

Technology Trade Show PR

Even if you have a well-oiled PR machine, we hope that our 11 technology trade show tips give you new ideas and insight to what's possible - even on the smallest budget.

Also, Lumen PR can help you attract the attention of the media well before the show even starts. We will promote you during the show, plus make suggestions after it closes. The 12th tip is to pick up the phone and talk to us.

Tip 1 – Trade show PR, why bother?

Attending trade shows is a great way to meet journalists and to build better relationships with them. It also might be the only time you have the opportunity to meet some journalists face to face.

Editors and reporters know that there are great many companies with innovative ideas who don't always have a well developed PR function. Attending trade shows for them are an opportunity to walk the halls and discover new businesses. This means you need to be prepared.

Tip 2 – Early birds get the...

We can't say this enough times, but it's never too early to start planning for a trade show and how to present yourself to the press.

The first steps are knowing what you are going to be doing at the show and how you want to communicate it. For example, are you launching a new product; the first demonstration of a new application; announcing news results or research outcomes? Are you or a customer presenting and on what topic? All of these are of interest to the media.

Next, check which publications are sponsoring the show as they will often send their editorial team along. Then, identify which magazines are important to you to be seen in and contact the journalists, asking if they are attending the show. Offer to keep them up to date on what you're up to, even if they're not going. If they are, offer preshow information, one to one interviews, or to meet up for a coffee to talk through your plans for the coming year.

Reporters tend to have two lists - 'must see' and 'would like to see'. We want you to be on either one of them.

Tip 3 – Tap into what's already there

With key technology trade shows, many publications will automatically carry preshow guides in the issue before the show as well as the issue that will come out during the show. Check which ones do and make sure you given them information when and how they want it.

Use the organiser's service, you've paid for it. Ask for their help and listen to their advice. Make sure you're in the show directory including a logo. You may get an exhibitors' manual with a section especially about the press and promoting yourself. The organisers will give you deadlines for activities. Check regularly for a list of confirmed journalists and telephone numbers and add them to your contact list.

Tip 4 – Event promotion

The organisers will be promoting the show to journalists and visitors alike. They will have a programme of press releases to highlight exhibitors and news to entice visitors. They might also be using Facebook, LinkedIn Groups and other social media tools. Check to see when they are doing this and how to participate.

Let visitors to your website know you are attending the trade show and what you're exhibiting. Make a point of highlighting it on your website and consider hyperlinks and the show logos too.

Finally, check what news you can put on the show's website.

Tip 5 – The press pack

Press packs both physical and virtual should include a single page press release that gives the news of what you're announcing at the show. It needs to include your stand number, a telephone number and an email address for the company that will be checked regularly during the show.

Also included should be a single page backgrounder of the company with its milestones and key points. If you are presenting, include a short biography and picture of the speaker and a copy of the presentation, plus at what time and where they are presenting.

You'll want to put this in nice folders - don't bother. The press will take the bits they're interested in and ditch the rest. So save a tree and your budget and keep it simple with a clear plastic wallet.

Before the show check with the organiser as to when, how many and where they want press packs to be sent to. Also at the show, know where the press office is and make sure you've enough press packs displayed. Keep them topped up throughout the show.

Tip 6 – Sponsorship opportunities

Sponsorship opportunities get snapped up quickly. So if you are deciding which one to take up, consider how much it will increase your profile with the press, if at all. Is it a good match with your aim and messages?

You can always suggest something to the organiser that you're willing to sponsor not already mentioned. Look at what else could get your brand viewed. It doesn't necessarily need to be at the show, it could be around it, on the website, or even afterwards.

Tip 7 – Distributing your story

Arrange for your story to be distributed on the morning of the first day of the show to the journalists not attending show and any other sources you believe will pick up your news. This should be done by email and should provide supporting images, logo and offer of interviews. Monitor the email address you give as a contact, making sure any requests are dealt with quickly.

If you can't develop your own email distribution list, ask the organiser before the show to send your press release out, suggest a service that you could use, or give you a list you can send out to yourself.

Tip 8 – The press office

It's standard practice for a trade show to have a press office, which editors and reporters visit to sign in or register and get their press badges. It is also a place they can sit down and relax, perhaps have something to eat and drink and look over press packs displayed around the room.

Staff managing the office have historically acted as gatekeepers and only allowed the press in. However, this is changing; so don't be put off by them.

Check regularly throughout the day which journalists have signed in to the press office and ask the show staff to point them out to you. Go and engage with them – but don't annoy them if you get the feeling they'd rather be left alone! Remember they are looking for interesting stories and news. If they are busy, suggest an alternative time today to meet up or at the very least, arrange to contact them after the show. Don't forget to hand them your business card.

If the show doesn't have a press office, check with the organiser what alternative service they are offering. You can also consider having a section on your website that goes live on the day of the show which holds all the press pack information that can be downloaded.

Tip 9 – The journalists are coming!

While you're off checking the press office or networking, there is every chance that a journalist will turn up on your stand and want to know about you and your products - NOW. Give clear instructions to your staff as to how you want them to manage the situation. This might be your one and only opportunity with that journalist to give them what they want.

Always let your stand team know when you'll be back, and leave press packs with them.

You might also want to consider having a spokesperson who speaks another language. By not having one, you may lose opportunities both in the media and possible customers. Ask the event organisers if they think it's appropriate.

Tip 10 – Let's Tweet about it

Consider using [Twitter](#) to increase buzz and energy about you attending the show with your audiences. Use hash tags (#). Check if the organisers have made a hash tag for the show and add it to your show Tweets. This will help you track relevant discussions.

Invite attendees and identified journalists to follow you, letting them know of some of the things you're up to and how you can be found. Encourage the press to sign up for one on one interviews or a time to visit you on the stand or at the press office, especially if they are busy.

Once at the show, Twitter in real time so you can keep your followers abreast of what happening, what time and where. If you are also following the show's hash tag, you'll know what topics are being discussed and what's happening with your journalists and be able to respond accordingly.

If you're presenting you may want to consider having a member of your team Tweet the interesting bits in real time. Or, if appropriate, project a live Twitter stream during the presentation. All you need is an internet connection, laptop and LCD projector and you're set to project everyone's comments and questions. This is great for larger meetings to engage your audience with immediate effect.

You may want to consider embedding your Tweets while at the show into your website. This means that visitors can follow the day's activities in real time even if they're not attending the show.

If someone says something good about you during the day or your presentation, then retweet it ASAP.

Finally, at the end of each day or the show, you could organise a tweetup: meet other Twitterers at a certain time, preferably when there is an open bar! It's a nice way to put faces to @names and network.

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Understand technology,
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Contact:
Nick Daines
Director
lumen PR
Phone: (0)115 8412109
Email: nick@lumenpr.com
Twitter: [@nickdaines](https://twitter.com/nickdaines)
Website: www.lumenpr.com

Consider how Facebook along with LinkedIn, Plaxo and others can be used to promote your news.

Tip 11 – It ain't over until...

Chase down all the media opportunities after show and follow up on any actions as quickly as possible. Journalists will be thinking of the next trade show and their next issue.

Contact the journalists who didn't attend the show that said they would, to promote your news.

When you get coverage either in print or on a website, get permission to have it added to your website, in a news section. There is normally no cost to link to online coverage, but double check.

Learn from this trade show what worked, what didn't work and start planning for next year's trade show.

And finally...

Here are a few extra tips not PR related but we've learned the hard way, so you don't have to:

- Book accommodation well in advance. It's not funny dragging yourself half way around the city from a single bed in a one star bed and breakfast.
- Have water and mints. Drink plenty of water. Keeping your fluids up helps the brain function better.
- Take your business cards and ensure you have plenty on you at all times. You never know where and when you'll need them.