



SUPPORTING
WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS
IN BC

Getting the Most From a Trade Show

A MODERN GUIDE FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Introduction

Trade shows are powerful opportunities to showcase your brand, meet potential customers, and build partnerships. For Canadian women entrepreneurs and small business owners, they can also serve as a platform to grow confidence, gain exposure, and make meaningful connections. With today's tools and digital strategies, it's easier than ever to make a trade show a successful part of your business growth plan.

1. Pre-Show Planning

Set Clear Goals

Start by identifying what you want to achieve. Is it sales? Brand exposure? Market research? Lead generation? Having a clear purpose will shape your strategy and help you measure success.

Create a Realistic Budget

Factor in booth fees, travel, accommodations, promotional materials, marketing, and giveaways. Include a contingency fund for unexpected costs.

Choose the Right Trade Show

Look for shows that attract your target audience. Check past exhibitor lists, demographics, and event themes. Consider women-focused expos and events that prioritize diversity and inclusion.

Design an Engaging Booth

Use professional signage, clean layouts, and branded elements that reflect your business values. Consider interactive displays and multimedia (video loops, slideshows) to attract attention.

2. Promote Ahead of Time

Social Media Campaigns

Announce your participation across Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, and TikTok. Create a countdown, share sneak peeks, and use the event hashtag to join the conversation.

Email Marketing

Send invites to your existing clients and subscribers. Include your booth number, reasons to visit, and any special offers or contests.

Landing Page or Website Banner

Add a dedicated section to your website about your trade show appearance. Include a call to action to book a meeting or sign up for updates.

Digital Ads

Use targeted ads on Google and social platforms to reach potential attendees based on location and interests.

3. Use Modern Tools On-Site

QR Codes

Let visitors scan to access your catalog, website, or contest entry. This saves paper and ensures you collect contact info easily.

Capture Leads Effectively

Use a tablet, app, or QR form to collect names, emails, and key info (interests, notes). Ensure that all data collection complies with Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL). Obtain express or implied consent to follow up, and clearly state why you are collecting information.

Digital Business Cards

Use apps to share contact info instantly and professionally.

Mobile Payment & POS Options

If selling on-site, make it easy with tap-to-pay and mobile checkout tools.

Event Networking Apps

Use event apps to schedule meetings, join chats, and find key contacts before and during the show.

4. Packing for the Trade Show

Being prepared with the right materials will reduce stress and help your booth run smoothly. Here's a modern packing checklist:

Essential Booth Supplies

- Business cards (physical and digital options)
- Signage and banners
- Product samples or display items
- Printed marketing materials (flyers, brochures)
- Promotional giveaways
- Technology (tablet, laptop, chargers, power strips)
- Lighting or extension cords
- Branded tablecloths or backdrops

Administrative Tools

- Lead capture forms or digital sign-up tools
- Pens, notepads, tape, scissors, clips
- Schedule and contact list for the event
- Hand sanitizer and cleaning wipes

Personal Comfort

- Water bottle and snacks
- Comfortable shoes
- Extra clothing layers
- Breath mints and hand lotion

Optional Add-Ons

- Portable speaker for ambiance
- Portable Wi-Fi device
- Floor mat for standing comfort

Pro Tip: Create a reusable packing list in Google Sheets or Trello to check off items before every event.

5. Stand Out and Engage

Be Approachable and Enthusiastic

Your energy sets the tone. Greet visitors with a smile, ask open-ended questions, and share your story authentically.

Create an Experience

Incorporate interactive elements like samples, live demos, or contests. Consider offering a service on the spot or a hands-on activity.

Post on Social Media

Share behind-the-scenes photos, live updates, and short videos from your booth to draw attention and create FOMO (fear of missing out). Use the event hashtag, tag collaborators, and invite people to stop by in real time.

Offer Branded Giveaways

Choose items that are useful and reflect your brand, like reusable bags, planners, or wellness items. Digital downloads or discount codes work too.

Host a Mini-Session

If allowed, run a short workshop or info session relevant to your expertise.

6. Follow Up Like a Pro

Ensuring that all data collection complies with Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL) during the show allows you to make follow up connections.

Follow Up Promptly

Within a few days, send a thank-you email or message. Personalize it with details from your conversation.



Add to Your CRM

Import contacts into your customer relationship management system and tag them accordingly for future outreach.

Post on Social Media

Share a recap of your experience, photos, and shoutouts to new connections. It helps extend your presence and build credibility.

7. Measure and Reflect

Track Your Results

Compare leads generated, social engagement, sales, or meetings booked to your original goals.

Collect Feedback

Ask team members and booth visitors what worked and what could improve.

Plan for Next Time

Use what you've learned to refine your approach and grow your trade show strategy.

Inspiration from Canadian Women Entrepreneurs

These stories show that preparation, creativity, and follow-through can lead to major opportunities.

- A skincare brand from Vancouver boosted their online sales by 30% after showcasing new products at a women-led wellness expo.
- A Nova Scotia-based tech startup booked three partnerships after running a live demo at a major industry show.
- A Toronto maker landed a national retailer deal after attracting attention with an eco-friendly booth design.

Conclusion

Trade shows are not just about selling - they're about showing up, learning, and connecting. For Canadian women entrepreneurs, they are a chance to amplify your voice, build your network, and create momentum for your business.

With modern tools and a clear plan, your next event could open doors you didn't expect.

