Exhibition Organiser

Level  Advanced
Salary  £18,000 - £40,000

Do you enjoy organising and planning?

Exhibition organisers are responsible for planning and co-ordinating events. Depending upon the company or organisation, the type and size of an event can vary dramatically. You may be involved with a large annual event such as, the Chelsea Flower Show or you may organise smaller events within a museum.

Exhibition work is generally broken down into three key areas: Marketing, Sales and Operations. These functions allow the life cycle of an exhibition to be covered in its entirety - from concept to delivery. Each function is very different. Read below to see which area might suit you.

Marketing – General activities include; market research, generating event interest, designing and printing literature, creating promotional campaigns, public relations, developing exhibition partnerships...

Sales – General activities include; selling exhibition space and advertising opportunities to exhibitors, both on the phone and face to face, organising sponsorship deals...

Operations – General activities include; planning and co-ordinating the practicalities and logistics of an event, negotiating and managing supplier contracts and relationships, on-site liaison with workers, sponsors, exhibitors and visitors, dealing with health and safety issues...

This role is also referred to as: Events Organiser, Conference Organiser

The ‘Low-down’

Whichever key area you decide to go into, you should expect to have a busy and varied role as an exhibition organiser. Specific skills will be required for each function but fundamental skills such as organisation, negotiation and time-management are essential. Typical duties may include:

- Locating suitable venues and locations
- Negotiating costs and contracts
- Producing project time-lines
- Building relationships with suppliers, exhibitors, advertisers
- Market research
- Creating promotional ideas

These are just a few examples of what you should expect from the role of exhibition organiser. In reality and depending on which route you pursue, this role is extensive.
A typical day...

9.00  Meet with potential new sponsor
10.00  Chase up leaflets at printers
10.30  Deal with enquiries
11.30  Visit venue to see how plans are coming along
12.30  Quick bite for lunch
13.30  Meet with manager to discuss project progress
15.30  Meet with team to discuss ideas for marketing campaign
17.30  Evening meeting exhibition partner

The Facts

Hours:  Exhibition organisers tend to work standard office hours (9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday) with 1 hour for lunch. However, during busy periods such as just prior and during an event, it may be necessary to work through evenings and over weekends.

Salary:  Entry salaries start from approx. £18,000 and can rise to approx. £40,000. Many roles offer commission.

Prospects:  With 100’s of exhibition companies across the UK, there is plenty of scope for progression. Work your way up into management or transfer to a different function. Many exhibition organisers go on to work freelance or set up their own company.

Location:  Positions are available across the UK, although there is a lot of concentration in London and the South East. Other key areas include: Birmingham, Edinburgh, Manchester, Glasgow and Cardiff – homes to major exhibition venues.

Travel:  Predominantly office based but will be required to travel to meet sponsors, exhibitors, and contractors or to view premises.

Environment:  Dependant upon company or organisation but exhibition organisations tend to be high energy environments, where a great deal of time is spent on the phone.

Stress factor:  Things could get hectic when deadlines are looming. Be organised and calm and you will get through it.

What skills will I need?

The role of an exhibition organiser is challenging and whichever function you choose to specialise in, you will need certain fundamental skills in order to succeed. Ideally you should:

- Be able to deal with people on all levels
- Possess excellent communication skills
- Be organised
- Have good time-management skills
- Be able to work under pressure and to deadlines
- Possess good negotiation skills
- Able to manage budgets
- Possess a positive outlook
Is it possible to specialise?

Some exhibition organisers choose to specialise by focusing on one of the three key areas: Marketing, Sales and Operations. However, it is possible to specialise further by building an expertise with a specific sector. For example: B2B (Business to Business) exhibitions or mass consumer shows.

Opportunities

There are many exhibition companies across the UK, so you should have plenty of choice. Many roles may be located in London and the South East. You will also find opportunities available wherever there are major exhibition venues such as: Birmingham, Manchester, Cardiff, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Promotional progress is undefined. Many exhibition organisers build upon their experience and ultimately move up into management. Others choose to do freelance work or set up their own company.

Where do I start?

There is no set qualification requirement for the role of exhibition organiser but employers tend to look for a bachelor’s degree in a relevant subject or a vocational equivalent such as a level 4 N/SVQ. For example: event management, marketing or business studies.

Ideally, employers will look for graduates with a related degree (or equivalent), such as: marketing, events managements or business studies. This however, does not mean that you cannot get into exhibition work without a degree. Previous experience is just, if not more so, desirable. If this is the role for you, try doing some work experience in your vacation time or perhaps get a junior role within an events company and work your way up.