

GLOBAL VIEW notes



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Top Resources for Finding International Trade Show Contractors



By Michelle Bruno

It's a big world out there. And, if you are a U.S. exhibitor searching for a company to perform a very specific service in a particular part of the world, it may take some time. The good news is that there are lots of resources and people available to offer suggestions and make recommendations. Here is a list of resources for finding companies to fill in the blanks of a successful international exhibit program.

Trade associations

There are two ways to approach the use of trade associations to find a show contractor. International associations based outside the U.S. with members that include show contractors are a logical place to start. There are also global trade associations that govern the contracting specialties, such as exhibit builders ([EDPA](#) and [IFES](#)), international freight forwarders ([IELA](#)) and audio-visual companies ([infoComm](#)). UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry maintains a comprehensive online [list](#) of general and specialty associations around the world.

Trade publications

There are a number of digital magazines and newsletters that cover international topics. Some carry advertising and directory listings from show contractors that provide services to companies exhibiting outside the U.S. including [Exhibition News Handbook](#), [Exhibition News](#), [Exhibition World](#) and [TSNN's Asia Exhibition News](#).

Online directories

Many international trade show directories also include a directory of specialty contractors. Two groups based in the U.S., Exhibitor Magazine and Trade Show News Network, provide online directories for global contractors: [Exhibitor Magazine's FindIt Marketplace](#) and [TSNN's global vendor search tool](#).

International trade show consultants

There are a number of experienced and reputable consultants who provide services primarily to international exhibition organizers and trade associations; however,

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they are also familiar with the leading exhibition contractors in various parts of the world as well. If they can't answer a specific question immediately, they can certainly tap into their own networks of overseas contacts to find a solution. The list includes Cherif Moujabber of [Creative Expos & Conferences](#), Steve Sind of [Global Event Strategies](#) and Stephanie Selesnick of [International Trade Information](#).

Trade show organizers

The organizer of the specific trade show that a company chooses to participate in can also be a wealth of information on contractors. Often, they have selected "official" or "recommended" contractors in the various specialties, but they are also familiar with other contractors operating in the region. In addition, the U.S.-based offices and sales representatives of international organizers, such as [Messe Düsseldorf](#) for example, often make recommendations about contractors.

Other contractors

International contractors are always on site and often partner with other specialty contractors (exhibit houses work with electrical, audio-visual and customs brokers, for example). They can offer behind-the-scenes advice on which companies to use and which contractors have the best service and reputation among their peers.

Other exhibitors

Many exhibiting companies post their international trade show schedules on their corporate websites. A Google search on the trade show name will often turn up exhibitors planning to participate in the show being searched. Other exhibitors—especially those with international experience—are often the best source of information on service contractors.

LinkedIn groups

Exhibitors asking for recommendations are a daily occurrence on LinkedIn. Service providers as well as their

clients are only too happy to address an inquiry. Asking for suggestions in LinkedIn groups that focus on tradeshow is one option, but there are also several groups dedicated to the issues that concern contractors directly including "Event & Exhibition Subcontractors World Wide." Exhibitors can post a question in the discussion area or simply search the members' list and connect with companies directly.

Industry trade shows

Most of the leading trade associations (and at least one publisher) related to trade shows produce their own events showcasing members. For exhibitors, the leading event is [Exhibitor](#). Although Exhibitor's roster includes mostly companies providing services for domestic shows, increasingly more international companies are showing up on the trade show floor. Another show of interest is [EDPA's Access Showcase](#), which includes the leading exhibit houses in the U.S. and some global producers.

Google

Rather than using general search terms like "international freight forwarder" (which can lead to a very long list of companies that may or may not do business in a specific region or don't necessarily specialize in trade shows), exhibitors should search on the show name. Contractors often list the international shows they will be providing service for and their names come up in searches related to those particular shows.

By asking enough questions, exhibiting companies can assemble a list of show contractors that they can contact to obtain information and quotations. Consulting with multiple sources at the same time is a great way to see which company names consistently "float" to the top. None of these ad hoc resources replaces a formal RFP process, but they're a great start.

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