

# BEFORE THE EXPO, PRINT & MERCHANDISE: MERCHANDISE

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### EXHIBITOR TRAINING VIDEO



Investing in promotional goods might seem like an unnecessary cost when you're trying to control your expenditure, but if you set clear objectives and select the right merchandise for your target audience, it can generate a valuable return on investment.

Most exhibitors will have pens on their stands; others will spend more on items such as coasters, mugs, mints, USB sticks, car air fresheners, bags and trolley coins. The question is: are these things worth the effort?

*'Don't expect a visitor to turn into a customer just because they took a pen from your stand. Why have it? Because it gives you a presence after the event.'*

Merchandise can be important because it offers another form of advertising for your organisation - one that remains effective after the event has finished. Some organisations invest in particularly clever merchandising techniques. We've listed a couple of examples below:

- Branded 'bags-for-life' that can also be useful for shopping. Expo visitors ended up using the bags throughout the event to carry exhibitors' merchandise. Not only that, they even used them for their weekly household shopping, long after the event was over.
- Branded give-away T-shirts. These were worn by a number of visitors on day two of the Expo. This resulted in free advertising during and after the event.



Corporate merchandising is also great for promoting the organisation at an expo. Some examples include:

- Workwear – great for constant advertising, on and after the event
- Table cloths – improve the professional image of the stand

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Overall, choosing the right merchandise will ultimately depend on your budget and the preferences of your target market. It is, of course, easy to over-spend, just as some exhibitors may feel under-equipped when faced with more ostentatious competition. However, be sensible about what you can afford, about what sort of items will really appeal to your target customers, and what you are likely to get out from an investment in merchandising. That's a calculation only you can make.



On the one hand, a luxury brand exhibiting at a show aimed exclusively at high spending buyers may feel compelled to give out high-value merchandise; indeed, it might be completely justified in that, particularly if visitors expect that level of investment in customer relationships.

On the other hand, if your business model involves delivering high-tech industrial solutions, then your customers will probably make their decisions based on a totally different set of priorities. What matters is that you understand your customers, what they expect and on what basis they are likely to want to engage with you. In some cases, merchandise can play an important role in that process.

## IN OUR NEXT PRESENTATION...

Our next tutorial will look at the importance of the exhibition stand itself and how to make it an effective tool for communication and engagement.

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