



Deutsche Messe AG

# The great shows on e

One of the best ways to start or increase your international sales is to participate in a German trade show. Why German? It's probably because trade shows in Germany have been big and international since the Middle Ages.

Part of the reason may be geographic and part may be, simply, that Germans have been and still are good at organizing the things.

Take the CeBIT show held every spring in Hannover, one of dozens around Germany throughout the year. The biggest information technology show in the world, CeBIT draws more than 400,000 visitors from 75 countries, and more than 85 percent are buyers. U.S. companies can fly to one conveniently located place, meet avid buyers from all over the world, and not be concerned about how to get the buyers into the U.S. where acquiring visas is sometimes a challenge.

"CeBIT was just a great opportunity to meet with a lot of people and to really expand your presence," said Rick Scanlon of Tampa, Fla.-based Pegasus Imaging. "We have generated significant business over the last five years by becoming an exhibitor because it gives us access to a much broader market than what we can get just remotely from the U.S."

According to George Ruffner, senior commercial officer for the U.S.

Commercial Service at the U.S. Embassy in Berlin: "In Germany, virtually every city of any consequence has an exhibition facility, many of them perhaps not as large as Hannover's, but absolutely huge. And they put on exhibitions which draw from a very wide area. The people you want to talk with are going to be here."

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*Meet and greet as many people as you can.*

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The bottom line is what counts for Papa Samba Gaye of Boston-based Accusoft, who has attended the show several times. "The name recognition we get here is amazing. A very important part of our revenue comes from the international market. After joining CeBIT our revenue immediately increased by 10 percent."

U.S. business participation in shows like CeBIT dropped sharply after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks. But U.S. companies are starting to return. For the man who runs the show, this is a welcome development.

Sven Pruser, senior vice president of

# atest earth

## Germany is a mecca for global trade shows that attract hundreds of thousands of visitors

BY DOUG BARRY

Hannover International, said: “You’re asking about the importance of the U.S. companies in this show. Well, first of all this industry is made in the USA. Computer technology, even telecommunication technology, is unthinkable without the United States.”

### Selling and learning

Participating in German trade shows offers benefits beyond, but still linked to, the bottom line. One is that you can see the competition, and also where the industry and markets are headed. Because government regulators also come to these shows and often hold official meetings at them, exhibitors can anticipate and sometimes influence rule changes before they happen.

Another benefit is the opportunity for companies to use the shows to help transform their business practices, processes and the products themselves. Trade shows are not just a great place to sell things; they’re also great places to learn.

“CeBIT gives us a great opportunity to meet individually with our customers and with our prospects,” said Pegasus Imaging’s Scanlon. “It also gives us an excellent chance to speak directly with them, face to face, and learn about the trends that they’re facing and learn about the needs of their customers. And it gives us great information on how to improve our products and build for not

only today but also technology that we’ll build in the future.”

Mendy Ouzillon of Seattle-based Impinj agrees with the transformative potential of doing international business and the role trade shows play in the

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*The U.S. Commercial Service provides various forms of assistance for U.S. companies attending trade shows.*

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process. “It’s impossible to be in our business without having that international exposure. Because it’s such an integral part of our company, not only has it made us better but it’s also pushed us in new directions that we weren’t necessarily thinking about.”

For Ouzillon, attending these shows is about understanding customer needs and nuances. “European customers have very different requirements from U.S. customers or even from Asian customers, and so by understanding those requirements and making them part of our con-



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An exhibitor from China explains the equipment his company is offering for sale.

## CeBIT will hold shows in Istanbul and Shanghai

CeBIT is best known as the brand name for the huge information-technology and communications trade show held in Hannover, Germany, each March. This year's show attracted about a half-million visitors and close to 6,000 exhibits, according to chief spokesman Hartwig von Safi.

Deutsche Messe AG (messe means fair) held the first CeBit show in Hannover in 1985.

In recent years, the company has expanded into foreign markets. It held a trade fair in Australia last month, attended by some 40,000 visitors. Looking ahead, it will hold a show

called CeBit Bilism Eurasia in Istanbul, Turkey, on Oct. 7-12. Von Safi expects between 150,000 and 180,000 visitors to show up.

Deutsche Messe will hold the second annual CeBIT Asia in Shanghai on Oct. 27-30. Von Safi described it as a conference, rather than a show, saying it will probably have only a few exhibits. "The fair business in china is not so easy," he said.

CeBIT held shows in New York in 2003 and 2004 but has no plans to offer any more.

Next year's CeBIT show in Hannover will take place on March 3-9. ⚙️

the products of the U.S. show participants, and the Americans are briefed on how to promote, price, and position their products in these markets.

"We met with 30 or 40 companies last year at CeBIT, of which several have become partners of ours," said David Presti, co-owner of Paris Technology. "One of them, a very significant partner, resells our products in Germany and throughout Europe and we're selling theirs in other markets



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German Chancellor Angela Merkel was one of about half a million visitors at this year's CeBIT show.

textual whole we can then provide solutions that really target the markets that we're trying to address."

All of this targeting and transforming takes hard work, and preparations begin months ahead of time.

### Plan for success

"This is not something that you just decide to do one day, get on a plane and just walk around," Ruffner said. "That's not the proper way to do it, and you're going to find that it can become a very expensive proposition to come back with rather meager results. This requires

planning; this requires preparation and work with the appropriate people. And we like to think that our folks at the U.S. Department of Commerce, both in the United States and around the world, are those people," he said.

Help from the U.S. Commercial Service takes several forms. One is the buyer delegations that Commercial Service specialists bring from dozens of countries throughout the world. Shows such as CeBIT become a one-stop shop for overseas companies looking for U.S. suppliers.

Buyers are briefed in advance on

around the world. So it's been very successful for us from that point of view."

Ruffner has high praise for the German nationals who work for the Commercial Service. "They're really the heart of our organization. These are people who know the market, know who the buyers and sellers are, know who would fit the profile."

U.S. companies at CeBIT attend side meetings to learn how to get into new markets and to meet with Commercial Service representatives from around Europe. "That was really helpful," said Carlos Sanchez of Redcom Laboratories, a Victor, N.Y.-based telecommunications firm. "I need those contacts right away."

### What size exhibit space?

Where can you talk with all these

# Success strategies for trade shows

The U.S. Commercial Service offers these tips for companies planning to participate in foreign trade shows. The Commercial Service is the export arm of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

## Prepare

- You should make a decision to participate six months before the show. Contact the Commercial Service at [export.gov](http://export.gov) or by calling 1-800-usa-trade.
- See if your state sponsors business delegations to international trade shows. If so, you can get good rates on booth space and other assistance.
- Monitor the show Web site as exhibitors register. You can preplan who you'll visit, even e-mailing them in advance that you'll be coming.
- Many big U.S. companies exhibit at the shows and some are interested in partnering with and buying from smaller companies. Arrange to meet their representatives.
- Ask the Commercial Service representative about getting a story about your product in the show media.
- Decide what kind of presence you want at the show. This will drive budget and staffing decisions. You can come alone and walk the floor. You can rent booth space in the U.S. pavilion. You can rent a table and chairs on the top floor of the pavilion, the CEO. You can rent a booth as part of a state delegation. Depending

on the show, the least expensive booth space runs about \$1,500 for the week.

- Register your intellectual property before you exhibit at trade shows. It's easy to do. German trade shows are probably the most aggressive in helping exhibitors protect their intellectual property.
- Check to see if the show has an event for the industry press and consider exhibiting there. At some shows there are separate events with separate fees. Show organizers know that the press is more likely to come and to write favorable things about your product or service if they are wined and dined.

## At the show

- Make sure you bring enough literature and business cards. Estimate on the high side.
- Consider bringing at least two people. The shows can be tiring, and you'll be handling lots of inquiries, going to meetings and parties, and trolling the floor. You can also hire a local bilingual assistant who can arrange meetings on the show floor. The Commercial Service can help find a qualified person.
- Men should wear suit and tie or sports coat and tie. Women should wear a suit. Bring sensible shoes.

- Talk to as many people as you can. Smile. As one German buyer, said "You can have the best presentation with diagrams, with charts. Forget it. Talk to the people."
- Attend as many parties as you can. Don't stand in a corner. Meet and greet.
- If you have signage, make sure it's clear about what you're offering. It's amazing how many times you can't tell what a company is selling. If an interested buyer has to guess, you'll lose the sale.
- Avoid areas in the exhibition halls that are too close to mass transportation entrances and too far away from major foot traffic. If you have competitors at the show, consider locating near them.
- One U.S. exhibitor figured out that motion attracts people. So he makes use of slide shows and videos projected on LCD TV monitors. He also uses special-sized chairs and a table that allows him to take sitting breaks without looking like he's goofing off.
- Keep track of every business card so that you can personally send a thank-you email after the show.
- Make a commitment to attend the show for more than one year.

## After the show

- Follow-up with all sales leads.
- Consider visiting other markets in the region with the help of the Commercial Service or your state's international trade program.
- Start planning for next year. ⚙

buyers in the middle of huge crowds? The U.S. Commercial Service can help you here too, with renting a small booth, a medium-sized booth, or a gigantic booth with its own elevator and private restaurant. Or, you can forget booths entirely and try the CEO, a low-cost option, especially if you're attending a German fair for the first time.

"That, essentially, is your office at the exhibition," Ruffner said. "Simply put, this is a table, chairs, with an interpreter, someone who can assist you throughout the exhibition.

"You are free to go out, walk around the show, make the contacts,

bring them back to your office, discuss your product or service."

The Commercial Service will advise you on how to get publicity for your products and services in the Show Daily and other industry publications. Exposure here can build awareness in your products and drive traffic to you at the show.

You'll also get help with follow-up meetings in Germany and elsewhere in Europe if you can tack on some extra days after the show.

And maybe most important of all, international buyers appreciate that U.S. suppliers have the support of the U.S. government and their state governments. A number of states including

California, Florida and Massachusetts organize mini pavilions at some of the German shows for their resident businesses. Receptions featuring local food and drink attract large groups of international buyers and become another good venue for doing deals.

As one U.S. participant put it: "German shows are great opportunities. They are very multinational and international. There is nothing like them anywhere in the world." ⚙

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