



Are You Ready for IMTS 2026?

Maximize ROI at IMTS 2026:
The Strategic Exhibitor's Ebook

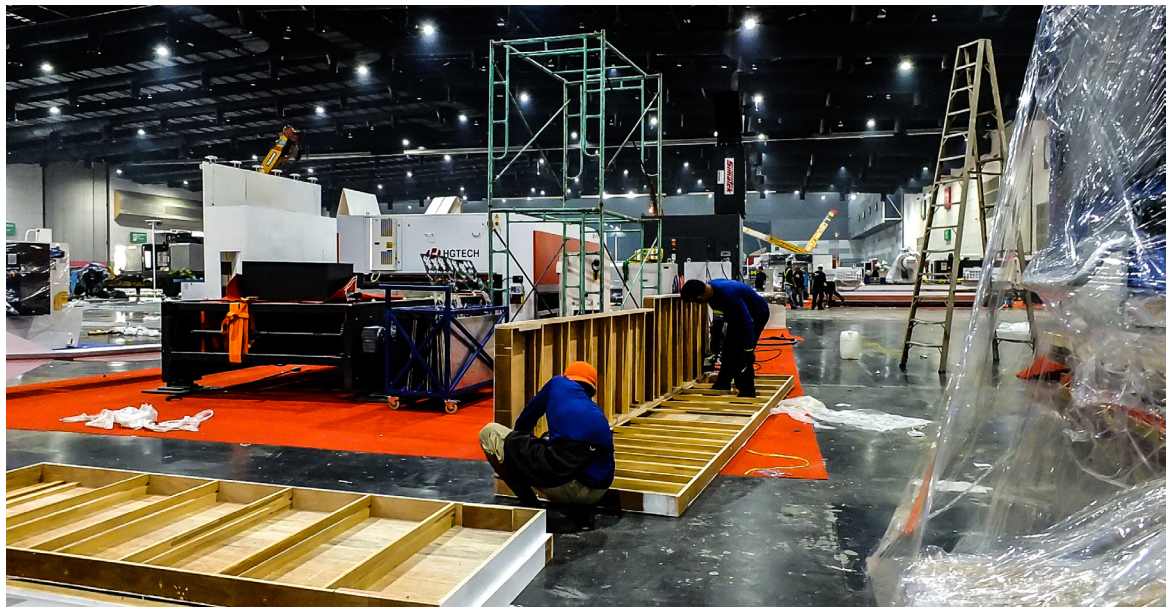




Your pre-International Manufacturing Technology Show to-do list is a long one.

It's a big event, held only every two years, and your team needs to be well prepared to make it pay off for your sales and revenue goals. Before you pack up your trade show display gear, ship off your supplies and board a plane to Chicago, you should consider some key things to ensure that you're ready. Successful planning now requires a focus on digital integration and data-driven optimization to justify the overall investment.

It's wise to invest the time necessary to evaluate your trade show booth. Even if your display is relatively new - but especially if you've been toting it around for a few years - asking a few questions about the booth, its various elements, and how it serves your interests (or doesn't) can help you make sure you're getting a solid return on your trade show investment. Exhibit cost allocation should now prioritize digital tools and technology due to the rising on-site service costs (eg., labor and drayage). If you're not sure, you might need to make a few adjustments.





Make the Booth Work for Your Goals

Your company and its reasons for exhibiting change over time—either to a small degree, or on a big scale. Now is the time to evaluate your program to ensure your display is aligned with who you are now and what you have to offer the manufacturing industry. Gather your team together and ask these questions to determine if your IMTS booth fits your company and its goals right now.



Specifically, what are you looking to achieve at this show? You might not check off all the boxes, but make sure the ones that are important to you are marked off.

- ☐ Introducing new products
- ☐ Boosting awareness of existing lines
- ☐ Strengthening relationships with existing customers
- ☐ Connecting with prospects
- ☐ Generating leads
- ☐ Expanding brand exposure
- ☐ Hunting for emerging trends
- ☐ Increasing press coverage

The design and features of your booth should support your goals. For example, if you're looking to showcase products, consider a custom exhibit booth tailored toward giving those products a spotlight. If you seek to engage current customers and prospects, consider adding technology features like interactive displays. If the focus is on generating leads, concentrate on qualified, CRM-ready leads to emphasize the measurable outcomes required in 2026.



Design for Success

IMTS presents a unique challenge, due to the fact that many exhibits will have machinery, equipment and operating demos. These all serve to engage your audience, however careful design planning will help you with traffic flow, lead qualification, and in person demo or meeting opportunities. The look and feel of an exhibit booth are more than just superficial considerations. The first impression attendees get of your event displays can make the difference between convincing them to enter your space and engage with your company, or walking on by.



Look for these elements - again, you might not mark off all of them, but make sure you're hitting the ones that matter most to your company:

- ☐ Eye-catching, stand-out colors and consistent branding
- ☐ The latest technology that showcases your offerings
- ☐ Engaging, clear graphics that identify you, what you do, and your unique benefit
- ☐ Impactful, eye-friendly lighting that focuses on the important areas of your space
- ☐ Backlighting key elements
- ☐ Prominent logos and product information
- ☐ Dynamic video presentations that incorporate interactive and personalized video walls (e.g., touch panels) that capture attendee interest and data
- ☐ Welcoming reception area
- ☐ Meeting areas
- ☐ Sustainability Compliance: incorporate the use of energy-efficient LED lighting and recyclable materials in design



Extend your Exhibit Beyond the Booth Walls

Your actual IMTS booth represents a tremendous opportunity to engage with prospects and create a positive brand experience. And while the exhibit itself might physically take up a few hundred square feet, you can expand its impact through both content and post-show outreach to manufacturing prospects.



Consider layering in these activities to maximize success coming out of the show:

- ☐ Develop Video Content - A quality video can get your value props to event attendees quickly and set you apart from the brand at the booth next to you.
- ☐ Host an In-Show Seminar - Live Interviews and panel discussions with experts or stakeholders are a great way to drive traffic to your booth.
- ☐ Author a Whitepaper - These are an effective way to work as gated content-a tool to showcase your industry knowledge and leadership, and capture quality lead data and segment prospects before they arrive at the show
- ☐ Leverage social media - Everything you do for IMTS should be considered for social media. Consider spending time in the months leading up to your event to engage audiences and “prime the pump” for exhibit traffic.
- ☐ Interactive Email Campaigns - use embedded interactive calendars or appointment booking links in pre-show email invitations to guarantee qualified appointment
- ☐ Stay Connected Through Blogging - You should be maintaining an active presence on your company’s blog, even during the show. Incorporate daily updates with images, testimonials, appreciation for partners and share stories of conversations throughout IMTS
- ☐ Get Your Team Comfortable with The Art of Questioning - Rapport can be built within minutes of meeting a prospect by asking just a few open-ended questions (versus those that result in one-word answers). Develop a list of industry and brand appropriate questions that your sales team can leverage to provide you with information on your prospects and what they want. The answers gathered by staff should immediately classify the lead and trigger a personalized digital follow-up sequence.



Speak to your Audience

Too often, booth planning puts a laser focus on the exhibiting company but fails to consider who they're exhibiting for. If your IMTS booth plans keep the customer in mind, they are much more likely to draw attendees in, engage them and provide a strong introduction to your company. Look at your booth through their eyes to help determine if it speaks to them.



Check for these elements:

- ☐ Places for both product display and customer engagement
- ☐ Data and lead collection mechanisms
- ☐ A clear call-to-action or next step for visitors
- ☐ Promotional items
- ☐ Takeaway information

So, are you ready for IMTS or do you have some work to do?

Talk to an Apogee exhibit and event experts - we offer the experience and insight necessary to take your IMTS booth to the next level.

Call Apogee at (315) 986-4600 or [request a consultation](#).

Together, we'll make this IMTS your best event yet.