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MAKING YOUR MARK AT MAJOR EXHIBITIONS

Five tips to ensure your
brand message is heard

BE PREPARED. BE PRESENT. **BE HEARD.**

There's no doubt that it can be a challenge for small exhibitors to achieve share of voice at major technology events. Making enough noise to be heard among what may be thousands of other exhibitors requires commitment, planning and creativity.

Even at a relatively niche event, you could easily be fighting for attention with several hundred other companies, so you need a proactive strategy and a heavy dose of determination.

It's an inescapable fact that the major vendors will dominate the tech news agenda. Regardless of the sector, the biggest tech brands have substantial marketing budgets attached to important exhibitions.

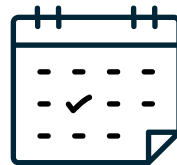
They carefully construct integrated communications strategies to maximise visibility across all channels ahead of the event and during the show to maximise visitor footfall and attract the interest of journalists, analysts and other influencers.

Senior executives from the market leaders often spend time at key events, and media interaction is high on their agenda. For visiting journalists, it's a rare opportunity to get face-to-face with an elusive spokesperson. It's a chance to add an element of exclusivity to their product news and secure some golden observations on market trends.

These companies also typically reserve major product launches for such exhibitions. Their announcements dominate at-show press conference schedules, hijack the time editors have available for briefings and – ultimately – take the lion's share of post-show editorial coverage.

But there are still plenty of opportunities for smaller exhibitors to take their slice of the communications cake. Here are five tips to help you ensure that your brand's message is heard:

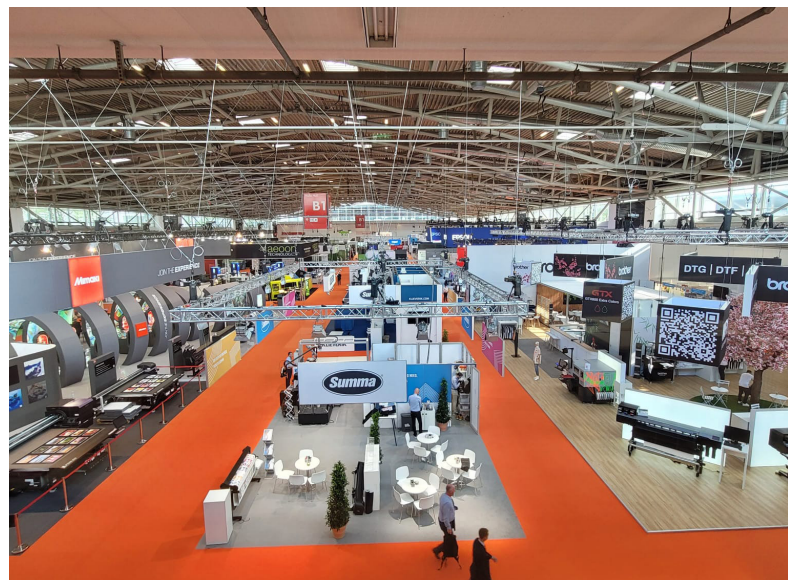
1. Take all opportunities



There are plenty of ready-made opportunities for media exposure, if you take advantage of them. Most event organisers ask proactively for product news, opinion pieces and so on to share with interested editors in advance of major shows, to support them with their preview preparations. Look out for these

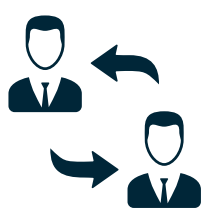
requests and respond to them.

Find out how to contribute your press information to the on-site press office or virtual news centre. Journalists often use these to source interesting nuggets to supplement news they have gathered on their rounds – if you haven't provided your press materials, you're missing an opportunity. Don't expect journalists to come to your stand and ask for them!





2. Share preview information early



Not all media news cycles are instant. For industry publications preparing in-depth event previews for major shows, editorial lead times can extend to several months. Sharing your product news the day before the show means you're squandering the chance to grab attention in the weeks running up to the show.

Today's serious business decision-makers are prudent about planning their time at events to prioritise the companies they want to visit. Unless your innovation is truly ground-breaking, if you're a small exhibitor hoping to attract editors and prospects, you'll have more success if you get on their 'must-see' list before the show, rather than hoping they'll accidentally trip over your booth.

3. Nurture press relationships



As a new entrant or a small player in a market, don't rely on an industry event as your platform to engage with the media. If a specific sector is important enough to your business to invest in attending an exhibition, then have a continuous media relations strategy towards the most influential outlets and writers.

Keep an active flow of news, and strive for sustained visibility by researching and responding to editorial feature opportunities or proactively pitching exclusive content.

And don't wait for the event to try to initiate the relationship. Journalists have two or three days in a crowded exhibition centre and a packed schedule, so they have to justify every minute spent talking to an exhibitor.

The same advice applies to communications channels such as social media. Sustain a continuous feed of valuable, shareable content for months ahead of the event. Once they're on site at an exhibition, journalists and visitors alike are unlikely to be spending their time scouring LinkedIn.

4. Develop charismatic spokespeople



Major exhibitors have spokespeople who are experienced at interacting with the media. They're well-rehearsed, have clear and concise messages, and are skilled at supporting their lead stories with anecdotal material for added colour. They understand that journalists want their insights into the market and are ready for strategic

conversations that make them 'go-to' contacts for those same editors the next time they're after an interesting comment.

Invest in training your spokespeople to communicate your story confidently and with conviction, and don't be afraid to express strong opinions. This can positively differentiate you from large corporates, who are often guilty of blandness because of the scale of the potential consequences of a bold statement to the media.

And be available. The bigger exhibitors are geared to responding quickly and positively to media opportunities pre- and at-show. Smaller suppliers can be difficult to reach, wary of editors and reluctant to engage. Good preparation means that you can take better advantage of unexpected approaches.

5. Think visual



The old cliché says that a picture is worth a thousand words. Invest in decent photography and other visual materials of your new products, and consider how to make your booth stand out visually so that editors on their rounds of a show are stopped in their tracks to take their own photos. Even if they don't have time for an

interview there and then, they'll review their images after the show and it may be the spark for a follow-up call.

On your stand, think about how you demonstrate your technology, and to create some theatre around what you are showing. And consider other visual content, especially if your tech story is complicated – a good infographic for example, could help a time-poor editor to quickly grasp your story or to make sense of it when they're back at their desk.

With careful planning and sound content, any exhibitor, no matter how modest their budget, can maximise the wider communications opportunity that comes with exhibiting.



EXPLORE ALL POSSIBILITIES

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a structured approach to B2B event
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