift that delegates will keep that always shows your message (pens, caps, T-shirts, paper weights etc).

Choosing your stand and design- Keep in mind your objectives for your stand and whether you have sufficient space to show all of your exhibits, whilst welcoming your guests comfortably in a way that reflects your company and brand.

Looking Good

Explain your company / brand/ product- Make sure that you have clear information explaining your company's activities. In a global marketplace what is a well know name in one market may not be recognized in another.

Keep it simple- Many companies over complicate their stands and lose the overall message. It is important to show your benefits and not just the features of your product brand or service.

Unique Selling Points and benefits- These key issues can distinguish you from other similar companies, make these stand out where possible to enhance your brand.

Photos- Photos offer an easy and strong way to get your message and style across. Strong images are important and can be understood universally by those who may not speak your language.

New Launches and promotions- Everyone is interested in the latest developments, if you have something new to show then ensure that it is strongly emphasized so it will generate interest and people will want to find out more.

Promoting

Raising your profile- Look at other ways of raising your profile via a selection of other activities where possible. Advertising in the catalogue and Sponsorship all raise awareness and promote your company to your prospective clients and the media. Mailing to key clients prior to the event and setting up meetings will always give you a head start.

Ensure people know you are there- Mailing to clients and potential clients in advance will always help increase business. A customer arranging to meet you has already partly committed and shown strong interest.

Press Packs- These should include information on your company, your products, a Press release specific to the conference and when possible a CD with all of this information and photos. Try to keep it small as journalists have to carry much around and heavy packs run more risk of being discarded.

Letting the media know you are there- Invite the press to your stand and even consider a press event to encourage them.

Sponsorship- Sponsors have the added bonus of gaining strong branding and can choose from a series of Sponsorship opportunities to raise their profiles further whether this is to sponsor a lunch, host a Cocktail reception, brand the bags or supply the lanyards. These are worth looking into as they associate your brand with an industry and are remembered by delegates long after the event. Most event companies offer a selection of sponsorships to fit most budgets and can distinguish your brand from the rest of the field. Delegates always want to know who is sponsoring and generally to speak to them too.

Web activities- More and more delegates and companies are using the web for business and research, use your logo on the web and try to get links from the organizers website to yours and visa versa. Also look into banner advertising, news pages, online journals for Press releases and hyperlinks.

Following up the event with a mailing- Send a mail after the event to ensure everyone received your message. If possible, use the organizers delegate and guest list to target those important customers.

The Stand

Briefing your workers- Ensure all of your team are aware of your objectives and hours they are expected to work as well as covering breaks etc. Ensure everyone has a dress code if required, the logistics required for the show including food and refreshments.

Getting the right people- Ensure that your people are energetic, motivated and know their products. Good people on your stand will increase sales with clear knowledge and

the ability to attract people onto the stand and then knowing how to deal with them effectively.

After Show

Be ready to follow up- After events the team can be exhausted but now is the most important time to follow up those hot leads and build on the momentum of the event and its success. If there have been new developments and new deals then the press and show organizer should be informed as they may use it for publicity or news stories.

Prioritise leads- Deal with hot leads first and prioritise and organise your leads so that they are dealt with as soon as possible.

Keeping track of leads- Good administration of leads will ensure that you keep on top of clients. Many deals can take months to come to fruition and this will be helped by knowing when to make follow up calls, records of information sent and understanding the origins of the contact.

Return on investment, was it worth it?

Sales Achieved- Where possible look to see over time where new business has come from and the value of those sales achieved from exhibiting, as well as the additional branding benefits compared to the cost of participation.

Number of leads- How many leads did exhibiting create? Did you exceed your expectations or not? On both of these questions it is important to look at quality and quantity.

Cost per qualified contact-How many contacts were made and how long and how expensive would it have been to have created these conventionally?

Media coverage- Did your press releases get printed, were there trade reviews in local or international press, were you included in any post show reports? All of these are free of charge but a direct benefit from participating prepared. These can then be shown to new clients on your website to cement your position as an industry leader.

Database growth- Did you establish new contacts that are now in your database and a valuable contact for your company for now and the future? Databases are the heart of a company and added contacts help build a sustainable future.