
GEARING UP FOR GLOBAL GROWTH – INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIRS ARE KEY

Imagine a time when your business is ready for the next big step, a new phase, the next level. You are probably doing really well on the national stage but have decided that the rest of the world needs to see and know your service or product too. The big question: How will you do this? Monique Surges, Chief Executive Officer of the German New Zealand Chamber of Commerce (GNZCC), has been asked this question many times by NZ business owners and her answer came promptly: “International trade fairs remain the leading platform for companies to present their products and services, to show and see innovations, and to generate new business contacts. The sensory factor of touch and the ability to communicate directly, face to face, cannot - yet – be replaced by a digital presence.” With 30 years of experience, Monique knows that attending international trade fairs is an essential part of the global marketing strategy of successful companies. Monique adds that the most surprising part for businesses might be, that attending trade fairs on a global level can be very cost-effective – when done correctly.

Minimise Risk, Maximize Gain for Kiwi Businesses

Many New Zealand companies such as Bobux International Ltd or Wishbone Design Studio Ltd already took the plunge into the international markets. When asked if this was the right decision, they both

gave us big thumbs up. In a short survey conducted by GNZCC, Bobux and Wishbone Design Studio rated their attendance at international trade fairs such as “Spielwarenmesse” (children’s toys) in Nuremberg and “Kinder & Jugend” (kids & youth) in Cologne as important.

Jennifer McIver, Executive Director of Wishbone Design Studio Ltd, was very satisfied with the response to their stand: “It was very good. International trade show visitors often express happy surprise to discover we are exhibiting all the way from NZ.” Direct contact with buyers from important retailers and distributors is an important benefit for the Wellington business that designs and manufactures transformable children’s bikes. Jennifer points out that being an exhibitor at the fair is definitely a part of the marketing mix that shouldn’t be underestimated: “In addition to finding new leads, trade shows offer us an annual opportunity to meet our existing customer base in a single location and stay in the forefront of their minds as an exciting and dynamic brand for their stores.” Wishbone Design Studio Ltd sees exhibiting at an international trade fair as a cost-effective way to kick-off a global brand.

Andrew Sharp, CEO of children’s shoe designer and manufacturer Bobux International Ltd, advises:

“Understand and be very clear about what your goals are in the market. If trade shows will advance that goal, then do it, but if not, then they are very expensive.”

Andrew sees exhibiting at an international fair as key for the future goals of Bobux: “For us in Germany, we are rebuilding the brand, which requires a lot of brand exposure work.” Andrew sees the brand exposure as their biggest trade show benefit. On top of that their stand got a very positive response by many international and local attendants.

Your 5 Steps to Trade Fair Success

Germany is the world’s number one location for hosting international trade fairs with two-thirds of all leading trade fairs for individual sectors being located there. With up to 180,000 exhibitors and around 10 million visitors every year, German trade fairs are extremely international. More than half of exhibitors are from abroad, one-third of them are from countries outside Europe. German trade fair organiser AUMA (Association of the German Trade Fair Industry) has created a so-called toolbox for potential exhibitors which creates a personal fair plan online that helps your business to calculate trade fair benefits, determine costs and monitor success. Taking AUMA’s expertise into account, we’ve created a Five-Step-Guide for you.

Step 1 – Choose the Right Trade Fair

Just because an event looks ideal doesn’t mean it will make sense for your business, so do your research. It can be helpful to contact the show organiser and request the latest floor plans, exhibitor lists, visitor demographics, conference program, and keynote speaker details. Figure out if your competitors are exhibiting, and where they are on the floorplan. Take into account if it might be more cost-effective to choose an event that covers more than one market. To make good use of trade fairs, you need to make certain

choices. We often hear statements such as “all our competitors are attending so we have to be there too” or “our customers want to see us there.” Both statements are worth taking seriously but are no basis for such a far-reaching decision, you need to go deeper. Some suggested selection criteria:

- Your company’s situation and objectives correspond to the theme of the fair
- Your range of products corresponds with the products in the nomenclature – the categories of products listed by the trade fair organiser
- You can address relevant customer groups – particularly important is to consider whether you want access to trade only or wish to get feedback from the public
- You can reach new target groups

Step 2 – Plan your presence

In order to make a strategic decision regarding trade fair participation you will need to look at your marketing mix in terms of products, pricing, communications, and sales channels. Trade fairs should not only be viewed as an efficient communications and sales channel. They also influence product and pricing strategies, and as information technology evolves, they naturally change too. Please understand that when booking your space, the stand structure is not included in most cases. So, you need to not only think about the furniture on your stand but also the walls, flooring and lighting. The exhibits chosen will determine the amount of space required and the concept of the stand. A trade fair stand is a company’s calling card. Its dimensions and design should reflect a company’s market standing and the products it is exhibiting. The focus should be

on a customer-friendly presentation of the exhibits appealing to the visitor's senses in every way. Remember a visitor takes four steps before engaging in a conversation:

- He orientates himself
- He obtains information
- He asks for something to be shown or demonstrated
- He engages in a conversation

Step 3 - Budgeting and Organisation

"How much will it cost?" is normally the first question we get asked, and it is naturally very important to understand the investment required, it is equally important to understand the long-term return. Every show is different, so it is better to get us to help you itemise the costs. It is only possible to make a final assessment of costs versus benefits after your first show and decide on how successful the participation was.

- Stand personnel: The more motivated, informed and qualified the employees on your stand are, the greater the chances of achieving high sales and building new contacts. Making the right choice of employees for your stand and proper training are just as important as making the best of presenting your products.
- Stand operations: Two important things often overlooked are setting up a timetable – who is on break when, who is scouting specific halls etc. The other key thing is note-keeping – you often have very little time to take notes and need to ask specific questions so you can then categorise the conversation later. Develop a template before you go and have pads pre-printed. A nice touch to

consider is offering water and snacks from New Zealand.

Step 4 - Advertising and Public Relations

Never rely on visitors just passing by your stand, these trade fairs are far too big for that! You will need to engage in pre-marketing activities such as sending an invitation with a reply option by letter, fax or e-mail. You may want to offer admission vouchers or come up with something quirky. For example: NZ business Formthotics manufactures customizable, heat mouldable foot orthotics. To attract leads they sent out the right insole and suggested visitors come to the stand to collect their matching left insole – clever decision.

Step 5 - Follow-Up Analysis

Do not just pack up and fly back to NZ or off on holiday – this part is crucial. Every visitor to your stand should receive some form of communication from you – this could be pre-organised with the team back in the office, but it must be done. In many industry sectors, a company has to approach a customer six to eight times before doing business with him. A sit-down chat with the stand personnel to go over the notes made and the impressions of how the stand worked and the products were accepted is also crucial.

How GNZCC Can Help

The German-New Zealand Chamber of Commerce (GNZCC) has provided tailored consulting services for more than 36 years now. We have got a vast experience of international markets and trade shows and will offer unbiased advice on the best events for your products and services. Why not consider a German organiser for your brand exposure? German

trade fair organisers have developed a range of trade fairs, which are oriented towards the long-term requirements of industry and are further developed in close consultation with the participating sectors.

Check out the AUMA toolbox which can be downloaded free of charge at www.auma.de

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