



**Peter Allan on overseas exhibition marketing**

## How you can put on a good show abroad

OVERSEAS exhibitions are crucial to help gain exposure for a UK brand among international buyers. For example, we exhibit at five overseas events annually, including Domotex, Index Dubai, Maisons et Objets, NeoCon, and Salone.

There are two types of international exhibitions. The first is a domestic show or conference, serving the host country, e.g. Surflex in Poland. The second attracts global businesses and gives access to international contacts and buyers, such as Domotex in Hannover, Germany, this month.

Domestic exhibitions should be tailored to local market requirements. So do your research and discover what these are. Often this type of exhibition is useful when a company already has some market presence in the country; the event can be used to maximise distributors and retailers relationships in that market.

International exhibitions can work really well to generate leads into brand new markets, and, because the audience is much wider, you can really 'show off' your portfolio of products.

Both exhibition types are valuable, but the decision to

attend one event over another depends on the needs of your business. When planning an annual events calendar it is important to strike a balance between the expected outcomes (such as networking opportunities and publicity), versus the monetary time and resource costs you will incur. It goes without saying therefore, that matching your prospects to your resources is essential.

**There are several success factors to consider before and after an exhibition:**

**1.** Make sure your stand looks professional and that people passing can instantly understand what is being communicated. This is especially important if exhibition visitors don't speak English.

Strong visuals are key for foreign audiences, so it may be an unnecessarily extravagance to translate product brochures and other point of sale material. However it is courteous and advisable to have a local speaker on hand to assist and ensure opportunities aren't missed.

**2.** Remember that the individual who approaches you on your stand may not be the person you ultimately need to build a relationship with at a company.

They may however, be the bridge to this person, so treat all visitors as a potential lead. At the very least, they may provide further insight into the markets you wish to penetrate.

**3.** Building a good relationship with the show organisers is never a bad move, whatever the exhibition. They are key to ensuring a favourable position for your stand (for example, near to the refreshments or on the main drag, rather than tucked away in a corner) and they will be able to point you towards the correct press office contact to capitalise on any pre-event promotional activity.

They are likely to invite journalists from the host country, this could help you getting coverage in local trade press. Also, use your show organiser contact to ensure that your show catalogue insertion is correct. If the show is particularly large, this includes your company's 'classification', to ensure that you are positioned in the right area of the show, with other relevant exhibitors.

**4.** Ensure that you build in post-show time to respond to leads made at the event. If you have had several days out of the office, it can be tempting to defer

contacting important people you have met, however prompt follow-up will put you ahead of your competitors.

**5.** If the credit crunch forces cutbacks in exhibition budgets, consider sharing a stand with other brands – for example those managed by your local agent.

This may be more beneficial than it first appears, as association with better-known brands can be useful where you have a lower profile. You may also benefit from sharing the co-exhibitors' existing customer base and piggy-backing on potential networking opportunities.

Finally, there is help available for taking your brand to exhibitions overseas. To begin with there are very good websites from UK Trade and Investment

■ [www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk](http://www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk) and Business Link

■ [www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)

Both offer excellent advice covering all areas of marketing abroad, including how to apply for grants to assist your business in entering foreign markets. **CFJ**

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**Dids MacDonald on patents within the flooring sector**



## This certificate means a great deal

LAST month I explained what you need to do to make a patent application. Here I will set out what has to happen for a patent to be granted?

Before a patent can be granted, the UK Intellectual Property Office ([www.ipo.gov.uk](http://www.ipo.gov.uk)) searches through previously published patents and patent applications.

This search is an attempt to find any documents showing that your invention does meet the requirements of novelty and inventive step. The examiner considers your application in light of the disclosure in each of the documents found in the search. The examiner then issues an official letter setting out their opinion on its patentability.

You may wish to conduct an unofficial search via the UK

Intellectual Property Office before filing an application to find out whether your idea is novel. However, searching can be a difficult, costly and time consuming task, therefore it may be more beneficial to file your patent application and wait for the results of the official UKIPO search.

How much does it cost, how long does a patent last and how long does it take to get one?

For a 20 year monopoly with a patent, UKIPO charges £200 to process a UK patent application, £30 for a preliminary examination, £100 for a search and £70 for a substantive examination.

Typically, according to UKIPO, it usually takes two to three years to grant, however, they can accelerate the procedure at the

applicant's request.

There is a maximum time limit of 4½ years from the applicant's earliest date. Don't forget that cutting corners does not necessarily pay.

Employing a patent expert to draft your application could be one of the best investments you will ever make in a potential money making invention. A minimum of £1500+ should be added for consulting or using a patent agent or IP lawyer.

Patents – a route for brand expansion? If a patent is granted, you have a piece of paper, a numbered certificate, which becomes the inventor's property.

As such it can be exploited and commercialised in sales or in an agreement with a third party to use.

A UK patent, however will only give a monopoly right in the UK, so it is imperative to look at the territories in which you will trade and research countries where you also need a patent to protect your market share.

A UK patent gives what is called a 'priority period' which allows time for a swot analysis to take place.

As the inventor Trevor Baylis said, 'No-one will pay you for an idea, but they may pay you for a certificate which says you own the idea!' **CFJ**

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