Ready To TRANSFORM Your Store?

SPRINGFAIR
AUTUMNFAIR

SAVE THE HIGH STREET

Retail MAKEOVER MISSION

HOW TO SHOP A TRADE SHOW: YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE

Trade shows can be overwhelming. Thousands of products, hundreds of exhibitors, and only a few days to make smart buying decisions. Whether you're a first-timer or a seasoned buyer, this toolkit will help you make the most of your Spring Fair visit.

Before You Go

SET CLEAR GOALS

Know what you want to achieve before you arrive. Are you looking for new suppliers? Filling gaps in specific categories? Discovering trends? Strengthening existing relationships and seeing first-hand new product ranges from your current suppliers? Setting clear intentions makes every decision easier and keeps you focused.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

- Review the exhibitor list online and create a "must-see" and "want-to-see" list
- Research participating brands and their product lines in advance
- Familiarise yourself with the show floor plan so you know where key exhibitors are located
- Check the show website for special promotions, many exhibitors offer exclusive show discounts, free delivery, or percentage reduction.

PREPARE YOUR BUDGET

Calculate your open-to-buy budget before attending, ensuring you're not overbuying. If sales were down last year, your inventory should reflect that reality. Know your numbers before you start shopping.

SCHEDULE APPOINTMENTS

Reach out to priority suppliers before the show to book meeting times. This guarantees you'll connect with them even during busy periods and shows you're a serious buyer.

PLAN FOR MULTIPLE DAYS (IF POSSIBLE)

If you can stay overnight, use a two-day strategy: Day one for exploring and making your shortlist, then overnight to work out budgets and stock mix, returning day two to place orders with clarity and confidence.

WHAT TO PACK

Comfortable Shoes Are Non-Negotiable. You may average 20,000 steps a day at a trade show, so prioritise comfort over style. Choose shoes with:

- Low heel-to-toe offset for better posture during long standing periods
- Cushioned insoles or gel padding

BRING ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES

- Light, comfortable bag for collecting catalogues and samples (avoid plastic bags that cut into your hands)
- Notepad and pens for taking detailed notes
- Phone charger or portable battery pack
- Business cards
- Water bottle and snacks
- Comfortable, professional clothing with layers (exhibition halls can be heavily air-conditioned

At the Show

WALK THE SHOW FIRST BEFORE BUYING

This is crucial: try to walk all the aisles once before committing to purchases. You'll discover products and suppliers you didn't know existed, allowing you to compare options and make more informed decisions.

PLAN YOUR DAYS WITH BREAKS

Build breaks into your schedule to take advantage of the content on offer. Spring Fair and Autumn Fair feature multiple stages with keynote talks, panel discussions and insights on trends, retail strategy and industry developments, all completely free with your attendance.

Check the full content agenda on the website before you visit and plan which sessions align with your business goals. Use these sessions to reset, learn and gain fresh perspectives for your business.

TAKE DETAILED NOTES

Capture product details, supplier information, lead times, minimum order quantities and terms. With hundreds of exhibitors, these notes will be invaluable when making final decisions.

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Don't be shy about gathering information from exhibitors:

- What are your minimum order quantities?
- What are the carriage/delivery costs?
- Can you split crates to help meet minimum orders with different products?
- What are your payment terms and lead times?
- Do you have any show-exclusive deals or discounts?

THINK ABOUT YOUR MERCHANDISING

As you shop, visualise how products will work together:

- How will this fit into your shop layout and window displays?
- Does this complement your existing product mix?
- Is the seasonality right for your buying timeline?

NETWORK STRATEGICALLYSTRATEGY

Trade shows bring thousands of retailers under one roof, a rare opportunity to connect with:

1. Fellow retailers: Ask what's working in their stores, share insights and learn from each other
2. Exhibitors: Build relationships beyond the transaction; many buyers develop lifelong relationships with suppliers who come to understand their stores and customers
3. Industry experts: Attend networking drinks and happy hours to expand your professional network

BRING BUSINESS CARDS

Have plenty of business cards on hand to exchange with exhibitors, fellow retailers and industry contacts you meet throughout the show.

DON'T RUSH KEY CONVERSATIONS

If a supplier you want to speak with is busy, wait to speak with them rather than thinking you'll return later. You won't want to walk the entire exhibition centre again.

After the Show

FOLLOW UP QUICKLY

Confirm orders as soon as possible after the show while products and vendors are fresh in your mind, and you're fresh in theirs. This also demonstrates professionalism and seriousness as a buyer.

REVIEW AND REFLECT

Go through your notes, catalogues and business cards. Organise them by priority and follow up with any suppliers you want to work with but didn't order from at the show.

SHARE INSIGHTS WITH YOUR TEAM

If multiple people from your company attended, debrief together to share discoveries, compare notes and coordinate your buying strategy.

FINAL TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Pre-register for the event to streamline your arrival
- Stay hydrated and take breaks, exhaustion leads to poor decisions
- Don't be afraid to say no. You can't buy everything, and that's okay
- Trust your instincts, if something feels right for your customers, it probably is
- Remember: relationships matter - the connections you build often prove more valuable than individual orders

Trade shows are one of the most efficient ways to discover new products, compare suppliers and stay ahead of trends, all under one roof. With preparation, comfortable shoes and a strategic approach, Spring Fair can become one of your most productive buying events of the year.