

# SHOW ME THE MONEY

In his role at GMK, **Karl Waktare** often had to decide whether to spend his marketing budget on shows and The Game Fair. Here he unpacks his reasons for being a firm supporter of both

I know what you're thinking, Waktare is a complete sell out! He starts writing for GTN (ownership connection with The Game Fair) and guess what, here he is writing a gushing article about how great The Game Fair is. Probably after free tickets, now he has to pony up for them himself. Well, you underestimate me. I am actually after a couple of VIP enclosure tickets also—if you're reading this James do the right thing.

I honestly cannot remember how many Game Fairs or British Shooting Shows I have been to over the years, probably nearing 50. My perspective has always been as an exhibitor showcasing products with no revenue coming in. So why do we do it? They are not cheap to attend even if the actual stand space is often not the biggest cost. I have tried to put together the business case as I saw it below.

As part of the marketing mix The Game Fair falls into the category of 'consumer events' or exhibitions. They all have similar pros and cons, the cons being mainly the cost and the disruption to normal business activity. Most fairs or shows happen outside of the peak autumn months which means they are not too challenging time wise.

## Product Showcasing

Shows are an opportunity to show your product to end consumers, allow them to see a full range of products, pick up the guns and ask questions without the pressure of some commission-driven sales person breathing down their neck. It enables you to give background to product development and explain much more product detail than is possible to get across in an advert. Sometimes you can correct untrue myths or incorrect rumours. I know that in terms of numbers you cannot reach thousands of people over three days, however you have to remember that often the people who come to these events will hold court and tell many others about the knowledge you have passed on.

## Product Feedback

When you are a distributor there is not that much opportunity for direct feed-

The Game Fair offers unique opportunities to meet your customers



The VIP enclosure. Meet Karl in here



Fairs and shows offer unique opportunities to promote your brand

back from consumers. It sometimes is fed back to HQ but often it goes through a convoluted route, consumer to retailer then to the GMK Account Manager and back. Exhibitions offer the chance to hear it first hand from the horse's mouth. Often if small product details like standard stock measurements are wrong or a palm swell is too pronounced, seeing and hearing it first hand is when it really can strike home. Beware the natter enthusiast however, they f@cking love an event, they sidle up to you and before you know it you are 20 minutes into a detailed but boring explanation of how you need to change your product. What they are describing is a product with a market potential of one.

## Product Launching

This is an obvious opportunity that I actually went off over the years. If you have a significant new product to showcase then I believe it is far better to have a dedicated event. Exhibitions have a big crowd, many customers and media in attendance. However, they are really busy and often you are competing with other launches and a lot of 'noise' and other activity. You have a window from 10.00-11.30, we all know there is no point speaking to a journo after lunch-

time (pissed) and don't expect them to be anywhere early in the morning (sleeping off the hangover).

## Branding

There is no denying a place at the Game Fair allows you to fly the flag(s), put up the banners and project your business. Let's face it the behavioural science behind how purchasing decisions are made

our sales team. We always had a steady stream of trade customers who would come and see us, often it was the only time I would get to spend time with them during the year. Having face to face conversations would often yield new ideas or unique feedback, or sometimes just re-enforced things that you were already aware of but not yet actioned. Don't make the hospitality too good or the

grow bonds and break down barriers between staff. You can also learn about people too, which ones put in a shift and which ones like to slope off whenever possible (I know, people in glass houses shouldn't chuck rocks).

We sometimes invited suppliers to exhibitions (and often they invited themselves). Again, a fair can be a good way to improve your relationship with them and also give them to a better understanding of your market.

## Competitor intel and Networking

Again, being at an exhibition means you will get to see your competitors' offerings first hand. You also get to meet new people in the trade where being able to put a name to a face really can improve the relationship.

## FOMO

There is also the FOMO argument, what will everyone think if we are not there? Competitors will spread rumours like 'things must be tough if they aren't here'. Everyone will want to know why you haven't come and people like me used to stoke the fire.

That just about wraps it up. I will see you in the VIP tent! **GTN**

**“Seeing and hearing it first hand is when it really can strike home”**

is complicated and imprecise. However, I think we can all agree that Consumers are more comfortable buying brands they know and trust. Showcasing your brand in front of tens of thousands of people at events gets the brand out there, it may even be at a subliminal level. Small brands can buy an enormous space and project themselves as the market leader.

## Trade Marketing

Personally, I used to spend less time talking to end users as I got older. My product knowledge was never as good as

chairs too comfortable or you might find yourself with a permanent fixture you hadn't planned for.

## Team Building

Whenever we had a new field salesperson we would always try and get them to a show as quickly as possible. Nothing accelerates the product knowledge as quickly as facing the range of enquiries you get at a show. Added to which all of our product is there on hand. The evenings back at the hotel were also good fun, having a few beers together helped