

All About Festivals

How to build your business with flea markets, street fairs, and more.

**How to get more sales
from your booth!**

**Get your customers to
come back again and again**



2 Festivals, street fairs, and flea markets

Special public events such as trade shows, African festivals, and flea markets are great ways to make sales and find new long term customers! This is the main way that people who sell African items make their living.

How these events can help you:

- **You find new customers.**
- **You get exposure** to people you can't meet any other way.
- **You get face-to-face contact** with other store and business owners who may be interested in your products.

These events allow you to show your wares to many people fast and easy. Only a little time is taken away from your own store, and you can increase your sales and your customer base exponentially. You can enjoy a whole new business, or get an extra part time income. You avoid the overhead costs of having a store or other place of business. And, if you decide to open up a regular store later, you will already have new customers. You will also learn what products will sell best for you.



How to choose an event:

Different events attract different types of buyers, so tailor your merchandise to the proper audience. To know if an event is right for you, and to know which products you should be displaying at different events, you need to ask yourself **what types of people will be attending?**

- If the people attending are children or young people, your offerings will need to be inexpensive items that these people can afford.
- If people come to hear a certain type of music, you can use the type of music to determine which products the people attending might want.
- If your audience is expected to be older, middle-aged, wealthy, or tourists, you can choose products that are best for them.

If you don't think that the products you have available would sell well with the audience, you can do one of two things: You can skip the event, or you can **add some new products to your existing selection.**

If you decide to try some new products at the event, be sure that they fit in with your existing products. You want to make money at the event, but you also want to attract long-term customers and test new products that could be good sellers for you later.

Most importantly, make sure you offer high-quality products that are eye-catching. Consumers today are tremendously demanding today. We are each bombarded every day with offers of new and different products. People can find cheap or commonplace items anywhere; you need to have something that stands out to capture peoples' attention.



Tips for a better display:

- Display your best-selling items at the front of your booth. Your customers make their decisions visually. Your display needs to draw attention to the things that your clients are most interested in. Keep your most popular items in the front of the booth where they will be seen first.
- Keep your display orderly and visually appealing. You want your customers to enjoy looking, without sub-consciously thinking of it as too much work. One of your main goals is to increase the "dwell time" that people spend with your products.
- To help your booth stand out, add signs and possibly photos. Sometimes music and videotapes will help too; but more often these can become distracting. A sign with your company name is a pretty basic and easy thing to add to your display.

Signs that offer some sort of prize for registering are effective. This gives you names of people to contact after the event. 'Helpful signs are ones that draw attention to your best sellers, and that tell the reader about a benefit they get with your product.

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- Finally, be ready to constantly re-arrange your display. Move more popular items to the front of your booth, and less popular items to less prominent spots. This is something that you will always see the most experienced and effective show salespeople doing. During the early part of an event, you will get to know what the people attending this event are most interested in. Rearrange your display regularly to gain the most dwell-time and sales.



How to act during an event:



It isn't always easy to know how quickly or aggressively to approach people who show an interest in your merchandise. Each person is a little bit different, so you need to be ready to change your approach depending on the customer. Your people skills will be used and developed to their fullest in these events. Here are a few rules that will help you respond to people passing by your booth:

- **Keep an open and relaxed air.** Your buyers are just as nervous and maybe even more nervous about interacting with you. A natural smile and a friendly look can take you a lot further than unique product knowledge by the time the day is over.
- **Be patient.** If you start a conversation with a prospect too quickly, they will often be distracted by you, and will not see the things that your booth offers. People often get defensive, and don't fully recover until they have walked completely past your booth.
- If you don't say something soon enough, you will lose possible sales. The flow of traffic tends to make people keep moving past your display unless something compelling stops them. **Just a simple 'Hi' said at the right time; is normally enough to stop the momentum.** If a person stops, but is not given attention, they will often not take the initiative to make a purchase on their own.
- **If they touch something, greet them.** One experienced trade show salesperson told me that he considers anyone who touches something in his booth to be fair game. He will then position himself in such a way that the prospect would have to walk around him to leave the booth, and say something to them about the product that they seem to be interested in.

One of the things that many people are looking for at these events is great customer service. Be on your best behavior. Each customer can be worth a lot of income if they like you enough to buy from you in the future. I regularly ask our customers what is most important to them in a vendor. I used to think that the products and prices offered would almost always be the most important factor. But I was surprised by the large response. **Most customers replied “Having pleasant customer service is the most important thing.”**

After you have done a few festivals or trade shows, you will get better every time. If you attend shows as a buyer occasionally, you will get a better sense of the state of mind of your buyers. The time that you spend ‘shopping’ can ultimately be well paid for by using the knowledge to improve your own booths.



Follow up with customers by an e-mail, letter, or phone call.

What to do after the show:

Most vendors don't seem to do very much with their prospects after a show is over. But you can get even more profit after an event is over.

If you **keep in touch with your contacts**, many will turn into even better customers. Many of the vendors at African festivals come here from Africa, and they are difficult to find again after the festival is over. An event attendee may not need or be able to afford something that they see during a festival, but will want to buy it afterwards. Perhaps a birthday, wedding, or other special event will come up, and then the customer will want what they saw at your booth.

Be sure to **get names, addresses, and phone numbers** from as many people as you can during the show. Finding out about the type of products people are interested in helps you find ways to make more sales.

The above tips will help the person to remember you as someone who is truly interested in meeting their needs. After the show, you can contact them again by mail, phone, or e-mail.

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I have always said that I don't make any money when someone purchases from us the first time. The cost of advertising, and finding a new customer is normally greater than the profit that comes from the first sale. Our profit comes when someone becomes a repeat customer. Don't lose your biggest opportunity for more sales. **Keep in touch with your customers.**

If you are able to tell people something about the history and significance of the things that you carry, you will increase your sales. Products that are merely interesting at first, can become irresistible when someone knows the background. You can give a lot of this information to people after the show. If you have a retail store, your goal can be to get more repeat customers. Be sure to have hand-outs printed that you can leave with visitors to your booth.

Other things to get from your event:

You can accomplish many different things at events where you show your products for sale. Your main goal may be to make as many sales and as much money as possible during the time you are displaying. However, there are even more things that can be just as valuable in the long run.

- **You can network with other vendors.** If you act pleasant and a little bit humble, you can learn a tremendous amount from the other vendors displaying their items. Most people seem to enjoy giving advice on things that they know something about. If your approach is one that is eager to learn; and you recognize the other persons knowledge and skill; they will usually be flattered (and human) enough to give you lots of valuable information.
- **You can learn which other events could work best for you.** Vendors at festivals or trade shows normally share their experiences with each other. There is a strong sense of camaraderie among vendors.
- **You can find wholesale customers among other vendors.** Perhaps these sellers would want to sell some of your things at other events that you do not attend. In return, you may find other profit opportunities for yourself with the products that these people are carrying.
- **You can see other vendors' best-sellers.** This gives you the ability to steer your product line in the most profitable direction. You can get marvelous ideas for new products.

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The first few times that you do something are usually the hardest. The first few days at a new job are the least productive. In the same way, the first few events will be most profitable for you in what you learn: not in what you earn. Try to improve your skills and the merchandise that you offer, and you can make much more money in future events.

The reason that many people stop doing festivals is the amount of physical work involved. You will be on your feet for long stretches of time; you will often be carrying heavy boxes for long distances; and you will be surprised at the length of time it takes you to assemble your booth. Even if you already know what you want your booth to look like; and you have everything well organized when you arrive; you will spend what *seems like* far too much time setting up your displays. Even though you may spend a lot of time in preparation, you will have customers that many other people don't have the energy to get to. You will also find many other ways to profit both financially and personally from these events. Attending these events can be a lot of hard work, but you will probably have a lot of fun too!



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