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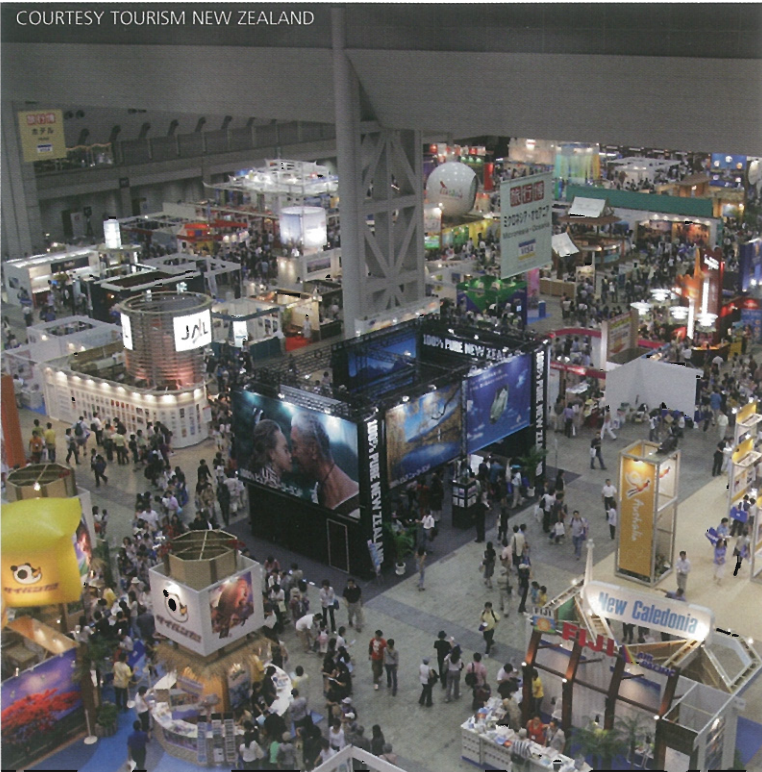
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Five tips for trade show success

Trade shows are hard work, but they are also a very useful tool to market your business to new customers. TRISH MAY highlights ways to get the most out of your investment.

THE New Zealand tourism industry is in the midst of the trade show season. TRENZ and Pure Luxury were held in May and there are more shows scheduled in coming months.

Second to a familiarisation visit, trade shows are arguably the best way to showcase your product to a new, potential customer – very often a wholesale agent. It is your opportunity to present your product first hand and importantly start building relationships.

So, if you're planning to participate in a trade show for the first time, how do you get the most out of the investment?

1. Prepare: At most trade shows you'll know well in advance who you will be meeting. Research them! This means going beyond their company biography and drilling deeper to find out what itineraries they have or what type of business they are delivering to New Zealand. This can be achieved through visiting their web sites, obtaining their brochures or even asking colleagues. It should become apparent which part of your product offering best suits their business and so place emphasis on that during your meeting.

Tracy Johnston is the marketing manager of the Classic New Zealand Wine Trail and represented the organisation at TRENZ in May. "I reviewed the product manuals and websites of all the agents on my schedule and looked at how the trail was

integrated into their itineraries or not, as the case may be, and prepared information and suggestions that suited that particular agent." says Johnston. "It really paid off because when it came time for the actual meeting – which is on a

time-limit - we were able to talk specifics and progress the relationship rather than start from scratch."
2. Participate: Participate in the networking aspects of the trade show. After talking all day, and with possibly three days of business in a row, it can be difficult to participate in social functions, but they are important. Not only do they provide an environment where you can enhance your rapport with someone you've met during a business meeting but you can also meet other agents not on your appointment schedule.

3. Be Enthusiastic: When you've just delivered your 10 minute product summary for the 88th time in the last three days, building up the enthusiasm for the 89th and 90th appointments can be a challenge. Whether a meeting is your first or last appointment of the trade show, each and every one is vital. Very often it is the first impression an agent will ever gain of your business and if you lose them due to lack of interest, chances are they'll never come back. Why would they – if you're bored how might you treat their clients!

4. Keep it Simple: We're in a digital and highly interactive age giving us some fantastic toys to portray your product. Using technology can be incredibly effective, but it can equally be disastrous if there is a break down or the 'toys' are lost in transit or stuck in customs (and

English is not the first language of your host country!).

Jo Heaton is the international marketing manager for Positively Wellington Tourism. In the past 10 years Heaton estimates she has attended at least 20 trade shows, both in New Zealand and worldwide "In my presentations I tend to opt for the safety of a manual 'flip chart' with professionally designed information and imagery. There is no risk of it malfunctioning and it is flexible enough to allow me to spend more time on a particular area, depending on the interest level from the agent."

5. Stay in Touch: It goes without saying the prompt follow up is fundamental to the success of the meeting and potential business. However it is important to nurture that relationship by ongoing contact; which could be in the form of sales calls, training, or sending them your latest product information. Maintaining contact overtime is the key.

Committing the budget and the time to a trade show can be significant for smaller businesses but despite this, they can be a relatively effective way of gaining new customers and growing your business. Just remember that marketing doesn't begin and end with a trade show – it is just one of the tactics you can successfully employ. 📧

Further Information:

www.trenz.co.nz

www.tourismnewzealand.com

(click on events tab)

Trish May is principal of May Communications and Marketing Ltd. She has been providing consultancy services to small and medium sized businesses for the past 7 1/2 years. Trish has attended most TRENZ events and numerous international trade and consumer shows during her 18 year tourism marketing career. See www.maymarketing.co.nz