



TOP 10 TIPS TO INCREASE YOUR INTERNATIONAL SALES AT THE SEMA SHOW

»» By Linda Spencer

As the industry gets ready to reconnect in person at the 2021 SEMA Show, the excitement and pace of both domestic and international buyer registrations are building. This article focuses on the international buyer—those residing outside the United States seeking products to meet local demand, whether it be in Sweden, the United Arab Emirates or South America. What follows are some top tips for attracting international buyers to your booth. After all, SEMA members' products have great overseas appeal.

Does your company have a strategy for meeting and following up with international buyers? According to the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration (ITA), U.S. exports of goods and services totaled \$2.5 trillion and supported 10.7 million U.S. jobs in 2019. Of the 288,000 U.S. companies that exported goods in 2019, 97.4% were small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

"The majority of U.S. specialty equipment companies are SMEs and their high-quality, innovative products have great appeal to car enthusiasts worldwide," says Dr. Monica Gorman, ITA's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Manufacturing. "Our agency is pleased to continue to partner with SEMA to help its members to expand their exports. For U.S. companies looking for help developing an export

strategy, finding new overseas distributors, or vetting potential customers, I urge you to visit www.trade.gov and to contact a representative of ITA's U.S. Commercial Service. We have offices in more than 100 cities nationwide."

The SEMA Show is an excellent avenue to meet new customers from overseas and increase your company's sales to international markets. In SEMA's survey of top global buyers, we found that 64% of them dedicated three-quarters of their time to walking the aisles to find new products. What are some easy steps to meet new international buyers at the Show and attract them to your booth?

1. Identify international buyers by looking for the easily identified "International Buyer" designa-

tion on their badges. Actively seek out those with international buyer badges. Acknowledge your present customers, friends and neighbors, but keep an eye out for that next best customer who may be located overseas.

- 2. Designate one or more staff with the primary responsibility to engage with international buyers who might be a little hesitant to ask for assistance.** Make sure that you have enough staff to adequately handle your booth. This is especially true if your booth is busy or when competing with U.S. attendees for attention. Research indicates that 58% of Show guests will not wait longer than one minute for a sales representative's assistance.
- 3. Place products in the New Products Showcase (NPS).** It's a great way to get your hottest new products in front of buyers and the media (including international media). The annual Global Media Awards will

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once again be selected by a group of global top automotive journalists. Each journalist will name 10 products from the NPS that he or she thinks will most appeal to consumers in their home markets. Winning companies will be recognized at the International Happy Hour, receiving Global Media Awards that signify the global appeal of their products and their companies. About 80% of all buyers visit the NPS, according to SEMA Show surveys. In our own mini survey of about 60 global buyers, our numbers really tracked that finding, with 79% reporting that they visited the NPS.

In fact, in an interesting finding, the top two influencers prompting global buyers to stop and visit an exhibitor were first that something caught their eye as they walked the aisles; and second that many international buyers are seeking that something “new” and, therefore, go to the NPS.

- 4. Request a free “We Export” sign to place in your booth.** Let international buyers know that you are interested in doing business with them by using this complimentary multilingual sign. Visit <https://tinyurl.com/we-export> for the “We Export Sign Request Form.” Better yet, if you are selling products for overseas applications, make sure that they are prominently displayed with signage showing the vehicles they fit.
- 5. Utilize the Center for International Commerce (CIC).** Located in Las Vegas Convention Center room Westgate 233, the CIC offers complimentary private meeting space and interpreters to facilitate meetings between exhibitors and international buyers. A team of interpreters will be on hand to assist in bilingual communication in key languages such as French, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese and Portuguese. Exhibitors are welcome to use these export-oriented services. Information will also be available regarding SEMA’s upcoming international business-development events.
- 6. Attend the SEMA Show’s International Happy Hour.** The event, to



»» Sign up for the SEMA International Happy hour to meet with global buyers and enthusiast media.

be held Wednesday, November 3, provides an opportunity to meet with not only international buyers from around the world but also international media. Visit <https://tinyurl.com/sema-ihh> to register.

- 7. Set aside time to attend one or more International Roundtables** on Monday, November 1, in Upper West Hall room W229 to learn about international markets and network with international buyers and other exporters. For the schedule of international sessions, visit <https://tinyurl.com/international-roundtables-2021>.
- 8. Vet leads and potential customers (global or domestic) before agreeing to partner.** Look at factors such as their track record, capabilities, what other products they sell and whether they are a good fit. How many field salespeople does the distributor have? Is their current sales territory/product niche consistent with the coverage you seek? If not, is the potential partner willing and able to expand? What is their product mix? For example, how many product lines do they represent? Are those product lines compatible with yours? Would there be any conflict of interest? Does the distributor represent any other U.S. firms? If the companies are not selling similar products, consider reaching out to determine their experiences with customers.
- 9. Inquire how the prospective customer prefers to communicate—**

by email, by WhatsApp, WeChat and Telegram? In many parts of the world, email is not often used and may be looked at infrequently.

- 10. Follow up promptly.** You leave Las Vegas tired but with lots of leads. Don’t let all your effort go by the wayside by not being active after the event is over. In this competitive world, if you don’t respond to leads within two or three days, your competitors will. Have a sound plan for following up with people immediately after the Show is over before you even head to Las Vegas, as you want to follow up with leads as soon as possible after the Show. The longer you wait, the longer they have to forget who you are and what you said. Make sure to take good notes during the Show to be able to send personal messages addressing their unique requests, concerns or interests.

For more information on SEMA’s international programs and resources, visit www.sema.org/international or contact Linda Spencer at lindas@sema.org.



Hold these dates: SEMA Middle East, March 22–29, 2022; and SEMA Nordic to Sweden in August 2022. ■