



# Event Marketing: An International Perspective

*A Strategic Guide for the Energy Industry*



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# Reaching Across the Globe

In our first trade show marketing guide, “Information to Maximize Your Event Potential,” we presented an overview of the role trade shows play in the oil and gas industry. We presented a plan for successful exhibiting and measuring the results of those efforts. Now, let’s focus on trade show marketing “all over the world.”

In the first guide, the goal was to get you started and help maximize both your event and budget. You’ve got a booth, you’ve got a plan and now you’re ready to focus on a sector of our business that is growing, influential, and at times, intimidating – the *INTERNATIONAL* trade show world.


This guide is intended to help you prepare for and seamlessly execute your trade show marketing efforts across the globe.

Exhibiting outside of the United States is much more complicated than converting feet into meters or finding the right adapter. As a trade show marketer, your foundation is there and your skill set is in place, but taking your exhibit overseas can present many unknown hazards without the proper guidance and planning.

As you consider where to begin, use this information as an opportunity to get your feet wet and remember to surround yourself with experienced partners to help guide you through the logistics of international exhibiting.

Best of luck as you move forward!





Exhibitors planned to attend 12 percent more shows in 2012 than 2011, including a net increase in national shows and an even more impressive 38.7 percent increase in international exhibitions.

## Industry Outlook

The exhibition industry is optimistic, confident and moving forward. Despite some natural hesitancy still being felt in corporate America, these encouraging statistics reveal that the realm of trade shows and events is strong. Research sponsored by Octonorm USA, Inc. found:

- 30 percent of exhibitors are enjoying larger budgets in 2013 than in 2012, while an additional 46 percent are at least maintaining last year's allocations.
- 83 percent reported being "optimistic" or "hopeful" when asked how they feel about the current effectiveness of trade shows as a marketing medium.
- More than 81 percent reported feeling "confident" or "extremely confident" when asked how confident they were that their trade show program would achieve better results in 2013 than 2012.

SOURCE: "2013 Economic Outlook," *EXHIBITOR MAGAZINE*, March 2013



These encouraging statistics reveal an exciting uptick in the number of exhibitions companies are participating in. Additionally, recent research showcased that venues across the world have increased in size and number.

UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, performed a detailed assessment of the 2011 global market and found:

- The trade show industry is bouncing back after being wounded during the past several years, although there is a shift in where exhibitions are taking place.
- There are 1,197 venues worldwide (with minimum capacity of 53,000 square feet). That is an increase of 57 facilities since 2006. The majority of that growth took place in the Asia-Pacific region.
- China accounts for 46 percent of the increase through both new building and expansions (although not the highest-capacity facilities).
- The European trade show industry has 47 percent of the world's venue space (the leader). Asia follows with 20 percent.

SOURCES: "Need to Know," *EXHIBITOR MAGAZINE*, March 2012, and "Global Exhibition Industry Statistics," UFI.org, November 2012





“Almost anywhere you go, you need to make sure you have six months of validity left on the passport before it expires. Foreign governments want to make sure your passport is valid when it’s time for you to leave their country, too, not just when you arrive.”

*Jeffery Hannah,  
President and CEO of  
Nuance International Inc.*

## Timing

The first order of business is to prioritize. Develop a plan and timeline and develop it as soon as you can. Coordinating trade shows is founded upon this idea and international planning requires additional research and considerations.

**Start early.** Reserve booth space 12-18 months in advance to get the best options.

**Traveling abroad.** Passports are required, so make sure yours is up to date or apply for one. Depending on the season, passports can take up to 10 weeks to process.

**Apply for a visa.** The visa process is much more complex than that of a passport and should be done after you have your passport in hand. Two months is a good rule of thumb for the amount of time when applying for a visa. Visit <http://travel.state.gov/travel> as a starting point.

**Book hotel and air travel.** When possible, booking a hotel a year in advance is the norm, and the same book-early advice applies to flights, as well. There aren’t as many international flights leaving each day to deliver you to your international destination, so get your seat early.

**Time delays.** The logistical implications of working on a project with someone who is several hours ahead of or behind you can be frustrating. Understanding time zones and allotting leeway time to accommodate them are crucial.

**Request show deadlines.** Your timeline should include all deadlines for space and show services. Meeting deadlines can save money, so request this information as soon as possible. Should you miss a deadline, access to certain services onsite is not always readily available in many countries.

***“You should plan for about 30 percent more time. Days will be lost because of the time differences, delayed responses, and possibly some miscommunication. So, if something takes you three weeks in the States, you should allocate about four weeks for that same thing when you’re planning an overseas show.”***

**Angela Delatore,**  
*Director of International Services for Milwaukee-based Derse, Inc.*



## Costs

Next, develop an estimate and keep a budget. The global market can be a budget buster so developing a realistic budget is essential. For first-time international exhibitors, coming up with a budget takes experience – there are just too many unknown factors (even for those with experience) – and you are likely to incur some kind of unforeseen cost.

**All-inclusive pricing.** Most foreign vendors will present a project price for a complete exhibit, not each line item. This greatly helps in defining your costs and most likely eliminates any billing surprises as related to the booth build.


**Negotiate.** Your best bet when working through the intricacies of foreign exchange rates is to negotiate purchases based on your local currency. When this isn't an option, plan for the swings of exchange rates. Some suggest adding 20 percent to your budget to cover unexpected costs and exchange rate fluctuations.

**Pre-pay option.** To avoid the fluctuations of exchange rates, pre-pay for your services. This method can eliminate surprises if the value of the dollar drops. This eliminates some risk, but in some cases, this could work against you if the value of the U.S. dollar climbs.

**Credit cards.** It is not always as easy to use a credit card for international purchases as it is in the United States. Although you may be pre-approved to use a credit card for show services, many vendors require the actual card be swiped and an actual signature obtained. Plan for this if the credit card holder is not going to be onsite. Track outstanding costs and follow up on them to avoid delayed invoices weeks after the show is completed. Be aware of a credit card's foreign transaction fees.

**Apples-to-apples.** Confirm that you are negotiating with your vendors in the same currency. When you receive quotes from Australia in dollars, determine if it is U.S. or Australian dollars.





A value-added tax (VAT) or a goods and services tax (GST) is a form of consumption tariff or a duty on the purchase of goods and services.

**VAT (value-added tax).** What is it and how should it be handled? A value-added tax (VAT), or a goods and services tax (GST), is a form of consumption tariff or duty on the purchase of goods and services. Exhibitors entering a foreign country with various goods often have to pay VAT on the items they're bringing into the country, sometimes up to 20 percent of their value. However, in many cases, you can apply for a refund – also known as a claim – to regain the tax after the show. Depending upon the amount you have paid in VAT, receiving this refund can be crucial. Companies with a significant amount of VAT to recover often hire a firm that specializes in recovering these funds.

Here are facts to remember regarding this tax to ensure you're not paying more than you should:

**Develop a VAT-recovery process and save receipts, invoices and proof of payment.** VAT refunds, particularly from the EU, often are determined by whether you submit original invoices and provide proof of payment, such as a cancelled check or wire-transfer copy. This paperwork should be submitted immediately upon the completion of a show. Go into your show knowing what you are going to need to provide afterward. After submitting the claim, it can take up to two years before money is refunded. Should you have forgotten something in the process, you most likely will have trouble locating it months after.

**Be prepared to provide pre-show paperwork.** Some countries require that VAT refunds be applied for prior to the show. Some require a representative with a bank account facilitate your refund.

**Obtain third-party assistance.** A VAT-refund agency can provide a wealth of information and has local resources and representatives in various countries to meet the necessary requirements.

**Know your deadlines.** There are several variables to consider. For example:

In most countries, paperwork is required for the previous calendar year by June 30. The UK VAT-refund calendar is July through June, with the deadline being Dec. 31. In Japan, all claims must be submitted within two months of your company's fiscal year end.

SOURCE: Swan, Jeannine K, "Help," *EXHIBITOR MAGAZINE*, November 2011



## Shipping

A major decision for any international event is whether you will ship your exhibit or alternatively, build or rent a booth in the show's host country. This decision has ripple effects throughout the entire planning process, with the key areas being your budget and timeline.

Shipping a booth overseas obviously takes time – and money. The timeline will play a large part of your decision to ship or rent. For example:

- When shipping to Europe, a container might be at sea for only a week. But then it needs to get unloaded, clear customs, be loaded onto a train, moved to whatever city, unloaded from the train, placed on a truck and driven to the venue. The whole process can easily take 30 days or more. Then there's 30 days back before you can use that same property again in the States. Can you live without these properties for two months or more?
- The process can be sped up by shipping items via air – but don't expect an overnight delivery. Airfreight typically takes three to five working days to Europe and a few more to Asia. Much of that delay has to do with customs. Customs clearance is still required on almost all packages, no matter how they are sent into the country.


Customs fees incurred by exhibitors for show freight vary from country to country. Depending upon the country you are shipping to, the customs fees charged may be more than what you would spend on a rental exhibit locally. These fees should be considered when determining the most cost-effective route.

Getting help with shipping is the smart choice. The most common hassle of trade shows is shipments stuck in customs. Work with a reputable shipping company that has experience with exhibit material and knows the intricacies of customs regulations.

Your best bet, at times, is to use the organizer's official freight forwarder. Some shows use an ATA Carnet system, the customs document that allows the duty-free and tax-free temporary import of goods. Contact the organizers to find out if the system applies to the event.

SOURCE: Todd, Brian, "Four Steps to Foreign Exhibiting," *EXHIBITOR MAGAZINE*, December 2011





*“Make the vendor responsible for providing updated rendering, photographs and progress reports. And make them stick to your established timeline.”*

*Jeffery Hannah,  
President and CEO of  
Nuance International Inc.*

## Differences

Regardless of whether you’ve chosen to ship your exhibit or buy a build-and-burn or rental booth, it’s now time to build your booth.

**Foreign properties.** Should you choose to send your booth from the United States, ensure that it meets the foreign code requirements regarding height restrictions and fire safety. Often times, it proves more efficient to utilize a reliable booth builder in a foreign country. It is best to enlist the help of a vendor with whom you have a relationship or that has been recommended by someone or vetted at some level. Foster Marketing has a network of international partners.

**Barriers.** Both language and cultural barriers are encountered in foreign exhibiting. Should you speak on the phone, follow-up with a precise email. Items can be easily misinterpreted. Graphics and pictures are often an effective way to communicate when dealing with a language barrier.

Among various cultures, the speed in which deadlines are met is often not the same standard as in the United States. Unless pressured, different areas of the world will not adhere to your requested timeline. It’s important to understand this going in, but to also demand that your timeline is respected.

Consider the culture of the country you are exhibiting in when planning your timeline. For example, many take long vacations. In China, there are three week-long holidays each year.

**Know the union rules.** Strong unions exist in the United States, United Kingdom, France and Italy. Understand and respect union rules. In the majority of countries, union labor is not involved, making logistics less expensive and easier, but you must order everything in advance from the event organizer.



**Drayage (aka Material Handling)** is the unloading of exhibit properties, storing up to 30 days in advance of the show at a warehouse, delivering properties to the booth, the handling of empties to and from the show and removing of material from the booth for reloading onto outbound carriers.


**Raised floors.** Outside the United States, exhibitors often are required to build their booths on a raised platform. This is done as a safety precaution against the risks involved with wiring that runs underneath floor/carpet covering. This floor is normally made of wood and measures roughly four inches tall and has floor covering on top. A built-in wheelchair-accessible ramp may be required as well. This can affect the construction of your booth as well as your budget. Even when not required, a raised platform may be a good idea simply so you don't stand out from the other exhibits.

**Side walls.** At most domestic shows, rules stipulate that for inline exhibits, side walls must be at a certain height. This allows for line-of-sight rules among inline exhibitors. Outside of the United States, the rule is far less popular. Side walls in foreign countries can usually extend to the edge of a space. If you do not build to the maximum allowable size and your neighbor does, you will be greeted by the unfinished back side of your neighboring side walls.

**Drayage.** One difference that most exhibitors enjoy is the lack of drayage in international exhibiting. In most venues, drayage doesn't exist, but there is a lift charge to unload and load your components.

**Onsite orders.** It is best to place all your orders ahead of time as there is no guarantee that onsite orders can be filled without advance notice. This is the case for all shows, but it is more important at international venues.





A local translator can probably clue you in on some cultural *faux pas*, because often it's not the words you use, but your actions that will say a lot about you.

## Communication: Heed Cultural Clues

Now it's time to staff your space and get boots on the ground. With all the planning and preparation to get the exhibit itself completed, it's not going to be an effective marketing event if you aren't able to communicate effectively. Trade show booth visitors who feel appreciated will be loyal. They will remember your messages, appreciate your brands and recognize that you have made an effort to communicate with them on a personal level. Provide as much effort toward accommodating the local culture and customs as your time and budget will possibly allow.

**Understand local customs.** Pick up a book on cultural etiquette so you will know the norms. In some countries, it's acceptable to discuss business over a meal while in others it's taboo. In some places, business cards are treated casually; in others, they are handled with great respect. Business practices vary from country to country. For example, the business day is not 9 to 5 worldwide. And while you may see contract provisions as carved in stone, others may consider them more like guidelines.

**Consider negotiation styles.** Negotiating in international business is extremely complex. Socializing is often considered essential to the process. Learn the cultural rules, especially as they relate to timing and how business is conducted. Know government regulations covering foreign business. Non-U.S. events require more socializing and face-to-face interaction, which is why conversation areas in your booth are important to successfully doing business.

**Be multilingual.** Though it is universally thought that English is the common language of the business world, multi-language graphics are always well received, even if it is only a welcome message. Have you sent documents to be translated into the language of the country where you will exhibit? Do your business cards have appropriate international dialing codes? Having a local office or local translator who understands technical language is important. Ultimately, it's about developing relationships and spending time with people. That goes a long way.

## Global Venues: China



- Officially, China's VAT is 17 percent, but its regulations vary among shows and venues.
- Any use of fabric must be approved by show management, so be sure to have certification to prove your fabrics are fire retardant.
- Union labor isn't required, and there are no drayage charges.
- Install and dismantle activities can take place well into the night. Be prepared for plenty of sawing, nailing and welding. Things can get chaotic and quite messy at times.
- In-booth hospitality is generally common only in large exhibits. Finger foods and beverages are most common. Alcohol is sometimes allowed but is not the norm (although, it is well received by attendees when available).
- Men and women should wear standard business attire. When in doubt, err on the side of formality.
- Your shipment will not clear customs if the paperwork is not correct, so use a transportation company with experience (especially to Shanghai – Hong Kong regulations are completely different).

## Global Venues: China

- Don't include anything political in your printed materials or refer to Taiwan as a separate country. If anything is deemed damaging to China or inappropriate for the culture, it will be confiscated.
- Do not use the following giveaways for cultural reasons: bells, clocks, sharp objects such as letter openers and chrysanthemums.
- Shaking hands is typical. Generally, bowing and kissing are not recommended.
- Business cards are presented with both hands. Look at the cards you receive closely and read them thoroughly. Do not write on them or put them in your pocket, as both are considered disrespectful.
- Having a translator at your booth is necessary, preferably someone who knows your company, industry and market.
- Print your business cards in Chinese on one side and English on the other. Present cards with the Chinese side facing up.
- Graphics and literature should be printed in English and Chinese.

SOURCE: International Exhibiting Guide, [ExhibitorOnline.com](http://ExhibitorOnline.com)





## Global Venues: Singapore

- Singapore's VAT is a 7 percent Goods and Service Tax. There are few exemptions and no refunds.
- Clothing is slightly more casual in Singapore compared to other parts of Asia. Modesty is the best policy.
- Handshakes are light to the touch, not firm as is customary in the United States.
- You should have plenty of business cards as it is expected that you exchange them with almost everyone.
- Singapore is a very clean country. Officials and citizens alike heavily frown upon littering.
- Business cards and other papers should be presented and taken with two hands, palms up. Do not write on someone's business card as it is considered rude.
- Singapore has three official languages (Malay, Mandarin and Tamil). English is the language of business and is spoken widely. No translators are needed at trade shows.



SOURCE: International Exhibiting Guide, [ExhibitorOnline.com](http://ExhibitorOnline.com)





## Global Venues: Abu Dhabi

- The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has recently implemented a 5 percent VAT.
- Be aware that since the UAE is an Arab country, Western music is often banned in public.
- Arabic is the official language of Abu Dhabi, but most attendees at shows speak English. Still, it is advisable to have an Arabic translator on hand in your exhibit if at all possible.
- Signage does not need to be translated into Arabic, but literature and business cards should be available in both English and Arabic.
- Formal English-language greetings are appropriate. While Arabs often kiss on the cheek when meeting, foreigners should simply shake hands with the right hand.
- Men should wear business suits at shows in Abu Dhabi. Women should dress conservatively, and avoid revealing clothing. However, head scarves are not necessary. Tattoos and piercings should be covered.
- There are no labor unions involved in Abu Dhabi exhibit halls.
- It is rare for an exhibitor to serve alcohol on the show floor.
- Note that observant Muslims set aside time for prayer in the middle of the day.
- Avoid building exhibits inspired by Arab art and architecture. It is seen as insulting.
- Because of social conventions in Abu Dhabi, do not take photos of women unless they give you permission to do so.





## Global Venues: São Paulo, Brazil

- Brazil's VAT is levied at different rates depending on the jurisdiction but averages 17 percent in São Paulo.
- Large exhibits usually feature bars with seating areas, though small exhibits typically offer some type of hospitality as well. Alcohol is frequently served.
- Dinner meetings are common, but the Brazilian dinner hour starts at 8 p.m., and meals in São Paulo can stretch on for hours.
- Taxis are plentiful, but insist the driver turn on the meter – do not accept fixed rates, as that is not how taxis are supposed to levy fees.
- It is common in Brazilian culture to be late for an appointment by 20 or 30 minutes.
- Don't refer to the United States as America; Brazilians consider themselves Americans as well.
- Air conditioning is not always provided in the exhibit hall.
- Brazil's free-spirit attitude can be reflected in its work ethic. Allow plenty of time and onsite supervision if you're using local labor for booth construction.
- Portuguese is the primary language. A translator who speaks Portuguese, Spanish and English is recommended.



## Global Venues: São Paulo, Brazil

- Signs and literature should be printed in Portuguese, while business cards should have both English and Portuguese.
- Customs is a complex process in Brazil and can be expensive to clear. Shipping an exhibit there is not recommended.
- You will be expected to shake hands with everyone in a group both when saying hello and when saying goodbye.
- In casual or social settings, it is customary for women to kiss each other on both cheeks and for men to kiss women on one cheek.
- Suits are still the most common attire, though neckties are becoming scarce on the show floor. More casual dress is increasingly popular at trade shows.

SOURCE: International Exhibiting Guide, ExhibitorOnline.com





## Checklist: Cover the Basics

1. Create a timeline:
  - Obtain a passport and/or visa.
  - Book airline and make hotel reservations.
  - Transport your exhibit and/or accompanying materials.
  - Add a 30 percent buffer to domestic timelines to account for time-zone delays.
  - Contract for any necessary show services at your destination.
  
2. Develop a budget:
  - Estimate hidden costs such as value-added tax (VAT) and raised flooring, etc.
  - Ask potential vendors about all-inclusive pricing.
  - Estimate the cost of currency fluctuation, and consider prepayment options.
  
3. Erect an exhibit:
  - Determine whether you will ship your exhibit overseas, rent locally, or buy a build-and-burn booth.
  - Find international vendors with whom you have some sort of relationship, if possible.
  - Establish a strict vendor contract with ground rules and deadlines.
  - Select an international freight forwarder with extensive trade show experience.
  - Familiarize yourself with foreign requirements for structures, as well as international holidays that might impact your timelines.
  - Hire an install and dismantle crew if one is not included in your booth price.
  
4. Train your staff:
  - Plan transportation routes for staffers traveling between the hotel and the show venue.
  - Determine common languages and hire the appropriate interpreter(s).
  - Learn local customs for greetings and appropriate business attire.

SOURCE: Todd, Brian, "Four Steps to International Exhibiting," *EXHIBITOR MAGAZINE*, December 2011



## We Can Help ...

The event specialists at Foster Marketing can help you decide how international trade show and event marketing fits into your marketing mix. Meeting with our team can help you sort through these questions and gain the insight you need to move forward with a successful event plan. We will research and determine what areas are best suited to help you achieve your objectives and map out a comprehensive and strategic integrated marketing and event communications plan tailored specifically to you and your audiences.

The international presence of Foster Marketing's trade show and event planning activities is strong as our clients and their work span the globe. Our specialists not only coordinate domestic-based events but also travel the globe building the brands of our clients through international events. The stars on the map below identify those areas in which we have coordinated recent trade shows and/or events.





## About Foster Marketing

**Foster Marketing** has been providing cost-effective, creative communications to the worldwide oil and gas industry for more than 30 years. We understand the industry and the unique challenges and opportunities you face. Our presence in the industry has allowed us to build relationships and a reputation all over the world for effectively executing a company's message. Our diverse and strategically built team of professionals understands the importance of executing a comprehensive, integrated marketing communications plan, and we know how to coordinate all of the pieces, including trade show marketing, to maximize its effectiveness.

By nature, trade show planning and event coordination is a detailed, time-consuming process with countless variables. There are many steps and a lot of work required to get your desired results. With years of experience on the trade show floor, countless events under our belt and a list of partners across the globe, Foster Marketing will provide your organization with a strategic trade show and event marketing plan based on specific goals and objectives, while freeing up your company's valuable time.





# FOSTER MARKETING

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