Targeted press activity for a successful trade show
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Dear Exhibitor,

Your company will be attending a trade show in Düsseldorf. This costs money, something that you are very much aware of as an exhibitor. The more intensively and carefully you prepare for the show, the more productive it will be. This is why you need to implement every possible measure effectively before the event – and afterwards too, of course.

Alongside advertising, press activity is extremely important in terms of the sales strategy, overall presentation and external image of a company. You need to be aware that press activity is an essential element of any trade show initiative. Having the best product or a fantastic innovation will mean nothing if public and professional visitors don’t hear about it in good time.

Trade shows have changed their role continuously in the past, adapting to market requirements. They are no longer just an opportunity to take orders – they have developed their communications role immensely. Put simply: visitors and exhibitors come to find out about innovations and advances in development, and also about the competition and positioning of their own company within the target market.

The media – newspapers, journals, radio, TV and electronic media such as the Internet – constitute a vital channel for communication. You need to make it your business to address and employ these information channels in the right way in order to support your trade show project and overall PR strategy effectively.

The Messe Düsseldorf press department assists exhibitors in their efforts to deliver information about their trade show products and company – in the right format – via the right media – to the right target groups.

However, the press department can only be the intermediary between exhibitors and the press. This means that you have to take the initiative. We will help you make your trade show the greatest possible success.

This guide will help you to achieve this. Don’t just put it to one side, telling yourself that it’s still too soon to start with press activity. Press activity and communication need to be ongoing.

You will only develop a reputation (or maintain it) if you keep up a constant dialogue.

Our guide is the result of many years of working with exhibitors and the media. It is not based on dull theory, but real experience. It wasn’t produced on a drawing board, but is the fruit of a lively debate with journalists from the full range of the media: trade, business, local TV, radio and online editorial departments. We have also drawn on the experience of various company press offices that have been Düsseldorf trade show partners for a long time. We would therefore like to say a special thank you to everyone involved in this project.

This brochure is therefore a guide in the truest sense of the word – written by professionals for the people out there in the field. All we ask is that you make good use of it!

One last important tip:

Successful press activity doesn’t depend on the size of your company. Never tell yourself “That’s not for me, it’s only for large corporations”. Press activity is important for everyone, whether you employ ten or ten thousand people. You need to develop your individual trade show concept supported by your own tailored PR.

We wish you every success with your trade show in Düsseldorf.

The Messe Düsseldorf Press Department
No need to be afraid of the press: journalists are people too!

Time and again, we see people experiencing uncertainty and fear at the prospect of dealing with the press, preventing many companies from conducting consistent and transparent press activity. This is neither right nor necessary.

When each partner is aware of what the other does and their specific needs, acknowledging and respecting this as having equal value, you have the basis for successful collaboration. This can only happen through constant dialogue and communication. This means an open and honest information policy (especially in crisis situations) in the first instance and conscientious handling of information received in the second. The public’s requirements for company information policies have changed drastically over the years. It is now not enough merely to provide information on a company’s new products and financial situation. There is now a much greater demand for additional information on procedures, ingredients and the associated environmental impact, for example. This means that a company hoping to build and maintain public trust must take account of the public’s wishes and concerns in its press activity and take a positive stance.

A journalist who is treated fairly will respect their duty of care and act in the role of trustee, ensuring that a company’s affairs are communicated to the public in the appropriate way.

This constitutes a robust and transparent information policy for any press activity you engage in for a trade show, even if it goes beyond product information, addressing more far-reaching topics targeted at a wider public and involving a planned discussion of controversial issues (such as the environment and more humane working environments etc.).

Resist the temptation to hide or play down the facts, even though this might sometimes be hard. By nature, journalists observe a certain critical distance with regard to information. They need to maintain a certain distance in many instances in order to make their job easier. If you only provide part of the story, they will only feel a greater need to dig further, and it will come back and bite you in the end.

Open and honest communication definitely pays off in the long term.
What you need to do …

You have taken the decision to present your products and services to a large audience at our trade show. You have decided on the design for your stand and the leaflets, catalogues and price lists you need a long time ahead of the show. You have also prepared the stand personnel in the best possible way to ensure that they are able to provide visitors with qualified information in response to any questions they might get. But what happens if the tide of visitors you hoped for doesn’t materialise and your competitors report successful transactions but your company goes home with an empty order book…?

To avoid this kind of failure, you need to tell professional visitors that you will be at the show at the appropriate time. Targeted press activity is a very useful tool for achieving this. It is because you can only make the majority of visitors aware of your company and the performance capability of your products ahead of the show if you liaise with the trade press at an early stage, thus ensuring coverage.

If you have never conducted any press activity on a systematic basis before, don’t be afraid to take your first steps. The people who will benefit from such hesitation are the competitors who know how to use press activity as an effective tool for attracting visitors. And that doesn’t just apply to large companies any more. Many small to medium-sized businesses enjoy the advantage of a good relationship with members of the press, working on it continuously.

Before you actually do anything concrete, there are a number of basic questions that you need to ask within your company.

2.1 Who should be responsible for press activity?

Small to medium-sized businesses in particular often assume that it is not worth employing specialist people for press activity or even to create an in-house press and PR department at all.

Press activity needs to continue on a regular basis over the long term – not just before and during a trade show. Only if you provide journalists with information on a regular basis will you achieve your goal: raising awareness of your company amongst professionals and the public. But you must also build and maintain a direct relationship with the media. Go and see the major editorial departments, phone the appropriate editors and journalists and establish what information is required or maybe invite them to compile a report on your company. Continuity is equally as important as a professional approach. Amateurish press releases and incorrect information will show the company in a bad light. Editorial departments measure you against professionals and incorrect information will show the company in a bad light.

This is why sales and advertising departments should not be entrusted with the press activity, as sending leaflets and catalogues does not achieve the desired effect with the media.

Nor is the statement “Find out all about us on the Internet!” very helpful, either. Editors are inundated with information every day and are looking to ease their work load: there is always a chance that a well-written press release will impress, but a journalist won’t want to wade through advertising jargon in a leaflet. Your advertising material will just go straight in the bin.

There is therefore a lot to be said for bringing in a professional to take care of your press activity. And even if you think that the investment isn’t worth it at the moment, you must still appoint someone within your company to be responsible for the co-ordination of press activity and act as a contact for journalists.

To ensure that no conflicting statements start circulating, you also need to make it quite clear that only this person is allowed to send information to editorial departments and journalists, and therefore the public.

Once you have allocated in-house responsibility for press activity, you can actually start to plan and implement your approach.

2.2 Working with a PR agency?

If you have any doubts, use the expertise of a press office or PR agency. Especially when you are entering new territory, it can be useful to let press and PR experts do the work for you. They are professionals who know how to write a good press release, which media to use and with which copy, and when it is a good idea to hold a press conference. Press offices and agencies are also helpful for producing a catalogue or co-ordinating the timing of an action plan. Their remit also extends to providing the company with on-going consultation, analysing competitor press activity and documentation for targeted publications.

You don’t have to use all of their services, but can commission individual campaigns (e.g. organising a press conference) or only give one area of the work over to the agency (e.g. producing press releases and producing a distribution list or a specific sector). We recommend developing a long-term relationship, as this ensures continuity for your press activity.

However, there is still a certain amount of risk attached to choosing the “right” press or PR agency. There are lots of new companies plying their trade in this sector who know very little about professional press activity. So ask for references and give them test jobs or contact DPRG e.V. – Deutsche Public Relations Gesellschaft, Reinhardtstraße 19, 10117 Berlin-Mitte, Tel. 030/80 40 97-33) to find out what kind of reputation your chosen agency has. They can also give you an idea of the right prices for a range of services.

Remember: even if you are working with a PR agency, you and your company need to remain in charge.
Establish the required content and check the agency’s work carefully. Make sure that you are kept informed – and not just after the show!

2.3 Keep your press officers informed

Whether press activity is taken care of in-house or by a PR agency, the same principle always applies:

you have to be open and honest when providing information.

A press officer can only be as good as the information they receive from the company. Sound knowledge is the essential factor when working with trade journalists, as they know the sector, the major companies, their market positioning and the competitive environment very well. And maybe they already know a lot more about your company than you realise.

Your company press officer must also be able to answer critical questions. This is why they need to attend all senior level meetings, so that they not only know about your products, but are also aware of long-term strategy. At the same time, you can establish which information is to be made available externally during the meeting.

You must also give your press officer the opportunity to go on the offensive with critical issues rather than just waiting for uncomfortable questions to come in from the media. If the company loses a major client or a new product launch is considerably delayed, although the date was already widely known, your company must be the first to take a stance. Don’t get caught on the back foot – it will damage your long-term credibility.

Journalists also expect to find a reliable contact on your stand who is able to provide answers that reflect management opinion. If your company spokespeople just shrug their shoulders apologetically when a delicate issue comes up, the success of any press initiative will come under serious threat.
The right information for each target group

As an exhibitor, most of the media people you will deal with are as follows:
- Trade journalists, (editors of either newspapers or journals, so generally publishing staff or freelance journalists)
- Business editors (working for trade magazines, journals, daily papers or consumer magazines)
- Radio and TV journalists
- Local editors
- Online editors.

It is important to pay attention to the specific information requirements of individual journalists. This is because the various media view information from different standpoints and apply a range of stylistic methods. Whereas a trade press editor will want to know all the details about a product, a business editor will be more interested in the social and economic aspects (e.g. saving energy, protecting the environment, improving working conditions) associated with a new product launch. TV journalists also see it as important for products to be visually attractive and radio editors need a contact who can provide the facts in a clear and vivid way.

3.1 The trade press
As an exhibitor, the most important media target group for you is the trade press. Trade journals are a vehicle for market focus, imparting information and exchanging experience. The readers of these journals are potential users of your products and visitors to your stand. Intensive and effective activity in the trade press before, during and after a trade show can have a lasting positive effect on your presence at a show.

Therefore you need to acquire a comprehensive overview of the trade journals in your sector.

Ideally, you need to subscribe to the most important publications for you and your company. This will enable you to ascertain the subject areas you can cover for the various publications and how the information needs to be supplied. Most trade titles also publish economic reports and information about changes in personnel, company anniversaries and cultural activities in addition to the usual product reports. If you keep a close eye on the trade press, you will also stay abreast of how competitors present themselves to the public. It might also provide other ideas and angles for your own press activity. The trade show previews published by trade journals and industry portals in the run-up to trade shows and exhibitions are also an excellent way of raising awareness about your company. Visitors regard these reports as an extremely useful guide when preparing to visit a trade show.

So make sure you tell editorial departments in good time about any innovations and further developments on your stand.

This means submitting your information to editors at least six weeks before the publication date for the trade show issue. This is generally the amount of time required by a monthly trade journal for copy processing and production.

Many trade press editorial departments make it easy for exhibitors by requesting trade show information to help them prepare their piece in advance. But you can also take the initiative, ensuring that editors have your information in good time. Obtain the media information for the titles that are of interest to you from your advertising department, advertising agency or publisher. This will give you the topic schedule for the current year and the publication dates for the trade show issues.

3.2 The business press
As far as business journalists are concerned, trade shows are the principal barometer of the industrial climate, reflecting economic, technical and social development. This means that product-focused press activity only has a chance of success if your trade show offering mirrors for example such developments or influences and changes it over the long term. However, you should still be prepared for interest from the business press.

Business journalists see trade shows and exhibitions as an excellent way of finding out about companies and markets at first hand.

It is therefore a good idea to provide on your stand information including key business data (e.g. turnover, number of employees, investments, product programme, customer structure etc.).

3.3 Radio and TV
It is not easy to attract radio and TV coverage, even if you do everything right and are able to offer the right products, people and topics. These media address a wide audience and their main criterion for selecting topics is broad, general appeal. This is particularly restrictive in the case of highly specialised technical trade shows in terms of the scope for submitting this kind of product report. They are looking for the spectacular and the exemplary. And there is also a requirement for pieces to be suitable for radio or TV broadcast. Remember that radio and TV also offer a range of different areas (e.g. current affairs, the economy etc.), and tailor the content of your reports accordingly!

3.4 The local press
Local editorial departments like to report on events and initiatives in local industry, such as the foundation of a new company or anniversary of a locally based business – your trade show...
It is therefore a good idea to tell local editorial departments at daily newspapers where your company is based about your exhibition activity in the immediate run-up to the trade show. This is particularly important if it is your first time at a trade show or you are exhibiting something new. Focus on the significance of your company to the city or region and the goals driving your attendance at the show. Don't forget to include the local editorial departments of the Düsseldorf daily press in your press activity (e.g. the Rheinische Post and the Westdeutsche Zeitung etc.). A celebrity on your stand, product innovations attracting a wider range of users or an interesting stand promotion are popular topics for the local Düsseldorf press.

3.5 Online media

The Internet has opened up the options for spreading information to a tremendous degree. An enormous number of trade journals, magazines and daily newspapers offer online versions of their products. On top of this, there are also industry portals, information services and independent online magazines. All of them provide excellent opportunities for obtaining coverage at the right time and for the right target audience. If you are writing content for the Internet, you need to stick to the following principle: “Keep it short and sweet” (more on this subject in chapter 4.4: The press release). Internet editorial departments also love good image, video and audio content.

Make good use of the industry portals operated by Messe Düsseldorf for many of its trade shows

Portal editorial departments will always be interested in the latest news you have to offer and will be happy to publish it.

3.6 Looking after journalists on your stand

Trade shows and exhibitions are an excellent opportunity for journalists to talk to exhibiting companies about new products, processes and industry trends. Make good use of this unique opportunity to establish and maintain contact with journalists. You will be well prepared for a visit from the press if you note the following points:

- A press contact needs to be available on your stand every day during the show (or at least during the first few days).
- It is important to provide a member of staff who knows your company and sector inside out and, most importantly, has the skills to answer critical questions. The owner of the company or a member of the senior management team should also be available for comment if required.
- Several weeks before the show starts, send a written invitation to the journalists you would particularly like to see, agreeing a date and time if necessary.
- Provide a press pack with information on the latest news, further developments and your company.
The tools for your press activity

4.1 Press distribution lists
It is well worth investing time and effort in developing and maintaining press distribution lists. Even the best press release in the world is no use if it goes to the wrong address. So you need to:
- check which trade journals and newspapers are the right targets for receiving information from you. You need to use the address for the appropriate department as far as possible (the Editorial rather than the advertising department).
- organise addresses into target groups (e.g. trade press, business press, e-media = radio/TV). This means that you will always be able to use the appropriate distribution list to suit the content of your piece, avoiding wastage and unnecessary postage costs.

There are many different reference books available to help you compile distribution lists, such as:
- “Zimpel online”, a program that you can use to compile your own distribution lists for various media categories, and the “Zimpel-Verteilerservice”, which will provide customers with distribution lists based on their requirements.

Business and professional associations, chambers of industry and commerce and Messe Düsseldorf can be useful for compiling the addresses of editorial departments.

To ensure that your distribution lists are always up to date, you need to make a note of any changes of address you hear about. Check that addresses are correct on a regular basis.

4.2 Press services
Another opportunity for circulating press releases straight to the target audience as and when required is offered by press agencies such as dpa, with special service portals for the PR industry. For a fee, as a registered user, you have access to the agencies’ distribution lists for copy, images, multimedia and much more.

The Internet also offers numerous industry information services, portals and newsletters that you can use to reach your target audience without any wastage. These services are also often subject to a charge. Check whether it is worth your while sending your information there.

4.3 The vehicle: print or online?
Press materials and images are sent almost exclusively by e-mail. But there are still journalists around today who prefer to receive the printed word by post, although they are in an ever-increasing minority. Our tip: ask them about how they prefer to receive material and tailor your distribution lists accordingly. That way, everyone receives their information in the format they prefer and find it easiest to handle.

If you send materials by e-mail, make sure that it is in Rich Text Format (RTF). This ensures that all recipients of your press release will be able to open and process it, regardless of what operating system they are using.

4.4 The press release
In the final analysis, whether or not your press release is printed depends on layout and wording.

However good your product or interesting your news, if the essential information isn’t clear immediately, your message will be lost. Remember that editorial departments receive a huge amount of information. Editors are spoilt for choice and under constant time pressure. It is understandable that the first texts they look at will be the ones that attract their curiosity immediately and are easy to deal with. Most importantly, make it crystal clear how your product benefits users.

To have any chance of being published, press releases always need to talk about a special current event or innovation. If you also abide by the following rules, you have a good chance of success:
- Write concisely and factually and in the third person.
- Avoid advertising jargon and superlatives. As editorial departments are responsible for the accuracy of your statements, this type of wording will be removed anyway.
- Put the most important information first. A good guide to follow: Who, What, When, How and Why? These questions need to be answered for readers straight away. It also makes it easier to shorten text structured in this way if there is not enough space.
- Put headings and sub-headings in the text to highlight core messages.
- Where possible, avoid using technical terms and foreign words. Not all readers of trade journals are technically minded. It also makes it harder for editors if they have to “translate” your copy first.
- Reports aimed at overseas markets must be provided in the language of that country. Have the copy translated by a specialist, preferably mother-tongue translator.
The formal structure of a press release is also important:

– “Press Release” needs to be stated clearly in the header. Pre-printed or digital cover sheets containing all the standard information (e.g. company address, phone number etc.) are ideal.

– Include the send date and, in case of any queries, the name and phone number of the press officer, plus fax number and e-mail address where possible.

– Each sheet should be printed on one side only, with at least 1.5 line spacing. Allow for 30 lines per page and 40–50 words per line.

– Important: use paragraphs to structure the texts and avoid underlining, capital letters and similar types of emphasis – for brand names, for example.

– Attach a photo with the text or indicate whether a photo may be requested to go with the text, from whom and where.

4.5 The press photo

Photos are an essential element of print media design. A good photo often has more chance of being printed than copy.

Images are also a useful way of enhancing and clarifying press releases. Specialist editorial departments are particularly looking for photographic materials, as they often don’t have the option of hiring a press photographer or using expensive photo services. However, good photos are unfortunately rather rare. The most common mistakes: images too small, poor image quality or the picture looks like it has been taken by an amateur.

Important: never use images from your advertising leaflets. Make sure that your photos are credible and that the people or objects in them are shown in their “natural” environment. For example, photograph a machine in the plant rather than a photographic studio.

Remember the following advice for press photos:

– Press photos need to be taken by a press or industrial photographer, as they know the editorial requirements for image quality and composition.

– Digital images have replaced printed photographs in the media industry. The correct resolution is very important – at least 300 dpi.

– Each picture needs a caption, giving information about the image, publishing rights and source (company address).

Tip: adding “no charge for use of copyright” will save on enquiries and make it easier for a photo to be printed.

You also need to be aware that sending images often involves large volumes of data, and not all recipients’ mail boxes are set up for this. This can be annoying. Send just one image with your copy in the first instance and offer to send further image material by e-mail or on a CD afterwards if required. You can also refer people to image material available to the media via your in-house online press service.

4.6 The press folder

If you want to give journalists a number of press releases, it is a good idea to provide a press folder. The contents of the folder can be tailored to suit the occasion. At trade shows this means a press conference or when a journalist visits your stand.

A press folder should contain information sheets about new items at the show, a CD of photos, a report on the company and key data for the business press. Information about your company’s other products should be available for handing out on your stand on request.

If a press folder is being distributed at a press conference, journalists will also expect to find a list of speakers including their first name, last name, title and the text of their statement. Where possible, also include a summary of the conference details accompanied by the speakers’ core statements. Bear in mind that international trade shows are also attended by foreign journalists. You should therefore provide your press folder in other languages, or at least in English. It is essential for translations to be carried out by specialists. Texts that have been poorly translated, especially if on a specialist subject, can not only lead to serious misunderstandings, but will also damage your company’s reputation.

Providing copy and images on a USB stick as well is also a good service.

Alternatively, if you have an online press service, you can also say so in your press folder, informing people that they can download documents from there.

4.7 Press releases on the Internet

It is a good idea to make a press area part of your web site. It should be possible to reach this area via a single click on the homepage and it should provide an immediate overview of what is available (e.g. news, company information, product information, archives, photo service, contacts etc.). Text and images in the press area need to be updated daily to reflect what is happening within your company. In the run-up to a trade show it is a good idea to add a link to the relevant event to highlight the fact that you will be there. The appropriate logo can be downloaded from the trade show server.

Messe Düsseldorf has its own Internet portal for many events. Exhibitors are given the opportunity to post their news and information in a prominent position – a useful addition to your own online presence.
4.8 The press conference

A press conference offers the opportunity to initiate and develop a personal relationship with journalists and convey an all-round impression of your company.

On the other hand, editors are under extreme time pressure while the trade show is running. You therefore need to consider very carefully whether a press conference has enough factual content to make it worthwhile for journalists. As an exhibitor, you and your event are competing with lots of other companies for the journalists’ precious time and limited space in their trade journals. If you don’t have any substantial information to convey, you will soon annoy journalists and fail to create the desired effect.

Instead of organising a press conference, you can also invite journalists for a discussion on your stand. This kind of individual approach gives senior management a much better opportunity to address the specific questions and interests of trade, business and daily newspaper journalists. This helps intensify the discussion and offers the chance to hear the latest interesting news from editors – they are the most well-informed, after all.

However, if you still feel that you have a significant reason for holding a press conference, start your preparations in good time. (You will find a checklist on page 24.) First you need to decide a place and time with senior management, as their presence is absolutely essential to holding an all-round discussion. If you have a date in mind, it is vital that you inform the Messe Düsseldorf press department, and maybe the most important journalists too. Another company might well have issued its press conference invitations for the same time already. There is an area on the trade show site or within the immediate vicinity that can be used as a venue, so that editors who are already under time pressure don’t have to go far to your event.

You also have the option of organising a press conference on your stand. The advantage of this is that you are in your own environment, you can show your products to journalists and have information in addition to the press folder available in case it is requested.

Once time and place have been decided, you need to send written invitations with reply cards three to four weeks before the press conference (Invitations to foreign journalists can even be sent five to six weeks beforehand).

If you are sending invitations by e-mail, you can leave it until later on (a week or so before). Media businesses such as press agencies and daily newspapers receiving large volumes of current information prefer to receive information by e-mail, some even insisting on this. You should follow these wishes to the letter. Nevertheless: printed invitations are now quite rare, and can be a way of attracting attention to your company. A chance for you to get ahead of the competition!

Don’t forget to highlight important information such as place, time and speakers etc. (you will find further pointers for the invitation in the enclosed checklist). If you don’t receive a reply to your invitation, you can call the editorial department a few days before the event for confirmation of whether they will be attending or not.

Speakers must promise to be as concise as possible when preparing their texts.

The most important information needs to be conveyed in ten minutes at the most.

People tend to be a little vain, and they also love to talk, so keep the number of speakers to three at the most. Be firm. There should be no time restriction on the ensuing discussion, but experience tells us that you won’t need to allow much more than 20 minutes. Prepare the speakers for critical questions so that there are no painful silences or impulsive reactions.

To ensure that journalists have all of the facts referred to at their disposal, make sure that you have press folders on hand, containing the content of the presentation, a brief portrait of your company and photos of the products presented and possibly also the speakers.

Hand out the information before the conference starts so that journalists can make initial changes and additions while the speakers are talking.

You might show yourself as a good host by providing a buffet or lunch, but journalists hardly ever have time to take advantage of them during the show. This is why it is quite sufficient just to provide something to drink at the conference.

4.9 The press giveaway

It is very common to provide journalists with a giveaway at press conferences or when they visit your stand. But you need to be careful in your choice of item. Too expensive and you won’t achieve the desired effect. What is merely meant to be a thank you for their time or a symbol of hospitality could be interpreted by the recipient as an attempt at manipulation or even bribery. The professional ethics of journalism demand objectivity and the overwhelming majority of journalists take this obligation seriously. So restrict your choice to a token gift – maybe even with a little bit of fun thrown in!

Something useful or decorative for the desk, an original game or one of your products that is suitable as a giveaway will give pleasure but no sense of obligation.

Remember also that a press giveaway needs to be light and portable. Who is going to want to lug boxes through trade show halls and conference rooms?
4.10 Press cuttings

You have put all of these PR initiatives in place before and during the trade show. Naturally, after the show, you would like to know which publications have written about your company and products.

Don’t rely on receiving sample copies, as not all publishers offer this service. The best thing to do is to subscribe to the major trade journals and read through them to see if your company or products have appeared in them.

Many companies also employ press cutting agencies to ensure that they obtain the most comprehensive picture of the amount of coverage obtained. But trade journals aren’t included nearly enough in this type of research. So you might see the few lines in a local publication, but not the specialist article several pages long about product innovations at your company. It is a very good idea to employ a press cuttings agency on a one-off basis for special PR campaigns targeted across the entire daily and business press. When you engage the agency’s services, you need to provide them with the text of your press release and a list of the editorial departments you have contacted (distribution list) so that they know which particular publications to focus on.

You will find the addresses and terms of the various press cutting agencies in “STAMM-Leitfaden durch Presse und Werbung”. When you receive the cuttings you will also find out how many copies of the publication are circulated and how often. This will give you an overall idea of how many readers your message has reached. But don’t worry if a major daily paper has not responded to your press release – you should not see the number of copies printed as the only measure of the success of your efforts.
Evaluating trade show success

You should begin follow-up work as soon as the show has ended. You need to follow up on your press activity in the same way as you evaluate and analyse the level of success you have had at the show.

Record the names and addresses of the journalists and editorial teams that came to see you on your stand so that you can update your distribution list.

Produce your own post-show report for the press and send it out to journalists. Use the Messe Düsseldorf post-show report to enhance your own. It is available immediately after the show on the relevant event homepage provided by the online press service.

It is a good idea to send your press file to journalists who responded but did not come to your stand. Sending a small thank you letter to those who did shows that you are interested in their work and look forward to working with them again in future. Try to stay in touch with them until you attend your next trade show in Düsseldorf. Bear in mind that there might well be something to say about your products and company development between events, too, although this needs to be really interesting.

It is hard to evaluate the success of press activity. Even if you have done excellent work, you won’t necessarily see your company on the front pages of all the major publications.

But maybe you noticed during the show that journalists showed a greater interest in your company than at previous shows or that questions were asked based on in-depth knowledge. This is also proof of the success of your press activity.

You must always remember one thing when assessing what you have done: press activity demands a lot of patience, and you can’t expect the entire press contingency to take the information you are offering at your first attempt in this field. You will only develop positive public opinion for your company and increase confidence in the performance capability of your products if you provide the media with a constant stream of factual information and continue to maintain the contacts you have made. This means that the success of your press activity can only be evaluated over the long term.
How the Messe Düsseldorf press department works

Messe Düsseldorf sees working with the international press as extremely important. The press team begins work a long time in advance of a trade show. Working with Messe Düsseldorf offices overseas, the appropriate press details are obtained and updated as required. As already explained, the relevant trade journals are the most important contacts to have, especially overseas. However, depending on the type and content of individual trade shows, all other types of media will be contacted, such as business magazines, daily papers, radio and TV.

A continuous series of reports on all aspects of the trade show and economic and social significance of the relevant sector is generated for circulation by the press department. These are also made available to journalists alongside image material and lots of other information about the show by the online press services.

Press activity is supplemented by specialist articles, which the press department commissions from specialist journalists. They address current industry developments that will be topical at the trade show. Experts from the relevant industrial associations or sponsor organisations and Messe Düsseldorf will be on hand at press conferences at home and abroad to provide information and answer questions.

All the important information and a selection of images are also made available in the online press area for each trade show.

Radio and TV are alerted to the trade show through targeted media-specific information. Special appointments and tours of the show for photographers and TV crews bring the show into focus and put it in front of a wide audience.

“What is all this for?”

Press activity is a vital aspect of raising awareness of a trade show on the international stage. Professionals from around the world find out about trade shows that are important to their sector from the press, encouraging them to come to Düsseldorf. And this is what makes your attendance at the show as an exhibitor worthwhile: experts come to the event, giving you the opportunity to present your products and services to them and do business with them. This means that the work of the Messe Düsseldorf press department helps every individual exhibitor directly, even if individual companies or products are not highlighted in particular.

We can tell you the dates and locations of press conferences at home or abroad which will be held before a trade show. Please be aware that some overseas press conferences for major capital goods trade shows take place as much as a year before the actual event.

Inform any specialist journalists with whom you or your overseas branches have a good relationship about these press conferences.
The services we can provide for you

The Messe Düsseldorf press department has put a package of services together to support your trade show press activity. We offer you the following services via our Online Order System, for which you will receive log-in details immediately after official admission to the show.

7.1 Trade press list
We will be happy to provide you with the latest contact details for the most important trade journals at home and abroad. This list should help you with your own press activity and enable you to approach the relevant print media in a targeted way.

7.2 Press releases
Newspapers and trade journals are the ideal communication vehicles and you should make good use of them. Your greatest opportunity is to send press releases providing information on new products and innovative services and background details on your company. Any materials that you send have the best chance of being published if they are written in a professional language without any advertising content but with plenty of real information. Post your press releases on the Internet portal of the relevant trade show. Using your exhibitor log-in, you can upload content in the dedicated “Your company on the portal” area. This exhibitor presentation platform offers you plenty of ways to present your company online free of charge. A comprehensive company profile with a photo and/or full product information will raise your profile with the media, customers and any other interested parties.

In our experience, this service is very popular with the press who use it to produce an initial report as a preview of any innovations and further developments to be expected and use existing reports as a professional guide to the show itself. Anyone failing to take this small amount of trouble by using this – free – service will soon give the impression that they have nothing interesting to say.

We are obviously aware of the following concern: companies that are planning to present an important innovation at a trade show often fear that, by informing the press first, the “wow effect” of their own presentation will be lost. When launching a new product on the market, of course you need to consider when and how you can do this to achieve maximum coverage. But you should not forget that the whole idea is to attract potential buyers for the product. Trade show visitors are just such potential buyers, although they are confronted with an overwhelming number of products on offer at a trade show.

7.3 Photo-shoots/TV crew tours
Product information provided by exhibitors is also of course passed on to the relevant trade show press officers. It might seem obvious, but:

we can only pass on the information that we actually receive.

This means that we can only use information in our discussions with journalists, when putting together suggested topics for radio and TV and when selecting suitable items for photo-shoots and TV coverage if we have received it in good time. For the latter activities – photo-shoots and TV crew tours – we need detailed descriptions of exhibits so that we can assess whether products look good visually and are of broad consumer interest.

Even if it is not possible to submit a product report by the deadline, exhibitors should still inform the press department as soon as possible about their exhibits and any special activities happening during the show (e.g. well-known personalities visiting their stand).

However, you need to be aware that editorial departments, trade journals and TV broadcasters will make their own choice of exhibits from the reports provided. Just as is the case with you and your own PR activities, we can only provide the material – there is no guarantee. But if journalists come to you based on the information they have received beforehand: make the most of the opportunity! Tell them all they need to know.

Be prepared to put up with the – mostly minor – inconveniences of a photo-shoot or TV crew filming!

Photo-shoots or TV crew filming often happen the day before the show opens, but don’t worry if these disrupt your schedule for setting up your stand: you will be the envy of all your competitors in terms of the benefits you will see from a report on the TV or photo in the daily paper!

7.4 Press guides
The press department produces a press guide for journalists for every trade show in Düsseldorf. Journalists make good use of this brochure as a guide for their work, and it contains:

– Dates and times of all the press conferences held during the show.

– The names of all the representatives of the companies exhibiting who are available to journalists on the trade stands.

– General information or each show, names of press team members and information on the service provided for journalists.
Long before the start of the show, you will certainly have thought about whether to take advantage of the presence of a large number of specialist journalists by holding a company press conference. We have already told you about the criteria for deciding whether or not to hold a company press conference.

We are still happy to talk to you in person at any time and help you make your decision, choose the time and place and compile a list of journalists to invite. However, you need to be aware that you are responsible for preparing for and holding the press conference - we can only offer our help.

However, you must always agree the time and place for your event with us – before you send the invitation.

There are two reasons for this. Firstly, we co-ordinate the timings for all the press conferences here in the press department. For example, if two companies suggest the same date and time – which often happens with trade shows with 500 or more exhibitors – they are made aware of the clash immediately and asked to re-arrange the planned conferences. This is very important for both the companies involved and the journalists. Many journalists plan their day at the show based on the exhibitor press conferences announced in the press guide.

We also announce the time and place again in the press centre on the day of the conference.

When you send us your request to announce your press conference, we also ask you to provide us with the names of one or more staff members who will available throughout the show to talk to journalists. These details will be published in the press guide, ensuring that journalists who are interested in your products are treated professionally and not just dispatched quickly through ignorance. We have already mentioned that the person appointed as the press contact of course needs to know the company inside out and have the necessary skills to handle critical questions.

7.5 Press pigeon-holes

Nearly every journalist who comes to the trade show also comes to the press centre. As an exhibitor, you can benefit from this facility by hiring a press pigeon-hole for displaying your press releases and press folders. You will also find an order form for this on the online order system.

The pigeon-holes are right at the entrance to the press centre, showing the names of the exhibiting companies in alphabetical order.

You should only put press material in the pigeon-holes – no leaflets or photos for advertising purposes.

If you have supplies of your press releases in a number of language versions, you should hire the appropriate number of pigeon-holes and identify them clearly. Press pigeon-holes provide you with the opportunity to reach journalists outside your stand and interest them in your products.
Accreditation

Journalists wanting to attend a trade show in Düsseldorf are provided with a press card – however, only if they have provided proof of official press status.

Press cards are only issued on presentation of a valid press pass or editorial department authorisation.

The choice isn’t always easy, and we are quite strict about issuing press cards and accepting the various authorisation documents. Our aim is to ensure that people coming to your stand with a Messe Düsseldorf press card are worthy of your time. We work almost exclusively with top-class media representatives. Over the years, this has resulted in high quality reporting, even in the specialist media. We want it to stay that way, and even improve.

“Quality is the measure of all things”: this doesn’t just apply to our events, but to press activity, too. So when a representative of the media arrives at your stand, please make sure that they have a Messe Düsseldorf press card or that they can present our annual press card as proof of ID:

As no accreditation system is perfect, the press department makes this one request: if you are in any doubt that someone with a press card really is a journalist or somebody turns out to be an advertising representative or similar, please inform the relevant press office and we will take care of it. Of course, it goes without saying that accredited journalists are all important partners: for us - we rely on them for obtaining the desired publicity for each show, and for you - in your efforts to raise awareness of and achieve success for your company and products.

It is therefore a good idea to make use of the fact that many media representatives wear the press card with pride. Talk to them and give them a press folder, provide them with details of any innovations your company is exhibiting at the show. Chance meetings like this can turn into valuable contacts. However, don’t be discouraged if a journalist fails to show any interest. In such a segmented press landscape, journalists are often only responsible for certain niche areas of an industry sector, and therefore only interested in certain aspects of a trade show.

8.1 Looking after journalists

Messe Düsseldorf offers accredited journalists a comprehensive service – this is one of the reasons why we set such high standards for accreditation. In the press centre itself, to which only media representatives have access, we provide specialist and business information about the show and the industry sectors involved, notification of congress events, seminars and special shows, photos, exhibitor reports, press guides and catalogues. We also provide fully equipped work rooms.

W-LAN connection, phones and PCs with Internet access provide rapid access to editorial teams around the world.

On request, the press team will provide the contact details of interviewees and experts for holding background discussions. Last but not least, journalists use the press centre to take a break from a very hectic day at the show, talk to colleagues from home and abroad or simply to enjoy a bite to eat.
Advice for special
types of media

Trade shows in Düsseldorf also offer an opportunity for electronic media. Naturally, they have different requirements from print media/printed press publications. Radio is looking for interesting interviewees and innovations. Where TV is concerned, visual impact and news value are also extremely important. A stand that is not very attractive or an item that won't look good on TV are hardly going to make a TV crew want to film them.

9.1 Electronic media: TV/radio

You need to decide if there is any great PR value in TV or radio coverage. Even if it ultimately also means extra work, assist the TV, radio and photo journalists involved.

Be co-operative, make sure your stand is ready and give them access to take pictures/film.

Any costs that might be incurred will be far outweighed by the benefits.

9.2 Private radio / TV

Private radio and TV stations are worth a special mention. Programmes are not always editorial in style, but often purely advertising. This means: even if representatives of these types of media have a Messe Düsseldorf press card, they might actually be responsible for advertising. Individual exhibitors need to decide for themselves whether it is worthwhile buying an advertising slot.

All the Messe Düsseldorf press department can do is give you a few pointers on this:

- Private broadcasters often commission freelance production companies. Find out which programme they are producing material for. Ask to see the production order from the radio broadcasting company.

- Assuming that you have agreed to production going ahead: draw up a “purchasing contract” establishing the following points:
  a) Name of broadcaster
  b) Programme title
  c) Transmission time (date and time).

- Find out audience figures for the programme or broadcaster (range).

Private TV coverage is expensive. It is therefore very important to assess carefully beforehand whether this type of project is worth the investment.

9.3 Editorial and advertising business

The editorial work of the various media is totally separate from any advertising, and it is with good reason that many companies don’t place press and advertising activity with the same company.

The facts:

- Journals and newspapers survive on customer advertising.
- Long-term editorial reporting is only viable for media with a sound financial footing. For this reason alone, advertising is an absolute necessity.
- An advert is good support for editorial content, raising awareness of the products discussed.
- Advertising and editorial coverage have different objectives. An advert cannot replace journalistic content, and an article cannot replace an advert.

It is not always the case, but it often happens that adverts are linked to editorials and vice versa. It is your decision whether you want to place this type of advertising for your company, but please consider the following aspects:

Readers are potential buyers for your products and they want to find out about the market that they are interested in well before a trade show happens. They will only buy and read a publication if they are sure that the expertise and judgement of the (specialist) journalists involved in generating and processing the material are the basis on which the editorial piece has been selected and presented. If there is any crisis of confidence in this regard, both sides – exhibitor and publisher - stand to lose heavily.

As an exhibitor, you need to know that (specialist) editorial departments are independent in journalistic terms. PR activity can only be successful if you take the long view and avoid an approach aimed at short-term success.

Again, the Messe Düsseldorf press department makes this request: Generally, only accredited journalists will receive one of our press cards, but it is not always possible for us to distinguish between a journalist and an advertising representative. Please let us know if someone wearing a press pass offers you advertising or other paid services. (You will find names and phone numbers in your exhibitor information pack and on the Internet).

It is in our interest that people presenting themselves as journalists at your stand are in fact journalists.
9.4 Publisher’s inserts, special pages, supplements and brochures etc.

A number of journals and newspapers produce various inserts, special pages, supplements, magazines and brochures for certain target audiences. It is quite normal for the publisher instead of the editorial department to approach you about an opportunity to take out advertising. You must make up your own mind, of course, but here is some information on which to base your decision:

- Circulation figure for the journal or newspaper
- Range (international, national, regional or local)
- How well is the newspaper/periodical known?
- Is the planned target audience appropriate and big enough for your company?
- Technical inserts: does the subject really reflect your product range?
- Overseas issues: is the country/region in question a target market for you?
- Has the subject been addressed to a comprehensive, sufficient and professional degree?
- What are the costs?

If you believe that the investment is worthwhile, by all means accept the offer.

9.5 If opinions differ

What ultimately appears in a publication doesn’t always match the author’s exact intentions. In other words: you might feel misunderstood or misinterpreted. The journalist might have a different opinion from the company and give the product a less positive assessment. What do you do if this happens?

First of all: it is a fundamental quality of a free and independent press not to be told what to think. You then need to ask yourself the extent to which what they have written might be true or justified, whether your own product description might have been too positive, whether you might have blown your own trumpet a bit too much (the all-too-easy use of superlatives – the best, biggest, and most beautiful! Unique! World first! etc. is just asking to be viewed by journalists with a highly critical eye).

But if you believe you have come out of it too badly, you should contact the relevant editor. Gently tell them that things might also be viewed differently and try to talk about it amicably, calling on their sense of journalistic fairness. This is also recommended where the report in question has circulated false information about the relevant product or serious transmission, comprehension or printing errors have distorted the report in such a way that readers are highly unlikely to buy the product.

If you leave it to the editorial department to suggest how the error might be rectified, you will not only save ruffling too many feathers – you will also avoid a confrontation and possibly burning your bridges.

Just remember that in such – admittedly annoying – situations: press activity and PR are also a matter of trust.

Only if, despite all good intentions, nothing can be done and all options for an amicable settlement have been exhausted or you still feel that unreasonable errors remain, your only option may be to have recourse to the law (In the Federal Republic of Germany: Federal Länder press laws) and to demand that your own counter statement be printed. Remember that opinions cannot serve as counter statements. You are only allowed to correct “False facts and assertions”.

However, this should be an absolute exception!

9.6 Advice for interviews

Interviews vary, and there are just as many different interview techniques and procedures as there are different types of media. There are four types of interview in our field:

a) Trade journal interview
b) Daily and business press interview
c) Radio interview
d) TV interview.

Types a) and b) are often not even interviews in the sense of an actual “Game of Q & A”. The editorial department is looking for written answers on product range, product/company policy or on a certain, possibly tricky, subject (e.g. ecology). If it is an actual conversation, either your company spokesperson, or ideally a member of senior management, takes part in an interview before, during or after the trade show.

Please always remember: in a spoken interview, you always run the risk of saying something you didn’t really mean to. Sometimes, editorial departments (trade journals for the most part) will allow you to check the interview text again for accuracy. You should take advantage of this opportunity.

In other situations, you need to trust the journalist’s duty of care. In the Federal Republic of Germany, editorial departments are obliged to have the text of the interview approved for publication by the interviewee. If you want to benefit from this, it is important to be aware that it is only for the purposes of correcting content to prevent errors or misunderstandings. Please do not try to change aspects of the style or language – after all you have chosen to express your thoughts in words. If you are not sure what to say, be aware of the possible consequences and don’t do it!
A radio or TV interview is quite different. Yes, it happens a lot less often, but if it does, be careful! Whatever you say to the microphone or camera goes - especially in a live interview!

So:

- Prepare yourself thoroughly.
- Go through the questions with the editor beforehand.
- Find out the context in which the interview is to be broadcast.
- Write down what you want to say.
- Check that the time allowed is enough for you.
- Say the most important thing at the beginning, short phrases increase emphasis and keep you from losing your thread.
- No “gobbledygook” or idioms – the audience needs to be able to understand you.
- Say your piece standing up – it makes breathing easier.
- Radio relies on variety of tone – make your statements short and sweet.
- Speak calmly and evenly, but not in a monotone.

For TV interviews, please also consider the following:

- If possible, let them apply a bit of make-up for you! A shining forehead will not look good later on screen.
- Check your hair/suit/socks/dress/tie.
- Stand still, don’t fidget and don’t let your eyes wander about.
- If you are seated during the interview, don’t lean back – it can easily make you seem arrogant.

The interviewer will draw your attention to any special points, so talk through the whole situation with them.
You will find a template for scheduling your press activity below. Different types of event and content require different timetabling procedures, and you need to take this into account when drawing up your schedule. And your individual corporate press concept will also of course have an impact on your scheduling. For example, if you want to conduct press activity abroad, you need to allow more time for the initiative (and a bigger budget).

Our template therefore provides a rough schedule for the stages required for successful trade show press activity. You will need to modify it with your own individual stages as required.

10.1 Template for scheduling a press appearance before a trade show

12 months before:
- Compile a press distribution list for the relevant target audience and update previous address lists. Where necessary, use the address service providers already referred to.
- Decide at this point which member of staff will be the contact for trade show press activity. (If you want to arrange for an agency to do this, now is the time.)

6 months before:
- Produce initial basic information for the trade press.
- Produce a rough procedural plan (set of measures) for your trade show press activity.

3 months before:
- If you already have important information for the trade press, you can hold an initial press conference to announce that you will be at the trade show.
- Inform the trade press so that they can produce a preliminary report on your new products.
- If required, appoint a press cuttings service for your chosen publications.
- Decide on the time and date for your press conference during the show with the Messe Düsseldorf press department (check the date!).
- Order your press pigeon-hole in the Messe Düsseldorf press centre.
- Inform the press office of the name of the person in charge of your press activity.
- Compile your press folders.
- Arrange for translations where required. Materials should be available in German and English as a minimum.
- Have professional photos taken of your exhibits.

3 to 4 weeks before:
- Invite the trade and business press to your stand/trade show press conference.

2 weeks before:
- Inform your regional and local daily papers that you will be at the show and offer to send them your information.
- Check again that everything is ready (press folders etc.).
- Tell the press office if you can provide visually attractive images for the photo-shoot on the day before the show. (Remember- your stand must look good!)

From 1 week before until the show ends:
- Tell the press department about anything newsworthy, curious or interesting for the show news flash (VIP visit to your stand or similar).

After the show:
- Look out for mentions in the press.
- Fulfil any promises made on your stand to provide specific information (special information, case studies, articles, interviews and the like) or issue a comment.
- Send a press folder to any journalists who did not come to your stand.
- Send journalists your own post-show report. Send a letter to journalists who came to your stand, thanking them for their interest.
- Press articles will lead to reader enquiries. Make sure that they are answered promptly, skilfully and comprehensively. Stay on the ball. A contact not followed through can mean a sales opportunity lost right from the start.
- Stay in touch with the media until you attend your next show in Düsseldorf. Enter the names of the journalists who visited you during the show in your distribution lists.
Press conference checklist

Press conferences

Actioned  Completed

1 Scheduling based on:
   1.1 availability of key speakers
   1.2 editorial focal points of interest/ availability of journalists

2 Programme
   2.1 Topics
   2.2 Speaker selection
   2.3 Plan of execution
   2.4 Briefing of key speakers
   2.5 Appointment of moderator

3 Selection of location
   3.1 Room size
   3.2 Seating plan
   3.3 Catering
   3.4 Lighting
   3.5 Power points
   3.6 Cloakroom
   3.7 Phone
   3.8 Internet

4 Costing

5 Secure the venue

6 Press invitations
   6.1 Invitations/reply cards/forms
   6.2 Follow-up/phone or e-mail

7 Staff
   7.1 Hostesses
   7.2 Technical operating personnel
   7.3 Interpreter if required

8 Support materials
   8.1 Posters
   8.2 Models
   8.3 PowerPoint
   8.4 Videos
   8.5 Multimedia

9 Event schedule for all participants

10 Press folder
   10.1 Press information
   10.2 Speeches
   10.3 Photos
   10.4 Leaflets
   10.5 Event programmes
   10.6 Graphics
   10.7 Decision on number of copies required
   10.8 Photocopying/production of artwork
   10.9 Production of CDs or USB sticks
   10.10 Compilation of folders
   10.11 Press give away

11 Send press folders to journalists who didn’t attend if you know they will be interested
10.3 Sample press release