

You've decided to explore working with the travel trade. What next?

Exhibit at one of the large travel trade shows and meet buyers direct...

The travel trade has a vast selection of products and destinations to choose from, so it is up to you to meet and do business with them. Before you do so, it's best to identify what you want to get out of the market and those you'd like to potentially do business with.

The travel trade is about growing relationships with those who will suit you and your business. Not all will suit and you won't always be the right product for them. Identify potential contacts and invite them to speak with you. Remember – it's best to have a few good relationships that you keep going rather than lots of relationships you don't follow-up on.

It is also about time. This is not a market where business happens overnight. Remember they work to a long time frame. Typically European and US operators will look to learn about new products from September to March by visiting exhibitions and going on familiarisation trips. They then compile this information during the spring and summer and put in their new brochure, working at least 1 - 2 years in advance.

Key Travel Trade Events

ExploreGB

This is VisitBritain's flagship event held in March. This two-day workshop is filled with pre-scheduled one-to-one appointments and provides an invaluable opportunity to meet and do business with up to 300 hosted international travel buyers from up to 40 countries.

www.exploregb.org

British Tourism & Travel Show (BTTS)

This is the UK's leading domestic tourism event and brings together up to 300 exhibitors and up to 3000 targeted buyers – held in March at the NEC Birmingham.

www.tourismshow.co.uk

World Travel Market (WTM)

Staged annually at ExCel in London, World Travel Market - the leading global event for the travel industry - is a vibrant business-to-business event presenting a diverse range of destinations and industry sectors to UK and International travel professionals. More than 50,000 senior travel industry professionals, government ministers and international press visit to network, negotiate and discover the latest industry opinion and trends at WTM. It generates more than £2.5 billion of travel industry contracts.

<http://london.wtm.com>

Britain & Ireland Marketplace (BIM)

This is a 1 day workshop held in January and organised by ETOA with up to 32 pre-set appointments. The buyers in attendance will be those who already sell UK and Ireland and looking for new products to sell. Buyers will predominantly be based in UK (or at least have offices here) but sell to markets in Europe and beyond. There will also be outbound operators from Europe and North America

www.etoa.org/bim

ITB, Berlin

ITB Berlin is the world's largest and most important tourism trade fair, held in March. With approximately 10,000 exhibitors representing every sector of the tourism industry. The exhibition lasts 5 days of which 3 days are for trade visitors only. It attracts over 180,000 visitors.

Approximately 25 per-cent of the trade visitors come from countries other than Germany (a large part from the emerging Eastern European markets).

www.itb-berlin.de/en

Before attending any trade events

We would advise you to spend at least a few hours doing some/all of the following:

- **Review your own database and leads** from previous activities/events
- **Check out Visit Wales' travel trade website** – www.traveltrade.visitwales.com
Look at our operator search and search for operators that fit your market
- **Check out VisitBritain's industry website:** www.visitbritain.org
The insights and statistics section provides market intelligence information, latest insights, market profiles, trends and forecasts and more.
- **Request directories of trade contacts** from VisitBritain's overseas markets which will include company name and website addresses – note that due to data protection they can no longer provide full contact information.
- **Sign up to VisitBritain's industry enews** – www.visitbritain.org/sign-our-news
- **Take a look at Visit Wales' key operators list** (available on request)

Other useful websites to check out - see members listings on the following:

www.ukinbound.co.uk (search for members under Members List on the home page.

www.etoa.org (see under Membership, Member Search)

www.agto.co.uk – Association of Group Travel Organisers (see search for members link)

www.coachtourismcouncil.co.uk (see under Members Listings on the home page)

Once you have enough background information under your belt think carefully about what you have to offer as a product (remember this is the trade not consumer market):

1. What is the quality? How would a consumer experience it?
2. What makes your product unique from your competitors?
3. Which market(s) is it most appropriate for?
4. Can you confirm and guarantee the booking immediately or within 24 hours?
5. Can you provide block space (allocations) at your property?
6. Can you provide confidential net or commissionable pricing? Most often, the commission consists of a set percentage of the sale.
7. Can you work within their booking and cancellation policies?
8. Do you accept vouchers?
9. Do you offer free accommodation at your hotel or lunch at your attraction for coach drivers?
10. Ease of selling: if it's hard to book, operators won't sell it.
11. Price - If there is a different price every month how can the operator adapt his/her vouchers to cope with this? Can you provide and guarantee pricing and scheduling one year in advance of travel season?
12. Seasons: try to make winter 1 November - 31 March and summer 1 April -31 October to coincide with trade practice.

If you are representing an area or a number of members go armed with information such as the following:

1. Which accommodation providers in your area will work with the trade? i.e. do they offer commission/net rates?
2. Which ones have capacity to accept large groups?
3. Take their contact details: website address/contact name/telephone number/email address
4. What do the attractions in your area offer the travel trade and groups?
5. Take some suggested itineraries

Attending Workshops & Exhibitions – checklist

- Make sure you arrive in plenty of time before the start of the event – always factor in extra journey time as delays can occur.
- Ensure your desk/stand is staffed at all times.
- Ensure you end your meetings promptly as someone else may be waiting.
- If you have an appointment for areas you are not directly responsible for, collect any information or contacts to take with you.
- You don't need to take lots of literature – **business cards** are the most important item to have with you. You may also like to have information available on USBs available.
- Have your rates to hand, including any special group rates, commission/net rates etc.
- It's a good idea to have sample itineraries and an idea of what else is available in your area.
- Have a presentation on an iPad, or colour printed, available to highlight your product with lots of images.
- Make sure you take advantage of other networking opportunities. Chance conversations can lead to new product ideas.
- Remember your exhibitor badges, pens, paper and stapler and think about small give-aways.

Post event

Working with the Travel Trade really begins when you get home. You are one of many on their books. It's now about the personal relationship you establish, keeping them up-to-date with any changes, or just reminding them you are still here!

The Travel Trade requires a long-term commitment that pays off in consistency, additional and far reaching promotion and most of all, once you are working with the market it could soon be your bread & butter with any additional visitors a bonus.

Developing Your Business through the Travel Trade: Checklist

Topic	Considerations to Check
Product & Accessibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is your product suitable for the tour operator market? 2. Does the Operator actually have a demand for your sector of the market? 3. Is it good quality? 4. Who is it suitable for - the Japanese? Americans? Youth or senior market? 5. Is your product easy to book? 6. Does the operator know about you? 7. Is your website friendly/ easy to use - and only displays gross prices?
Rates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Operators require a <u>net</u> rate which they will pay to you. This rate is confidential between you and the operator - it isn't published anywhere. 2. Net rates are usually different to FIT rates which are for individual travel. 3. When negotiating with operators be sure to explain <u>exactly</u> what is included. <p><i>If you are unable or don't wish to offer net rates, then it is unlikely that operators will be interested in working with you.</i></p> <p>Pricing / Costing - have you considered your pricing structure?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It would benefit you to be as flexible as possible. 2. Have you taken into account pricing for out of season dates for example? 3. How will you charge? 4. Will you use vouchers/ accept credit cards? 5. Can you offer discounts?
Allocations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In some cases an Operator will need guaranteed allocations for an agreed length of time and a mutually agreed release date. 2. With the increase in short break and 'impulse' travel, booking trends are now very late and some operators could look for a 24hour release time. 3. Groups however are different and a longer lead in time is required - as well as a very competitive rate
Seasonality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is here that operators can make a big difference. Your pricing policy needs to be aggressive to enable the operator to make attractive offers. 2. Define your off peak periods. It helps if you can come in line with the industry as a whole. Winter 01 November - 31 March and Summer 01 April- 31 October
Photography	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide quality digital images. 2. Does your product / website / brochure stand out? 3. Does it have the WOW factor?
Flexibility & Commitment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When operators want something different, can you be flexible? 2. Give it the <u>YES</u> Factor! 3. It's important to build and nurture a relationship with an operator - and to demonstrate commitment! 4. If at first you don't succeed, don't give up - personnel changes are numerous in the travel industry and a new person may be more receptive

Speed & Response	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Linked to the commitment issue and the essential detail that can make or break an opportunity or partnership. 2. Crucial to respond to requests and leads immediately!
Partnerships	<p><u>2 aspects:</u></p> <p>1st –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Linking to member trade organisations such as UKinbound and attending trade shows- excellent for networking. 2. Remember to study the buyers list / target who you want to see/ pre-show mailing and <u>FOLLOW UP PROMPTLY.</u> 3. An important point to remember if you wish to reach the international market is that it could be more cost effective to link up with an incoming operator rather than market your product overseas independently. <p>2nd –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Partnering with e.g. attraction / activity operator and presenting a combined itinerary to encourage extension of stay in your area. 2. Be aware of regulations governing packaging - read the EC Package Travel Regulations. If you want to develop this as a package rather than simply presenting the separate components. <p>www.legislation.gov.uk</p>