



EP 17 - On Trade Shows, Conventions & Local Events

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Today's episode is a deep dive on the many aspects of trade shows, conventions, and events. We'll review the various types of events, and the impacts they can have on your business. This show will be relevant whether you're looking to sell crafts at a local fair or aspiring to a major national convention.

We discuss 5 aspects of shows:

- Show types
- Purpose
- Evaluation
- Network
- Display

*And yes, this makes the acronym **SPEND**, because that's ultimately what you do by attending or vending at a show.*

SHOW TYPES

- There are a wide variety of shows. It's important to understand the distinctions between them, since that will impact your preparations, preparation, and ultimately how much you'll spend.

- Hobby/Fan Conventions: Focus on consumer connections - putting creators & their publishers/manufacturing partners directly in touch with consumers of their work
- Industry-Wide Expo: Large, national or global shows covering a wide swatch of an industry
- Organization Conventions: Smaller conventions that tend to be based on a geographical region or sub-section of an industry.
 - There's usually more of a mix between talks/panels and a vendors area.
 - You can certainly be a panelist & a vendor - but you'll be doing double-duty so you'll want to make sure you have both booth coverage, and some breathing room to take advantage of your speaking opportunity.
- Small Events: Craft Fairs / Community Events
 - These will be local events, usually tied to a theme.
 - These often involve just a folding table and smaller time commitment
 - Tend to be the most cost-effective, but you need to keep a sharp eye on the ROI, which we'll talk about in a bit.
- Conventions can be big business
- Booths vs Tables vs Walking vs Bar-Con
 - Even if you have relevant products or services, you don't HAVE to have a booth at a show.
 - We'll talk about purpose in the next section, but recognize that depending on the setup of the show, you can generate as many opportunities walking the floor of the show.
 - Being tied to a booth can be great for brand/product exposure, but you're tied to it for large chunks of time. It makes it very difficult to get away and explore the show for new opportunities/connections, or connect with key vendors/customers.
 - Walking the show gives you greater flexibility, so you can more readily say "yes" to impromptu lunches/gatherings or catching up over a drink at a nearby bar.
 - There are even people who don't pay for the convention, but do a "bar con" where they hang out near the convention at a convenient & often frequented

restaurant/bar and catch up with people they know attending.

PURPOSE

- There are plenty of reasons to attend a show:
 - Brand awareness
 - Product / service marketing
 - Selling
 - Projecting company presence/health
 - Gaining mindshare with a target demographic
 - Networking
 - Thought Leadership

EVALUATION

- Logistics - **Read all of the exhibitor package / rules if they exist!**
- Travel
- Relevancy
- Realistic expectations (how chaotic is the event)
- Opportunity cost
- Location - Booth selection factors:
 - Flow
 - Competition: Balance between signing up first for best spots or waiting to see what/where your competition goes first to avoid them
 - Lighting
 - Mid-aisle, corner, end cap, block
- Demographics (may affect how you market your products/services)
- Post-show momentum
 - Attendee List / Organizer e-mail blast

- Mailing List (mistake I made at Halloween event)
- Post mortem / lessons learned for future shows
- ROI - difficult to quantify, but look both short & long term

NETWORK

- Remember: People do business with people, regardless of who ultimately signs their paychecks.
- Networking is the whole point of a show - how will people remember you and/or their experiences with your booth or talks?
- Will you focus on a few deep connections, or many shallow connections?
 - Take an important client to a nice dinner?
 - Do something zany with your outfits and/or booth with the aim of getting social media hits for brand awareness?
- Before show: Build a game plan & review attendee list & vendors
- There are many ways to make connections - and it can be tough to decide on how you spend your limited show time
 - Remember that those you are connecting with have the same problem! Their time & attention are a gift so don't waste or monopolize it
- What types of networking opportunities might you find at a show?
 - Solo presentations / readings
 - Panels
 - Lunches / Dinners / Bar Convos
 - Business card contests
 - TV - palming a card
 - Giveaways
 - Organizer ice breakers (booth visit sign/contest, speed networking)
 - Be present (watch cell phone use / over scheduling yourself with day-to-day tasks when out of office)

- Vendors vs Attendees
- Social media
- E-mail footers leading up to the show

DISPLAY

- Signage: Back Walls / Roll-ups / Canopies / Table dressing
 - Watch DPI of your printing!
- Exhibitor package: Especially for larger shows - read this carefully as there will be freight requirements / union regulations to follow / penalties for packing up early / etc...
- Layout of your booth:
 - Are you hosting meetings/evaluations?
 - Do you need to maximize your sales area (volumetric)
 - Floor padding
 - Electrical (trip hazards!)
- Sales Collateral: Handouts, sell sheets, company info
- Biz cards / Contact sharing ([DOT cards](#)) / Mailing List / QR codes
- Inventory
- POS
 - Never lose a sale for lack of accepting a payment method
 - For example: [Shopify](#) or [Venmo](#) , both of which powers Kreuter Studios!
 - Others: [Square](#), Paypal
- If doing business out of state, make sure you understand that state's taxation requirements
 - Most payment providers such as Shopify factor location in and will handle this for you
 - But most states have a lower threshold you have to cross before filing out of state sales tax - but rules can shift when you are physically doing business at a

show in that state.

- be sure to check this beforehand!
- Giveaways (cost vs awareness & attracting people to your booth)
- Samples / Demo equipment

🗨 **Episode 17 Photos:**

The Chris' debuting Masquerade Games & their new games Epigo & Simpletons at GenCon 2011:

