



First Time Exhibiting

Your step-by-step guide to exhibiting for the first time.



So, you've decided to exhibit. "What do I need to do next?" you may ask.

Well, exhibiting can seem daunting and overwhelming at first but, as over 80% of exhibitors agree, face-to-face marketing delivers far better ROI than other activities, so you're on to a winner!

Our job is to help you get the most from your time at an event, so we've made this guide with you in mind.

Inside you'll find all of our knowledge in an easy, step-by-step guide to exhibiting success. We've even thrown in some hints and tips to help you along the way, all built around a handy timeline to help you plan your time as effectively and efficiently as possible.

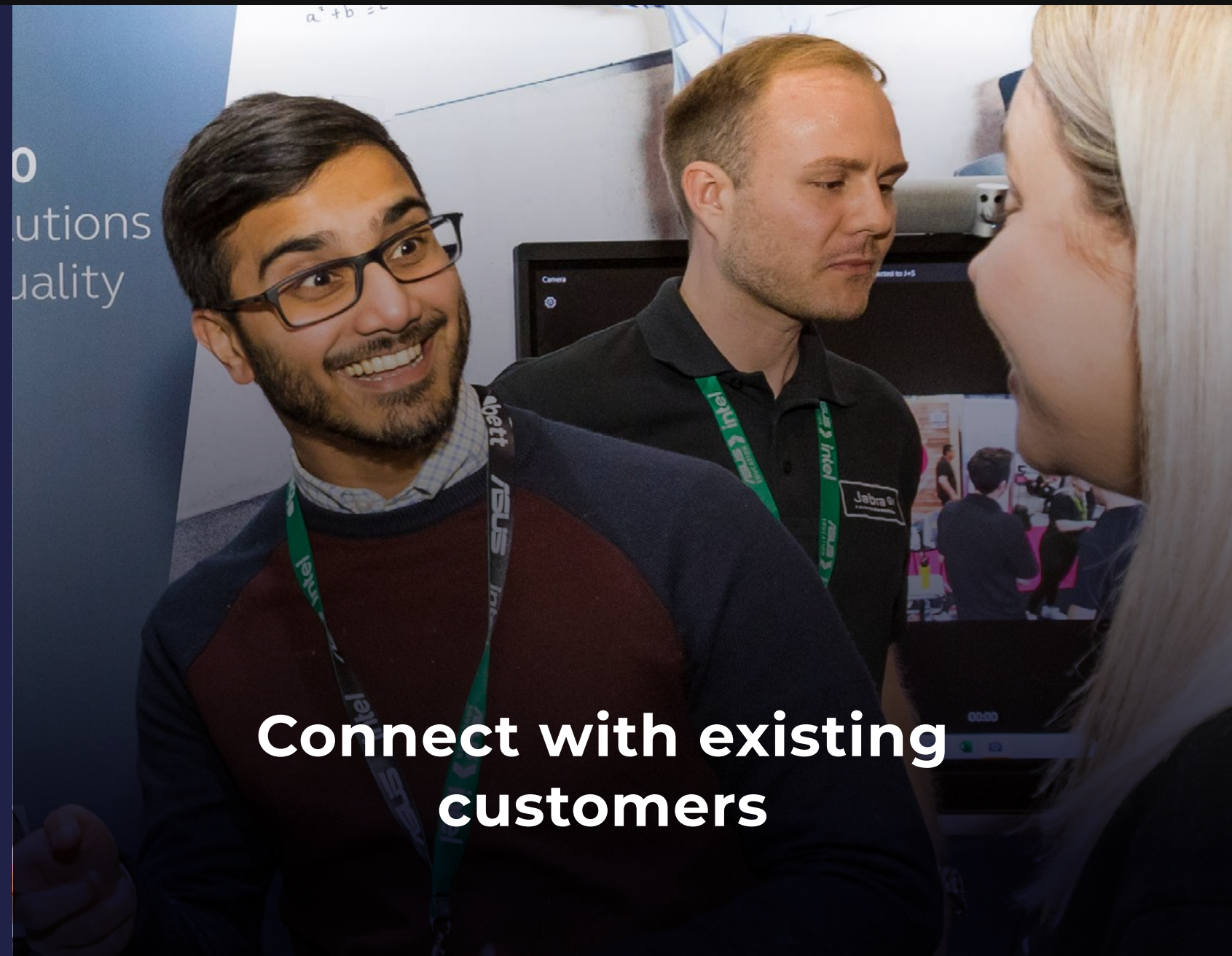
So, let's get started...



Why are you exhibiting?

It's important to decide on this right at the beginning of the process as it forms the foundation of your entire event marketing program.

It will dictate everything from your theme, to your furniture, and even your pre and post show marketing campaigns! Launching a new product, networking, hospitality, lead generation... the list is endless, so you need to pick one core objective and build around it.



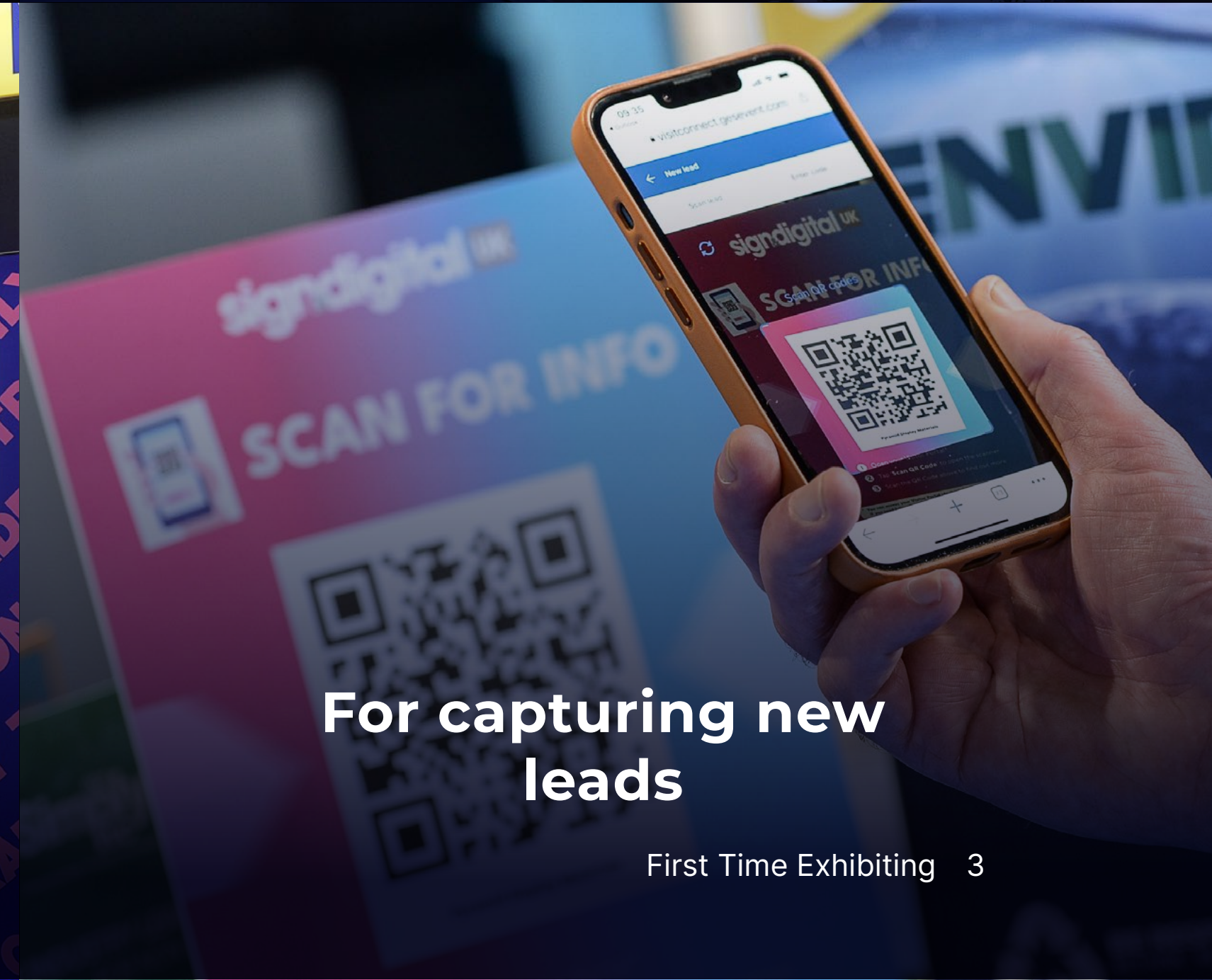
Connect with existing customers



To launch a new product



Generate brand awareness



For capturing new leads



Decide how you will engage with visitors

How are you going to exhibit? What activities will you undertake to meet your objective?

Deciding this now will help you start to outline the layout of your stand. Let's take the example of meeting with clients – perhaps you'd like to hold relaxed conversations over hot beverages?

You'll need to set aside space for seating (maybe some sofas or bar tables) and a bar area with a power supply for your coffee maker, plus plumbing for your sink. These features would help build the overall layout of your stand for you to plan around.

Research

What is your budget and what needs to be achieved within this budget? Your event supplier will be able to give you some ideas on what will work to achieve your objectives.

Once you have some supply quotes you can factor them into your budget, but leave yourself plenty of breathing space for additional marketing materials and contingencies.





First impressions last a lifetime

This old adage is very true when it comes to exhibiting. Investing in some branded clothing that ties in with the look and feel of your stand makes visitors think you're a quality outfit with an eye for detail.

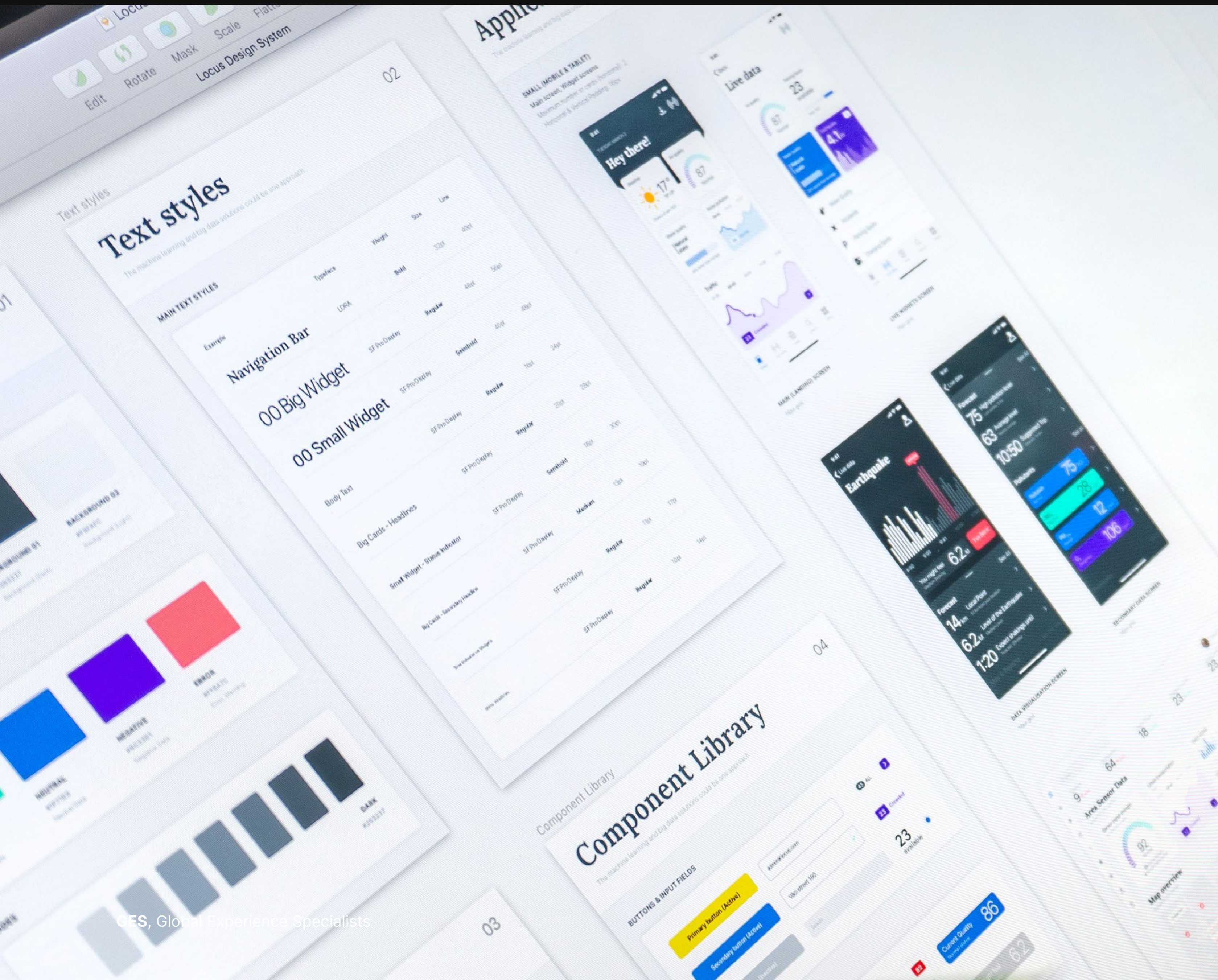
But don't undo all of your hard work by chewing while you speak to visitors... unfortunately, we've seen it done before.

You have to be in it to win it

Standing idly on your stand and waiting for people to come to you is kind of like angling for different fish with the same bait.

You need to make your presence felt so that visitors come over, so try running competitions and games. Be inviting and engaging!





Brand guidelines

If you've already got this part nailed down and you have your guidelines then pass Go and collect your £200 (figuratively speaking of course), if you don't have your guidelines don't worry, there are lots of helpful guides out there (we've hand picked a great article for you below).

Having your brand guidelines already done speeds up the entire process, giving you a paint-by-numbers map to design your stand with.

The graphics process begins

Contact your graphics supplier now to give yourself enough time to discuss your requirements and the options available to you.

You may only need some roll-up or pop-up banners that you can transport yourself or a bespoke set of graphics can be designed and printed, following your guidelines. Getting in touch now also gives you time to make sure all of your proofs are correct and ready for the opening day.

[You'll be amazed how panel graphics can transform your space.](#)





Less is more

Think of an exhibition as a giant market place, you wouldn't buy from a vendor if you couldn't tell what they're selling.

By their nature, exhibitions are very busy so your visitors only have a couple of seconds to see your stand as they shuffle past.

Don't fall into the trap of overloading your stand with massive posters full of text, one or two clear messages or infographics can be just as effective.

The best things in life are free

People are like magpies; put some shiny freebies out and they will come. USB sticks work well. You can brand them, you can Pantone them, you can pre-load them with case studies of your companies wins, and **EVERYONE** uses them.

Can't afford USB sticks? You can find branded cookies, branded water, branded ice lollies, branded ice cream and even cocktails!

Make your visitors work for their freebies and you can have a steady stream of potential leads coming in, you can do that by placing smaller giveaways (like pens) on the periphery of your stand to act as hooks and the nicer stuff farther in to reward those that show interest.





Electrics

Anything on your stand which uses power will need a power supply, in the majority of cases there are no pre-existing mains power sockets on your stand. You may also need to order lighting for your stand if you require it, as often the only lighting provided at an event is that at the venue (ceiling lights, sunlight etc.)

Contact your electrical team for help with ordering and tips on what would really work for you, they're a massive knowledge resource so make the most of them.

Order your electrical supplies sooner rather than later! Generally speaking, if you place your order early you'll get a 20% early bird discount. So why wait?

Furnish your stand

You can use a whole host of options to complement your stand branding. From furniture and floor coverings, to shelving and storage areas, most items come in a variety of colours and styles.

Just try to get your order in as early as possible so you get the pick of the stock. If you're aiming to build the ultimate brand experience, be sure to ask about branded furniture!





Lead capture

There's nothing worse than spending a fortune on your stand just to forget your visitors after the event, so decide how you plan on capturing leads.

Most trade shows make visitors register and arrive with passes, which you can scan and get back when the show finishes. Not all events do this, so make sure you create a lead capture form you can print out and fill in.

Collateral damage

Giveaways help to ensure you stand a chance of being remembered after the event. Printed collateral like hand-outs and brochures take time to print, so it might be worth looking into getting that done now.

Although, we recommend the sustainable alternative of handing out electronic versions of your information via file sharing on devices, you then only have to pay for your hand out to be made once and you can distribute it as much as you like!

TOP TIP

You're heading into the final stages of putting your stand together so it makes sense now to take a step back and look at what you're doing. At the same time, you might think about the little details you can add to your stand to make the difference and engage with your audience. This could include anything from incorporating a multi device charger into your stand for your guests (great if you're delivering an App/ device based collateral), to giveaways.





Logistics

Now your event is really starting to take shape! Get in touch with your event logistics supplier to get your items on-site.

They can navigate the tricky waters of getting your items to your stand in time for the show and deal with any heavy lifting if necessary. Parking at venues can be a real pain (or very expensive) so let the pros do the hard work.

Standard electrical prices will shortly kick in. Have you submitted your requirements?

Begin invitation campaign

Who are you planning to see on your stand? If you have contacts you'd like to see, get them to come along! Don't rely on people just knowing that the event you're attending is happening, you can play a part in attracting your own visitors.

Do you want to invite suppliers or existing customers? Do you have a list of prospects already? You can entice visitors to come by sending out invites which play on your branding through the post, or go 21st century and start sending a campaign through social media. Why not add a comment to your email signature?





Brief your stand staff

Who will be working your stand? Have you got the right people for the job? It's easy for visitors to become too intimidated to walk onto your stand, so it's important that you have the right people for the job (and not too many of them!) Make sure that everyone who will be on-site at your stand is singing from the same hymn sheet.

Presenting a consistent brand message to your visitors is important.

Have you informed your staff of the on-site dress code and how they collect leads?

Build process

At this point your stand is being put together by your contractor at the venue. Take this time to prepare yourself for opening day and make sure your travel arrangements are sorted.

At this point, it's also worth getting any venue passes you might need for your on-site team.





The devil makes work

We all own smart phones these days and they're great for capturing leads on-site, but don't fall into the trap of getting distracted by them if foot traffic starts to slow down.

Don't let potential clients/customers pass by because you're too interested in catapulting birds at green pigs!

Attendance is mandatory

Exhibiting is an investment, and you get out what you put in. So why would you pay thousands to have a stand sat there with no one on it?

Keep a presence on your stand, even if you take shifts.





The future is bright

The best way to get your visitor's attention is to get them involved.

All the best theatre productions, exhibition stands and direct marketing pieces have elements of consumer interaction in them to grab the attention of the audience.

A couple of mounted iPads on the side of your stand with a nice demonstration on can highlight who is interested, if you're busy with another visitor they can keep new visitors interested until you have a chance to come over, and you can also use them to capture leads.

Gather and review leads

You've worked hard to collect your leads from your show, now it's time to get them all together into a database and start using them. Rank them into a prioritised list. Make sure you action all leads.

Follow-up time

Gently reinforcing your brand through social media is great, but you'll want to personally engage with your leads too.

Give your contacts a quick ring just so they know you haven't forgotten about them (and so they don't forget you).

You don't need to jump right into selling anything now, just a short conversation about the show will do, but if you can get straight to business then that's always a win!





Announcements!

Social media is great for post-show reinforcement. You can search for and add all of your leads on to your chosen social media platform (Twitter and LinkedIn are great for this). If you were running any competitions, contact the winner(s) via social media.

How did we do?

It's soon reaching the time where you need to evaluate your show performance and see if you've made a return on your investment or objectives.

To help with the case, you could send a survey out to your leads asking how you did, what they liked/disliked about your offering etc. Keep it short, 5-10 short questions max!

Social media

We touched on this earlier, but now you can start delivering more generic content to your database. Maybe post a video to your entire network via YouTube of yourselves on-site and how it went, just in case any of your contacts couldn't make the show. You could write a supporting blog and push them all with some help from Twitter.

Measure the success

Now you've had time to dig into your leads and hopefully get some feedback on your performance, you can report on how successful your show was. Identify what worked well and what didn't work so well, you can then distil these elements into your next event to make an even better stand next time round.





Ready to learn more?

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