

# Mastering Exhibition Sales

Proven Strategies for Success

Simon Hazeldine





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## **Introduction**

Exhibiting at trade shows, expos, and conferences presents a significant opportunity for businesses to showcase their products, connect with potential clients, and solidify their brand presence. However, as recent discussions with industry experts reveal, many companies still struggle to maximise their return on investment (ROI) from these events. This pdf delves into proven strategies for mastering exhibition sales, ensuring that your time and resources are well spent.

## **Why Exhibition Sales Matter**

Exhibitions are more than just an opportunity to display your products; they are a platform for networking, learning, and gaining insights into industry trends. According to the Center for Exhibition Industry Research 81% of trade show attendees have buying authority, and 92% are looking for new products. Despite these promising statistics, the success of your exhibition presence hinges on your ability to engage attendees effectively.

As I recently noted in an episode of the "Sales Chat Show" podcast ("How to stop wasting your time and money selling at exhibitions"), "If you're not going to do it seriously and try to make it work, don't bother." The financial and time investment required to attend exhibitions is considerable, so it's crucial to ensure that you're making the most of these opportunities.

## 1. Pre-Exhibition Preparation

The success of your exhibition sales begins long before the event itself. Comprehensive preparation is essential for maximising your ROI.

**Set Clear Goals:** Before the exhibition, establish specific objectives. Whether it's generating a certain number of leads, scheduling follow-up meetings, or increasing brand awareness, having clear goals will guide your efforts.

**Research Attendees and Competitors:** Utilise event apps and websites to identify key attendees and competitors. Engage with potential prospects before the event by connecting on LinkedIn or arranging meetings in advance. Fill your calendar with pre-scheduled meetings to maximise your time at the event.

**Train Your Team:** Ensure that everyone on your stand is well-prepared to articulate your value proposition clearly and concisely. For example, "We help (target audience) with (specific problems your target audience frequently experience), and these are the outcomes."

**Promote Your Presence:** Use social media, email marketing, and direct outreach to inform your network about your participation in the event. Encourage existing clients and prospects to visit your stand.

## 2. Engaging Attendees Effectively

Once you're on the exhibition floor, the real work begins. Your ability to engage with attendees will determine your success.

**Be Proactive:** Standing passively behind your stand will not yield results. Instead, engage with attendees as they pass by, making eye contact, smiling, and initiating conversations. Many salespeople fail to engage, often missing opportunities by being distracted or uninterested.

**Qualify Leads Quickly:** Time is of the essence at exhibitions. Engage attendees in conversation to quickly determine whether they are potential leads. You can start with simple questions such as "Are you having a good show?" and "What brings you here?" This approach allows you to gauge interest without overwhelming the prospect with any sort of hard sell.

**Create an Interactive Experience:** Offer demonstrations, samples, or interactive elements at your stand. This not only attracts attention but also provides a natural way to engage prospects in conversation.

**Monitor Competitors:** Use exhibitions as an opportunity to gather intelligence on your competitors. You could get somebody from your office who the competitors don't know to go and pretend to be a customer and find out what they're up to!





### 3. Maximising Lead Capture

Capturing leads effectively is crucial for post-exhibition success. However, not all methods are created equal.

**Use Technology Wisely:** Many exhibitions offer apps for lead capture but be mindful of how you use these tools. Avoid the temptation to scan badges indiscriminately. Instead, focus on capturing qualified leads. Measure the right thing—follow-up appointments, not just the number of badges scanned.

**Offer Valuable Takeaways:** Consider providing attendees with useful, branded materials such as guides, tip sheets, or even small gifts. These items can serve as conversation starters and help keep your brand top-of-mind after the event.

**Personalise Follow-Ups:** Personalisation is key to effective follow-up. One method is to take a photo with a prospect and using it to personalise follow-up messages. This approach not only helps you remember the interaction but also makes the prospect feel valued.

### 4. Post-Exhibition Follow-Up

The work doesn't end when the exhibition does. In fact, the post-exhibition period is critical for converting leads into sales.

**Follow Up Quickly:** Time is of the essence when following up with leads. Timely follow-up can make all the difference. A prospect is more likely to remember and engage with you if you reach out within 24 hours of the event.

**Nurture Leads:** Not every lead will be ready to buy immediately. Implement a lead nurturing strategy to stay in touch with prospects who expressed interest but are not yet ready to make a purchase. Use your CRM system to track interactions and schedule follow-up activities.

**Evaluate Your Performance:** After the event, review your performance against your initial goals. Analyse what worked well and what could be improved for future exhibitions. This continuous improvement approach will help you refine your strategy over time.



## 5. Innovative Engagement Strategies

To truly stand out at an exhibition, consider implementing some creative strategies.

**Host a Treasure Hunt:** Collaborate with other exhibitors to create a treasure hunt. This strategy drives traffic to your stand and those of your partners, creating a fun and engaging experience for attendees.

**Use Social Media Live:** Utilise platforms like LinkedIn Live or Instagram Live to broadcast your presence at the exhibition. This not only increases your reach but also gives those who couldn't attend a chance to engage with your brand.

**Offer On-Site Consultations:** Provide free consultations or assessments on the spot. This adds value for attendees and positions your company as a thought leader in your industry.

## Conclusion

Exhibitions, expos, and conferences offer unparalleled opportunities for sales and networking, but only if approached with a strategic mindset. By preparing thoroughly, engaging attendees effectively, capturing and following up on leads, and implementing innovative strategies, you can maximise your ROI and turn these events into powerful sales tools.

Whether an exhibition is a waste of money, or the best investment of your year depends entirely on how well you plan and execute your strategy. By following the proven strategies outlined in this post, you can ensure that your next exhibition is a resounding success.

### Here are some further resources for you:

Centre for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR)

Exhibitor Online - Tips for Maximising Trade Show ROI

Salesforce Blog on Event Marketing

HubSpot's Event Marketing Resources



## **Simon Hazeldine**

Simon works internationally as a revenue growth and sales performance speaker, consultant, and coach. He empowers his clients to get more sales, more often with more margin.

He has spoken in over thirty countries and his client list includes some of the world's largest and most successful companies.

Simon has a master's degree in psychology, is the bestselling author of ten books that have been endorsed by a host of business leaders including multi-billionaire business legend Michael Dell and is co-founder of leading sales podcast "The Sales Chat Show".

He is the creator of the neuroscience based "Brain Friendly Selling"® methodology.

Simon's books:

Neuro-Sell: How Neuroscience Can Power Your Sales Success

Bare Knuckle Selling

Bare Knuckle Negotiating

Bare Knuckle Customer Service

The Inner Winner

How To Lead Your Sales Team - Virtually and in Person

Virtual Selling Success

How To Manage Your People's Performance

How To Create Effective Employee Development Plans

Virtual Negotiation Success



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