



Interbike is approaching ... are you ready?

Interbike is around the corner, and most of the major planning for both exhibitors and attendees should be well underway: your space rented; décor/exhibitory/signage determined and ordered; booth staffing/uniforms coordinated; A/V ordered; collateral materials (including business cards) ordered; and travel/hotel reservations made; just to name some of the major logistics required and (hopefully) already handled.

Now is the time to fine-tune your show experience. Whether you are an exhibitor or an attendee, you've spent money to attend Interbike. It's time to create your plan to get the most out of your investment. If you are a long-time exhibitor or attendee, you might already know most of this, but a refresher is never remiss.

BEFORE THE SHOW:

- **Set a goal(s).** Quantifiable goals help you make decisions and provide a yardstick for whether Interbike was successful for you. If you have a team of people there, make sure everyone is aware of the goal(s) and knows what they need to do to meet the goal(s).

Examples of goals might be:

- Make a sale(s) of more than \$xx,xxx on the show floor
 - Get at least 20 genuine prospects for post-show follow-up/sales
 - Collect xxx business cards/contacts to add to your database
 - Find 2 serious investors or partners
 - Ask potential customers 3 specific things (market research)
 - Identify xxx new premium items for your shop, schedule a presentation and establish an initial relationship with the manufacturer, wholesaler, representative for the brand(s)
 - Investigate two future trends by talking with xxx industry leaders
 - Schedule and conduct xx meetings with the intend of achieving one or more of your goals
- **Promote your attendance.** Whether you are an exhibitor or an attendee, you need to tell people you will be there, and how to find you.

Here are some things you should do before the action starts:

- **Postcard mailers work.** If you thought that “print media” is dead, it’s not, particularly before a tradeshow, and not if you do it right. Offer something cool at your booth if your recipients bring the card with them. Don’t forget to put your booth number on the card!
- **Emails probably work.** Because you can use Interbike’s name in the subject line, people will probably open the email. Just remember, some people get hundreds of emails daily, make sure your subject line is a compelling reason to open yours before the other 99+ in their queue. Sending out more than one email is a good idea. It raises the odds that more of your recipients will see and open yours.
- **Set up meetings in advance.** Tradeshows are a rare chance to get face-time with a wide variety of people. But remember, others will be setting up meetings as well, so start early. There’s only so many hours in the day for you and for the people you want to meet with. Go to the show with your meeting schedule set as much as possible and be flexible. Here are some of the people you might want to meet with: editors/reporters of on-line and hardcopy publications; bloggers; existing and potential customers; manufacturers, wholesalers and brand representatives; vendors; potential partners; your competition; industry leaders

- **Promote Interbike**

Add a line to your email signature with the Interbike info and your booth number. If you have a giveaway or something else interesting, say that too. You can also add Interbike to your website homepage and invite people to visit your booth. And finally, add a tag line to every customer/professional blast email you send, the name of the show, the dates and how to find your booth (even if the email isn’t specifically about Interbike).

- **Develop and practice your “hook-‘em-in” speech.**

The word “speech” is a stretch. You may have only 10 to 15 seconds to hook a potential customer into your booth. Not enough time for a speech, per se. But, what is your opening attention grabber? What gets people to stop? To laugh? To engage? To say “OK, fair enough, tell me more?”

Here are a couple thoughts to get you started:

- **Ask questions, open a conversation.** Most others will “pitch at” people. Be different and have a conversation. Good conversationalists are genuinely interested in the other person — what do they do, what are they interested in. If you start chatting they might actually ask you for a pitch as a form of reciprocation. Then you’ve got permission to “sell,” and they’re truly listening.
- **Don’t ask how they’re doing.** Your opening line should engage them with something you specifically have to offer. “Hello, how’s it going” is not interesting or unique. Even just a simple “Are you interested in [thing you do]” is better, although still weak. You might start with a compliment or an observation about what’s going on around the show.

- **Ask informational questions, don't just transmit.** Obviously you're there to pitch your product, service or idea, but this is also a fantastic opportunity for direct market research on your potential customers. Come up with 3-5 questions that you can ask people who walk by the booth. You can record the answers or not, but it's a great way to start a conversation, get people into your booth, and at the same time learn about your customers and detect trends.
- **Create a "box of everything"**

This "box of everything" can be a lifesaver. You won't use all the stuff every time, but you will use an unpredictable subset every time. The box should contain:

 - Pens (multiple, different colors)
 - Sharpies/markers and highlighters
 - Tape: scotch, masking, duct
 - Extension cord
 - Electric plug bar
 - Post-it-notes
 - Rubber bands
 - Small stapler
 - Paper clips
 - Scissors
 - All-in-one tool (screwdriver, can opener)
 - Over-the-counter meds (Tylenol, Advil, Excedrin)
 - Zip ties
 - Generic business cards in case someone runs out
 - Shipping labels (some items will need to be shipped or mailed back to your office)

AT THE SHOW:

Once you're at the show, there are a lot of moving pieces, things you need to do and remember, and people to meet and converse with. Here are just a few booth and attendee tips:

- **Take names instead of pushing brochures.** Attendees get dozens of pieces of paper pushed into their hands and pre-filled in their tote bags. Even if yours is clever, funny, and useful, it's still going to be lost. Instead of hand-outs, scan their badge or get a business card, and mail them something immediately after the show.
- **Make notes on business cards.** As an exhibitor and an attendee, you'll talk to hundreds of people; you'll never remember what one guy said or what he wants. Always write it down on their business card. If you're scanning business cards or badges, have a notepad handy to remind you of who you talked to and what follow-up steps are needed.
- **Stand, don't sit.** Sitting looks like you don't want to be there. It's uninviting. The head-height differential is psychologically off-putting. Your feet hurt; but stand anyway.
- **Get into the aisle.** Just because there's a table there doesn't mean you have to stand behind it. Break out of your 10'x10' prison and engage people in the aisle. Best is to have someone inside the booth to talk to folks who walk up and another in the aisle getting attention and directing folks inward. Especially during high-traffic, just being a barrier in the middle forces people to squeeze by your booth, which gives you a chance to engage.

- **Walk the floor and talk to everyone.** You have your goals. Make a plan each morning and carry it out. The floor space is huge, know who you want to talk to and get moving first thing in the day.
- **Don't forget the workshops and demos.** These should be planned as well. Select the ones that will help you reach your goals. You can meet a lot of people at some of these workshops, as well as learn about trends and new products.
- **Quality not quantity.** It's a cliché, but it's better to have six solid conversations with people who will buy your product than to give away 200 pieces of branded swag to people who can't remember who you are.
- **Remember what your goals are.** Everything you do should focus on reaching your set goals. There's only so much time during the day and at night. If an activity will not help you reach your goal(s), carefully consider whether you should spend time on it.

AFTER THE SHOW:

- **Have a debriefing with your team.** Discuss and analyze what you learned while talking to attendees. Find out what "hooks" worked best; what were people were saying about your products/services; what did you learn about your competitors; did your team spot any trends; where did they see the best prospects; prioritize your follow-up and make team assignments.
- **Follow-up.** Critically important! Otherwise you spent a lot of money and time on your feet, and nothing or little to show for it. Remember, attendees talked to a lot of people. They were pitched and pitched and pitched, and were saturated. It's up to you or one of your team members to follow-up in a timely manner, remind them who you are and ask for a meeting or determine another next step.
- **Update your database.** If you did not have a badge scanner and collected business cards, make sure you assign someone to get these entered into your customer database for future promotional outreach.



Triathlon Business International is hosting the Triathlon Pavilion presented by Quintana Roo.

The Triathlon Pavilion is located between booth 20033 and 20023 in Bayside B.

There will be six workshops, a Pinot & Pints reception Wednesday evening and coffee service Thursday and Friday mornings. Join us!