

**DSA<sup>®</sup>**

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MAKING UNFORGETTABLE

**V.01**

The Experiential Marketing Guide

# Make your next event Unforgettable

How large a role do events and exhibition's play in your marketing strategy? Are you getting the full value you need from your programme of events? What strategies should you adopt to boost your engagement from trade shows and how can this tie in with your digital marketing strategy? Unsure of the answer....?

We have written this guide for anyone requiring additional help and support with planning their next live event. We are here to guide you through the process of transforming your events strategy into a marketing tool that will deliver more sales and leads for your business.

We began as an exhibition stand builder and over many years have become a full-service event communications agency, working with leading brands around the world in a host of varying industries.

We are an experienced creative design, management and events delivery business, creating professional exhibition and event solutions for customers in a wide variety of industries. We provide an end-to-end events management service, delivering innovative, engaging and cost effective events aligned to your sales outcomes and marketing objectives.

# What 'Experiential' means



The events marketplace is saturated. In order to continually improve on your performance from events and get the ROI you need, you need to be able to diversify. Experiential marketing moves away from a narrow focus on events by bringing in personalised experiences from other branches of marketing.

This is the field we are involved with at DSA. Experiential marketing is pragmatic, using social media, email marketing, traditional advertising, retail strategies and new communication technologies to engage with customers in unique ways. At the end of the day the important point is where you get to, not how you get there.

You could think of the classic approach to events marketing as buying an off-the-peg suit, whereas experiential marketing is more like getting a suit tailor made on Saville Row. Some of the processes are the same and the outcomes look similar on the surface, but the experience and the value of the outcomes are fundamentally different.

So how can you shift your approach to events to keep up with the latest experiential trend?

# We Will Be Delving Into The Following Topics

## Strategy and Planning

- Choosing an event
- Creating your brand messages
- Harnessing Technology
- Achieving ROI

## Design

- Brand Recognition & Resonance
- Storytelling
- Using Colour
- Layout
- How much should you spend?

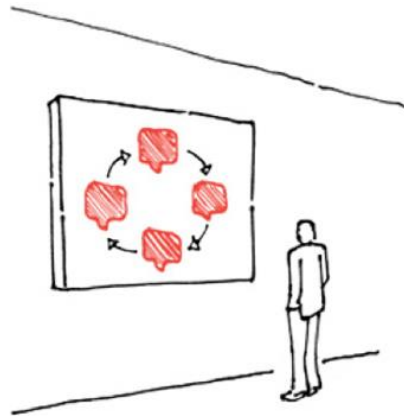
## Communication

- Your Team
- Social Media
- Pre-Communications
- At-Communications
- Post-Communications

If you have any questions whilst reading through this guide, please don't hesitate to give us a call on +44 (0)1789 293 930, we'd be happy to help.

# Strategy & Planning

Taking part in an event does not guarantee success. Without the right strategic approach in place, failure is just as likely as the former - we recommend using this section as a checklist to inspire your ideas while brainstorming.



## Choosing An Event

Some businesses take part in events out of habit, with little thought for what they get in terms of value. For any industry, there are dozens of exhibitions that you could attend, so how do you select the right one for your business? We recommend assessing each event in terms of the costs and the opportunities available to identify which will be the more lucrative.

# Strategy & Planning

## **The Target Audience**

- Assess the number of visitors at last year's event. What is the profile of the visitors and how many match your buyer personas?
- Why exactly do people attend the event, and what can you offer these people?

## **Exhibition Costs**

- How much will it cost you to attend the show?
- What are the exhibitor fees?
- Do you need to invest in a new stand or can you reuse an existing one?
- If you require a design agency's involvement, would signing a longer-term agreement save you further costs in the future?
- What transport, logistics, travel and accommodation costs are involved?
- What about promotional material?
- Will you be required to outsource staff for the event?

## **Competitors**

- Which of your competitors are attending the event?
- What can you find out about their stand and positioning?
- What are the key products and services they will be promoting?
- Is your business or brand strong enough to compete?

## **Opportunities**

- What secondary opportunities does the event offer? For example, hospitality, awards ceremonies, breakout areas, fringe events and speaking platforms.

## **ROI**

- What realistic returns can you expect from the show?
- What percentage of visitors are likely to turn into sales leads?
- What is the average value of each deal?
- Once you have a figure in mind, deduct the exhibition costs to calculate your ROI – is this trade show worth the effort financially?

# Strategy & Planning

## Creating Your Brand Messages

What brand messages should you use at the trade show? This four-point checklist will help you select cohesive messages with the appropriate '**wow factor**'.

### **Memorability**

Choose short, quirky or useful messages that are easy to use and memorise. Remember, consistency aids memory, so ensure you use the same messages on your greeting scripts, written content, visuals and videos.

### **Attracting & Engaging Visitors**

Think about what sort of message is going to attract visitors to your stand. How can you encourage long term customer engagement? Remember you have less than one minute to make a positive first impression, so start thinking about an elevator pitch that you can incorporate into all your marketing material.

### **Your Competitors**

Give some more thought to the messages your competitors will be using. How will you stand out from them and ensure you attract more visitors? How will your messages convert more leads than your competitors?

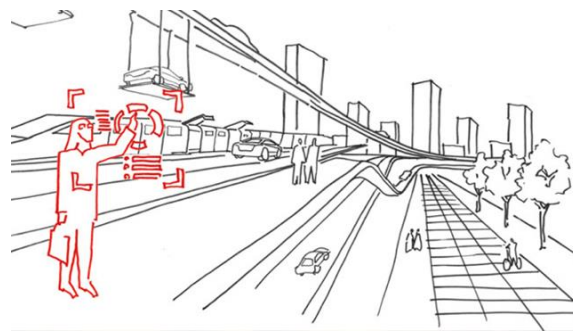
### **Environment**

Make sure your stand is designed to support your messages. Every element should be working towards the same goal. Make sure your booth is designed and constructed to the highest quality - your brand deserves no less.

# Strategy & Planning

## Harnessing Technology

What are the best technologies to draw attention to your stand and to achieve the results you need? Make sure you have the appropriate apps and technologies in place to cover the following important areas:



### **Imagery**

You will need powerful visual imagery to attract people to your stand and keep them engaged when they get there. Use visual display technologies to showcase your brand and messages.

### **Demonstrations & Videos**

Produce one or more high quality demonstration videos that visitors can access on demand. Keep them short, eye-catching and informative, with easy to understand messages. It is likely to be noisy and visitors may have questions, so make sure there is a quiet area on your booth and sufficient free staff available to chat with visitors.

### **Social Media**

Social media can be utilised before, during and after the show to boost your brand exposure. We discuss our implementation ideas in the 'Communication' pages a little further on in this guide.

### **Following Up Leads**

Take full advantage of digital communication technologies to follow up leads after the show. You can pre-plan your follow-up emails in advance, and make sure you backup your marketing efforts with blogs and other lead nurturing activities. You may even want to set up an exhibition-based landing page to make it easier for visitors to find you.



# Strategy & Planning

## Achieving ROI

The most important factor about any trade show is achieving the right level of ROI, this involves a concerted effort and should not be left to chance. Be ruthless in your planning and feel free to discard elements that are costing too much, or not delivering the results you need.

### Preparing Your Team

Brief your team well in advance about their expected behavior, dress code and individual roles during the event. Different individuals should be assigned to attract, to engage and to qualify leads. Time is precious, so streamline your training programme so your team can swiftly grasp their expectations and goals. It pays to diversify your tasks within the group and not expect any individual to take on too much.

### Competitor Research

Your team are in a great position at the trade show to gain crucial insight into your competitors and spot new industry trends. How do the other exhibition stands in the hall compare to your own? Do they appear to have more visitors – if so, why?

### Capturing Data

Make it as easy as possible to capture lead data on the day. Many leads are lost by trying (and failing) to interpret a prospect's handwriting - don't rely on the old-fashioned clipboard and pen method to capture important information. Instead we recommend investing in a tablet or touchscreen for customers to submit their information.

### Follow-Up

Start your lead nurturing programme on the day of the show and continue it afterwards. You can prepare emails, blogs and news articles in advance, and plan your sales call schedule. Monitor what people are saying on social media during and after the show and respond in real-time - don't miss any opportunity to create follow-up appointments.

# Design

Comprehensive planning is the key to design success – allow time to brainstorm for creativity. True 'Design Thinking' is the seamless combination of creative innovation with thorough project planning. It's crucial to know your product and potential customer base before a visual design is even a consideration. Failure to do this in the planning stage means that often your customers' needs are overlooked and poorly evaluated.

## Brand Recognition & Resonance

### **Brand Salience**

- Who are you as a brand?
- How easily retrievable is that to a consumer?

### **Brand Imagery**

- What image do you want your consumers to create about you in their mind?

### **Brand Judgements**

- How does the consumer view you?
- What does the consumer think about you?

### **Brand Feelings**

- What feelings does your brand imagery and performance provoke?

### **Brand Resonance**

- What relationship do you want consumers to create with your product?
- Is the brand relatable to them?

# Design

## Storytelling

Since the dawn of mankind, storytelling has played a crucial role in how we communicate with each other, helping us deliver complex information and ideas more easily. Although the concept itself continues to evolve, its purpose remains the same - to entertain, to share and to teach.



Creating a logical narrative for visitors to your stand allows for methodical understanding, a clear beginning, middle and end. In a saturated and busy marketplace, your design must stand out – it must truly engage your visitor. A narrative makes your message relevant; it develops your identity and builds your client base, supplementing qualified lead generation.

To view design as a language in this way has the capability to open clear channels for effective dialogue, heightening your opportunity for real visitor engagement. Your environment should allow for audience participation and encourage them to share your narrative across multiple platforms and invite others to become a part of your story.

When applied correctly, storytelling gives life to your brand and enhances its very presence among your competition. Rather than selling a 'thing', storytelling provides context, something easier for your customer to understand and support - meaning, depth and purpose.

# Design

## Using Colour

More than any other aspect of design, the colours you choose will evoke a strong psychological and emotional response. Even how your stand is lit will have clear connotations for your branding. Once you have established the emotional and psychological impact of your chosen scheme, you should consider the colour theory. The colour wheel is a logical arrangement of colours and hues, containing primary, secondary and tertiary colours. This can then be broken down into analogous and complementary colours, with colour context being a third aspect.

Different colour combinations have strong psychological and emotional connotations. When deciding what colours to use, you shouldn't automatically stick to your corporate colours. Instead, use colour theory to determine the most appropriate colours to achieve your goals.



# Design

## Layout

The 360° physical layout of your space is extremely important in making a positive impression on your visitors. It should ignite the curiosity of passers-by, maximise their dwell time and encourage them to stay in the space for a longer period.

**Consider the following 3 factors;**

### **Scale**

Create a focal point on your display by varying the relative sizes of different elements. This can be used to create a sense of drama and place emphasis on different parts of your stand

### **Balance**

An attractive design should always appear balanced, unified and harmonious. You can balance your design radially, with a focal point in the centre, symmetrically in a row, or asymmetrically, with a hierarchy of contrasting elements.

### **Dominance**

Using relative position, shape, colour and size, a designer can create a sense of scale and contrast within your event stand, enhancing the narrative purpose of your display

## How Much Should You Spend?

There isn't an upper limit on how much you can spend when investing in a live environment and it is common for businesses to spend up to 6 figures overall. Although this isn't strictly necessary, it is worthwhile to view your stand as an investment, rather than an additional expense that should be minimised.

Give yourself plenty of time to brainstorm ideas and encourage as much input from your team as possible. Be prepared to spend money on a good, high quality event booth, and it will very quickly pay its way. Design is the great differentiator in a crowded market place, and above all: creativity is key.

# Communication

## Your Team

It goes without saying that your customer-facing events team are your greatest asset during a show. Choose employees to represent you who are knowledgeable, eloquent and passionate about your brand. They should be smart, friendly and professional on the day. Listening skills are also important, with employees being encouraged to take detailed notes of any information they feel might be relevant later.

Make sure your booth is well staffed and a rota is in place to ensure your team have enough breaks. Tiredness and stress will impede an employee's ability to communicate naturally and recall information. It may cost you a bit more to have a couple of extra people on your stand during the day, but over-stretching your team may lead to missed opportunities.

Finally, treat your events team well. Now is not the time to skimp on travel expenses or insist on them bringing a packed lunch to the event. You want your front-line team to be happy, relaxed and positive about your company and ready to be your brand ambassadors for the day!

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# Communication

## Social Media

Social media is your best friend when preparing and delivering a successful marketing event. Each social media platform is a powerful tool in its own right. As obvious as it may sound, they cannot and should not be used interchangeably. Understanding how each platform works will let you utilise their strengths to your best advantage, whether before, during or after the show.

### Twitter

Tweet both before and during the show, to remind prospects of the upcoming event and advertise special promotions on the day. Monitor show-specific hashtags and brand mentions throughout the day and in the immediate aftermath of the event.

### Facebook

Use Facebook as the hub of your social media strategy, advertising your blogs, sharing photos and giving lengthier updates than those allowed on Twitter. You can also use Facebook video to post live video content.

### LinkedIn

Use LinkedIn to source potential invitees and get involved with discussions both during and after the event. Join an event LinkedIn group, and if one does not exist, create one yourself. This lets you post relevant information about the event and respond to thoughts and opinions from your prospects.

### Blog

You should post at least one blog in the run-up to the event, and then a series of topics exploring issues raised at the show in greater depth. You can tie this in with a follow-up email programme.

### YouTube

Be sure to publish all relevant video content to YouTube and encourage your prospects to subscribe to your YouTube channel.

# Communication

## Pre-Event Communications

Pre-show communications are essential for building a strong marketing foundation for your event. We recommend contacting as many people as possible to let them know about the event. You should also inform all your email subscribers and contact your LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter connections. It's also advantageous to follow your competitors on social media and see what they are doing ahead of the show - this will give you the chance to react accordingly. Communicate consistently and regularly about the event for several weeks, or even months beforehand. However, don't put all your cards on the table. Keep some news announcements back to announce on the day of the event, so you can leverage the in-show PR teams.

## At-Event Communications

Use Twitter to communicate in real-time during the show. Although you will be able to schedule some of these tweets in advance, its best to assign a member of the team to live tweet on the day. Use every opportunity to create urgency during the day to attract visitors to your space. If appropriate, you can tweet time-sensitive offers to your audience, such as: "Visit our stand before 2.30pm and you will be entered into our prize draw to win an iPad mini!". Use Twitter, Periscope and Facebook Live to broadcast live footage from the event. Send visitors LinkedIn connection requests and ask them to like your Facebook page on the day - before they have time to cool off.





# Communication

## Post-Event Communications

Arguably, the hard work doesn't begin until after the show is finished. The most successful trade show can crumble into abject failure if leads are not successfully followed up.

Have your communication strategy ready to roll into place as soon as the show closes, starting with a thank you to everyone who has visited your stand. Emphasise the hard work of your team and post pictures straight-away. Encourage social media engagement and arrange follow-up appointments while the iron is still hot! New relationships quickly lose momentum if not followed up, so get those pre-planned emails, blogs and social media updates on the production line without delay.

If your team have done their job properly, you will come back to the office with as many questions as you have answers. Make sure that all your buyers' queries, concerns, likes, dislikes, problems and desired solutions are logged in the appropriate place. Use this information to your advantage in planning follow-ups to your show. These are the questions people want you to address, so make it the centre of your email and blogging strategy over the coming months. Continue the conversation on LinkedIn after the event. You may find it useful to set up a specific post-show discussion forum, where you can address questions raised on the day and plan follow-up meetings.

# How can DSA help?

For over 20 years, we have helped customers engage with their target markets by delivering creative, award-winning environments. In this guide, we have explored the basic principles of experiential marketing and how this method can benefit your events strategy.

We love the work we do and truly enjoy developing innovative, immersive and eye-catching stands. Our priority outcome is to ensure your events deliver a successful return on investment. At DSA we hope to encourage a process of ongoing reflection and analysis that allows you to create long-lasting relationships with your target market.

This is a journey, a story if you like, which we would love to be part of. We have worked with many of our customers for decades and have seen their design and branding philosophy evolve over time. As new opportunities emerge, grab them with both hands. Embrace new technologies. Experiment with new design philosophies. It is a process of growth and change; and within that landscape you can find your niche and grow within it.

Let's start by having a chat about your current events strategy, and how events can fit in with your business and what you want them to achieve. While other events management agencies may start by proposing a solution they already have in mind, we would like to begin with a conversation.

## Let's Talk

We can provide a full-service event communication solution from beginning to end, working closely with your marketing team, event managers and supply partners.

For an initial chat with one of our experienced branding and events consultants, please get in touch by calling +44 (0) 1789 293 930 or email us at [hello@wearedsa.com](mailto:hello@wearedsa.com)