

KNOW YOUR EVENT - an exhibitors guide by Jacqueline Close Moore



The things I look for and questions I suggest you consider before you agree to exhibit at a major expo...

1. What's in it for the visitors, why would they come along?

- a) How much will the guest entry fee be and what does that **give** visitors?
- i. Visitors demand value, if it's little to nothing to get in, people are more likely to come, and will spend more when they get there.
 - ii. If there is a premium entry fee, what is planned to go into the gift bag upon entry for visitors? What free stuff will they get as part of that entry fee, and does any of the free stuff compete directly with your paid stuff? And did your event organise about think of that?
 - iii. If there is a gift bag in exchange for the premium entry fee, what's in the bag? Not more paper I hope, not simply discounted offers that if they buy something they get a basic % off. How about actual gifts in the gift bag? (actual samples of products and something fun, edible, or shiny!).
 - iv. Is there an event guide or event magazine handed out at the expo, if so, where's the rate card for being involved and featured in that?
 - v. Who are the big brands and "amazing activities" (drawcards) that are exhibiting at the event? Are those things relevant to the expo? And are they actually "amazing?"
 - vi. Can the visitor get all of this anywhere else without the hassle of paying to come to this event, especially if the venue is harder to get to than a shopping mall. People don't pay to get into shopping malls and rarely do they have to pay for parking there either. The event needs to more exciting and exclusive than a shopping mall or a high end department store that they can walk into and enjoy the air conditioning ***without paying a cent.***

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2. Publicity – Getting the information out to the public



a) Marketing angle and style

- i. Who are their media partners?
- ii. What marketing company, if not in-house, are they using to promote the event and what is their budget?
- iii. What marketing pitch have they used?
- iv. Is that angle attractive to you and your typical clients?
- v. How do their ads sound and look, both in content and production? Is the vision clear or grainy and badly lit? Does the sound have warm inviting tones or is it harsh and awful? Over all, does it add to the appeal of the event or detract?
- vi. How much and what type of exposure will the event have. I believe that not all publicity is actually good publicity, but some, well-planned publicity is absolutely necessary.
- vii. Can you see their marketing and publicity plan (including social media) and advert styling before committing?

b) Radio:-

- i. What times and during what shows is advertising for this event played?
- ii. Will the radio station or particular shows cross promote with the event?
- iii. Will there be live crosses from the event to the station during the event?
- iv. Will the station have a stand at the expo, does their branding fit with the events?

c) Television:-

- i. During what hours and what tv shows will ads about the event be played?
- ii. Will there be television interviews and chat spots for featured celebrities who are spokespersons for the event?
- iii. Will there be any live crosses to the event from television shows?

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d) Social Media and multimedia:-

- i. What is the event website Url address, how long has that website been built prior to this expo
- ii. Are exhibitors listed on the site, how many are listed?
- iii. Check out their social media pages on:- facebook, twitter page, pinterest, Instagram... how many likes or followers?
- iv. Do you have far more followers or likers than them? If so why exhibit, or what special deal are they doing for you for bringing more people to their event than they are?
- v. How long prior to this expo, is all of the SEO and SMO in place, and how many posts and what kinds of posts are made on their relevant pages?
- vi. Are the posts appealing, are they getting liked and shared by the public?
- vii. what is the frequency and details of posts?
- viii. If posts about specific brands, and you know about those brands already, does the post reflect the actual brand's way of communicating, or does it seem unprofessional compared to that brands usual presentation style?
- ix. Is their event and event website and social media contact points currently findable on google? For how many months before this event is content and names of exhibiting brands available for the upcoming event viewable?
- x. Are the event organisers expecting all exhibitors to heavily promote the event **for them** with little effort on their own part, or do they expect that as a natural mutual cross promotion in tandem with their own already high volume of interested followers and well organised promotions and cross promotional activity that you stand to gain good additional leads and potential new clients in addition to the ones you already have? No point going to events that you are only seeing the same people walk through.
- xi. What other multimedia (internet) event sites are involved in promoting the event? For example other generic websites that promote “events in that city” or ideas for tourist activities. Usually there are ways to place all kinds of free listings of events all over the internet if you look...A good event organiser won't be paying for every single form of publicity out there, but they also won't be relying purely on non paid advertising and promotions either. There is a balance that ensures an event gains the best most well targeted exposure a good event organiser will know how to strike that balance.
- xii. What if any advertising about this event will be featured in these additional digital media formats?
- xiii. How big will adverts in those digital formats be about this event and for how many issues prior and during the expo will that be?

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- xiv. What is the circulation and demographics of the readers of each of these digital formats that the event will be advertised in?
- xv. How can your business be featured in the multi-media content for being part of the expo?

e) **Print media:-**

- i. What print media is involved in promoting the event?
- ii. If the event organiser is a magazine themselves, or has a magazine strongly linked to them, one of the biggest mistakes they can make is assume that their magazine alone will be sufficient print media involvement. I have seen major magazines make that fatal error, suffering severe cases of over confidence that comes with Dunning Kruger effect.
- iii. So, what if any advertising about this event will be featured in the magazines that either own or are linked to the event?
- iv. How big will adverts in those affiliated magazines be about this event and for how many issues prior and during the expo will that be?
- v. What is the circulation and demographics of the readers of each of these magazines that the event will be advertised in?
- vi. Can your business be featured in the magazine as being part of the expo?
- vii. Will the magazines be including interesting articles and interviews about what to see at the event in the lead up to the event?
- viii. What other -well targeted- print media besides their own affiliated magazines are they planning on promoting this event in?

3. Their events management experience

a) **What events has the individual organiser run in the past?**

- i. There is a big difference between someone who plans weddings and corporate events to an organiser who successfully runs popular, big public events. Please, really let that concept sink in before you commit....

b) **Events dates research**

- i. What research have they done into the event dates they have chosen for other events in the same city on the same dates:-
Does this event clash with other local or cultural events, e.g

- School Holidays, Public Holiday Weekends
- Other similar and already planned expos in the same city

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- Major Sporting events e.g. NRL, AFL semi or grandfinals, Melbourne Cup, Spring Racing Fashions Events
- Major religious holidays or cultural events.. e.g Ramadan, Yom Kippa, Easter, Royal Melbourne Show
- Others?

c) **Technical advisor**

If the event is indeed having esoteric, psychic and exhibitors from allied fields, have they got someone -who knows what they are doing - as a technical advisor including organising clarification surrounding:-

- i.** Sites of indigenous significance
Is the event being held on land of indigenous significance? Have you invited the elders of that land to come and provide an opening ceremony or take part in some meaningful way within the scope of the event? Can your event in some way promote local indigenous businesses and identities as relevant to your event theme? Do they want to be involved?
- ii.** Space clearing of any energies that require it if necessary ...
(By someone who is noted for that work, and not some random hipster who simply, passively, and vacant mindedly passes around a smudge stick without understanding proper ritual)
- iii.** Properly checking out the astrology and numerology of the dates and times of the event and timings for events within the event, done by someone who is usually spot on with that information and themselves tends to be very busy at their work, which also signals their ability to predict success for the public event... as opposed to someone who isn't that busy and successful then trying to predict how busy and successful the event will be. (Pay peanuts, get monkeys). Here's another hint, eclipses aren't usually great... There's other noted aspects I avoid like the plague, but you have to book my technical services for that...additional hint, ask me before you secure the date, it stands to reason that you would ask about a date before booking the event date really.
- iv.** Placement of specific types of stands and defined areas and the uses of OHS matters and Feng Shui does matter. Both are all about allowing sufficient space, comfort, and safety in a space anyway...See the previous point about how to recruit your Feng Shui expert, except that while I psychically look at placement, chances are if your Feng Shui expert is brilliant they wouldn't have even considered having a stand yet, because they are already that busy.

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- v. Opening and closing rituals for the event as a highlight and lovely nurturing for stand holders.

d) **The past history of this event**

- i. Which years and how many times has this event run before?
- ii. How many visitors to those events (apart from exhibitors and their staff)?
- iii. How many exhibitor stands were at these expos?
- iv. What location has this event been held at? Is it a roaming expo, or a standard once a year centralised event? If so is there consistency on the location?
- v. Retention rate:- what percentage of exhibitors return to this event?
- vi. Name three regular exhibitors the organiser is happy to have you contact who would refer their events management work and event
- vii. How many prior times have they run this particular event brand in other cities? apply all the same questions as in b, i to vi...
- viii. What other events does this organiser run, are those events busy?

e) **Curb appeal...**

- i. Is there directional signage from the street?
- ii. Is the venue itself attractive and easy to see from the street?
- iii. Is it easy to see from the road how to get in, where to park, is there parking?
- iv. Is there plenty of public transport right out the front door?
- v. How clean, bright and attractive are any banners, flags, and entry signs and doors?

f) **Event Look and Branding**

- i. **Celebrity guests** who do they have featured and what forms of media will they be actively using to cross promote their presence in order to draw in more visitors to the expo? And are you happy with your brand being associated, by supporting the same event, with that affiliation?
- ii. Would your brand be highlighted by being associated with the associated celebrities and brands, or would it diminish and demean your brand to be associated with that celebrity or brands?
- iii. Do the other brands exhibiting at their event reflect the magazines promoting their event?
- iv. Is there uniformity in stand shell appearance, or part of the expo carpeted walls and part mellamine?
- v. Is there a minimum standard for exhibitors to apply to their stands e.g. no really unprofessional and texta hand written signs allowed?

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- vi. What stands are you likely to be placed next to and are these likely to negatively impact your stand?
- vii. If they have an affiliation with a charitable body, how is that being partnered and promoted and are you happy supporting that cause?
- viii. Who is behind the expo brand, are you happy being associated with them?
- ix. Is the expo organiser likely to have their own stand and service / product that will directly compete with yours and other exhibitors of the same type, while heavily promoting their product and service at a heavy discount inclusive of an entry ticket deal for visitors that links directly back to their stand and its product or service and drives it away from other exhibiting brands of the same type?
This will cause visitors confusion and annoyance towards you as to why you aren't offering the same price and ticket deal as the organiser and their product and service.
Especially if all the promotions on the event website point towards the psychic zone for example and not also mentioning the other psychics with their own stands.
- x. How many other exhibitors of your type will they be allowing into this expo?
- xi. Is the projected volume of visitors to this event likely to be accurate to outcomes on the day or days?
- xii. Has this expo organiser pulled in the numbers in the past? Or do they simply say they do?
- xiii. Is the visitor volume and target market going to be appropriate in relation to the volume of stands of the same type or will there be an over-saturation of that kind of stand for the targets visitor type?

There is also little to no point having three fertility clinics holding stands at a trade show for the aged care industry...possibly no point having one... despite us always being able to say that there could be sales for those attending who work in those industries and are younger, however for a general marketing purpose, you should get the idea.

g) Event Size and popularity

- i. What percentage of stands have they already sold, and what is the minimum percentage of exhibitors they will accept and still go ahead with this event?
- ii. What is the minimum amount of notice would they give exhibitors to postpone their event?

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- iii. If they have more than one presentation stage, how findable will all stages or presentation areas be and what will they do to making it easier for visitors to navigate?
- iv. Will the sound on one stage be louder than the other and overheard by the audiences at the other stage?
- v. Will they be announcing all speakers at all stages?
- vi. Will they have a sound technician to assist presenters with setting up sound, or are they likely to leave presenters fending for themselves to locate microphones and associated equipment?
- vii. What kind of break after the last presenter and before the next talk does the event organiser allow, and do they assist in ushering prior presenter if they overstay their presentation time?

4. Fairness

How does this expo organiser treat its potential stand holders, past stand holders and expected public visitors?

- a. Is it likely that the expo organiser will give you a last minute discount for signing up late?
- b. If so, how does the expo organiser look after exhibitors who have signed up way in advance who have paid the premium price well ahead of time as a comparison?
- c. What does all that say about how fair they are likely to be in all dealings?
- d. What does it say about the response to date that the event if they are now "able to afford" to now offer you a discounted stand?

Remember that you have to combine both your **intuitive feeling** about an event with **your logic** about the facts and the **details of the contracts**. Using all your skills in observing all of these three aspects cuts through the needs of all these other points I have already made.

The more you are fair and frank in your business dealings and life, the easier it will be for you to be in touch with your business instincts. The easier also, for those instincts to be accurate, and for you to know a fair contract when you see it, and know from the outset what outcomes all of that is most likely to be achieved before even signing.

I have on rare occasions, agreed in principle to some, rare contracts without even reading the terms. Then, having read the terms point by point, giggled because I had correctly picked which clauses would be in the contract and which would not, how they would keep their word, and what they would

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actually do. I have also known when I had to send my agreement within minutes or when I had months to contemplate, when I could procrastinate or when I had to jump for an opportunity now, in that instant, or genuinely risk missing out by a mere fact of minutes. Opportunity knocks, but often if it's a really good opportunity it doesn't wait all that long, while other opportunities that knock try busting your door down, and tell you that you must buy "now, now, now" but you know it's because they can't get a sale any other way.

- e. **Lastly, and most importantly, does the expo organiser sound and feel like they are fairly and truthfully representing themselves and their event to you?**

If you feel like they are lying they probably are. If they are truthful about the little things, it is more likely they will be honest on the bigger stuff, and reasonable to deal with, that you will also have a lovely experience. If they seem dismissive of you or others, and highly favouring others or putting them in the loop ahead of you, and they are not organised from the outset, it won't get better on the opening night.

If they are prepared to lie to or withhold information from you or others prior to their event and lie about the little things, chances are they will lie about the bigger things and it will be a huge disappointment.

If they are underhanded and exploiting others in how they compile the event it won't go well because there is a bad intention from the start and you will feel exploited to, and the visitors will feel a bit ripped off too when they come along and feel like not much is happening.

If you are a regular with the organiser, whether exhibiting at their past or current events, and you are usually featured as one of their draw cards, yet they put you down the bottom of the list of potential exhibitors to be informed and invited to exhibit, it can get pretty weird when the public start contacting you directly and asking you if you will be attending the event before the event organiser lets you know they are even running the event firstly, and that you are actually invited.

It's not that appetising to then go ahead with that event especially if you have had a good history with that event organiser in the past, yet you are being left in the dark until the last minute. If that happens, chances are your event organiser either no longer values your contribution, and doesn't look after people that have supported them in the past, or that they have let quite a few others down in some dramatic way... That generally flies back in their face when stands don't sell all that well, then, next, they cut the corners in their

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publicity campaign... because of the stands not being sold.... and the final nail in the coffin of the event when, finally and inevitably, the volume of visitors dives as a cumulative result of all of the above.

The wider public will not really get to hear about the event, or if they do, they will, on some level **FEEL** all of those above mentioned machinations behind the scenes and then not be all that attracted to the event precisely because it has already created its own force field of yuck because of a distinct lack of clear and positive intention and fair and frank organisation from the outset.

In my experience, truthful expo organisers are by far the best to deal with. If however, their organisational skills really stink, you may find that although they thank you for your feedback they change absolutely nothing about their approach and simply say that an event didn't work at that location, or that kind of event can't work because they weren't adaptable- or they will simply call you "difficult." It is best to assess how professional they are from the outset, and avoid working for events that fail the logic and competency score card from the outset.

A professional organiser most likely won't even need much feedback, except that you show your appreciation, yet an extremely unprofessional organiser may well be so far beyond taking in constructive feedback that it's pointless saying anything at all. Speaking up could well make it difficult for you with getting in to other events if you point anything out to someone who is already beyond accepting feedback, especially if they have any "pull" with others that don't seem to mind dealing with them for some commercially viable reason or personal entertainment reasons.

I always say that in any organisation, the more incompetent someone is AND the higher up their position in the company, the more powerful their friends or intimate others are. And, so I feel, that while I am not afraid of anyone, it's all about picking your battles wisely, and at times, not wasting your breath.

And to quote Mark Twain, "If you speak the truth, you don't have to remember." If answers come to the expo organisers and promoters naturally amidst their negotiations with you, and they demonstrate sound product and service knowledge, and also a well thought out, well planned and organised structure, then that is usually well worth being part of.

In the end, even at an expo that is quiet, you can have that one very important meeting, with a key player who may in fact come in and do a deal with you for tens of thousands in that one transaction. They might have

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chosen someone else if you had already packed up early and gone. In leaving early, most event organisers will exclude you from their future events. A bomb of an event can still set forth an explosion of fabulous activity later on.



If it's a bomb - don't despair...

I have at quiet events found business connections of a life time that I would not have had time to make if I had been too busy with the usual customers.

There is always wisdom and opportunity to be gleamed somewhere. Make use of every little bit of your time there, and remember your staff are the "face" of your business, no one likes a sour expression and a distinct lack of interest in being there. Keep it light, bright and fun...

Lots of love and happy exhibiting

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Jacqueline