

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a tradeshow or networking event. It shows the silhouettes of many people standing and talking in a large room. A bright red rectangular overlay is positioned in the upper center, containing the text. The overall lighting is dim, with the red overlay providing a strong contrast.

Inquill

6 Things to do *before* the tradeshow.

The companies that convert trade shows into an international pipeline arrive prepared. These are the things they are doing to make sure they get the most out of their investments.

At a trade show, buyers can tell within minutes whether a company *has prepared*.

It rarely comes down to the booth. What buyers notice is whether your team knows who they're looking for and what to offer. **The six steps below** cover what to do in the weeks before the show, so your team arrives ready for those conversations.

- 1 ————— Set your *goals and target* buyers
- 2 ————— Book meetings six to eight weeks ahead
- 3 ————— Get your website ready
- 4 ————— Train your staff and align on messaging
- 5 ————— Prepare your materials and documents
- 6 ————— Plan your follow-up before you leave

01

Set your *goals and target* buyers

In 2026, SNEC drew more than 2,800 exhibitors from 95 countries. Without a clear goal, three days can pass in conversations with whoever stops by, and you fly home unsure whether it was worth it. "Meet new customers" can't be measured, but "twenty meetings with qualified buyers" or "five proposals sent within a month" can. Clean tech deals usually take months to close, so judge the show by the pipeline you build rather than the contracts you sign there. Two or three goals are plenty.

Then decide who can help you get there. Developers, distributors and investors walk the same halls but care about different things. Describe your target buyer by company type, market and deal size, for example "commercial developers in Germany and Poland." Your past deals show which buyers actually chose you, so start there. Put the profile in one sentence your whole team can repeat. You'll still talk to others, but everyone will know who comes first.



WHAT TO DO

1

Set two or three goals you can measure after the show, such as qualified meetings or proposals sent.

2

Describe your target buyer in one sentence: company type, market and deal size.

3

Rank your target markets and buyer types beforehand so the team knows who to prioritise when the booth gets busy.

02

Book meetings *six to eight* weeks ahead

The buyers you most want to meet plan their SNEC days before they land in Shanghai, and their calendars fill up quickly. If you wait until the show to find them, you're competing with every booth they walk past. Start contacting your target accounts and last year's contacts six to eight weeks ahead. Much earlier and your email gets buried, much later and the best slots are already taken. Give each person a clear reason to meet, like a new product for their market or a project similar to theirs, and suggest two or three time slots so replying is easy.

SNEC has its own tools for this too. The organisers run an e-invitation system for exhibitors and a platform for booking appointments with visitors before the show, so use both for the buyers on your list. It's also worth checking visas. Many visitors can currently enter China visa-free for up to 30 days, but the scheme is temporary and only confirmed until 31 December 2026, while SNEC 2027 runs June 2 to 4. If a buyer needs a visa, send an invitation letter early, since appointments at consulates can take weeks.



WHAT TO DO

1

Contact your target accounts and last year's contacts six to eight weeks before the show.

2

Suggest two or three time slots in every invitation, so buyers can confirm with a one-line reply.

3

Use SNEC's appointment platform, and offer invitation letters to buyers who need a visa.

03 / Get your *website ready*

Most buyers will look you up before agreeing to a meeting and again after visiting your booth, often on their phone in the hall. Gartner found that B2B buyers spend about 27% of their buying time researching online on their own. In other words, your website does a lot of the selling before anyone shakes your hand. Test how fast it loads from the countries you're targeting, using a tool like WebPageTest that lets you pick a test location. A site hosted in one region can be slow in another, and pages that rely on Google fonts or YouTube videos can stall for visitors in China.

Then check what buyers see once the page opens. Within a few seconds they should understand what you make, which markets you serve and where you've delivered, ideally backed by a references page with real locations and project sizes. Make sure the English reads naturally, and add a Chinese version if you're targeting Chinese buyers. List the contact details buyers actually use: a company email address, WhatsApp for international buyers and WeChat for Chinese ones. Send a test message through your contact form, and make sure someone replies within a day.



WHAT TO DO

1

Test your site's loading speed from your target markets, and fix any page that takes longer than three seconds.

2

Add a references page with real projects, locations and sizes, and make sure product pages have downloadable datasheets.

3

List a company email, WhatsApp and WeChat, then send a test message through your contact form.



81%

of B2B buyers have already picked a preferred supplier before they first speak to sales, so the decision is often half made before anyone reaches your booth.

3X

more likely to convert. Exhibitors whose websites clearly show which markets they serve and what they have delivered there convert show contacts into follow-up meetings at three times the rate of those whose sites don't.

3sec

is roughly how long visitors will wait. Google found that 53% of mobile visits are abandoned when a page takes longer than that to load, and a site hosted far from your buyers can easily miss the mark.

CASE STUDY

LIFE365: FROM A SCATTERED CATALOGUE TO A B2B PLATFORM THAT GROWS WITH THEM

Life365.eu is a European B2B electronics distributor working across five sectors, including solar and smart infrastructure. Their website was fragmented, buyers couldn't find what they needed, and key processes ran on separate systems.

We defined how the five sectors fit together, then rebuilt the site in Webflow so new product lines can be added without a developer. We also built a Shopify integration for resellers, a tariff calculator and a warehouse PDF compiler that replaced several manual tasks.

The result: 10 electronics verticals with clear positioning, 3 custom tools built, 2 core platforms integrated.

O4 / Train your staff and *align on messaging*

A visitor may speak to two or three people at your booth before reaching the right one. If each of them describes the company differently, the buyer walks away with a muddled picture. Agree on a short message everyone uses, ideally two sentences on what you do, which markets you serve and one or two projects that prove it. Then make sure the whole team knows your target buyer profile and can recognise it quickly by asking a few simple questions: which market the visitor works in, what kind of project they have, and when they plan to buy.

Next, decide who does what before the show opens. You need people who can hold a real business conversation in the languages your target buyers speak, which at SNEC usually means English and Mandarin. If no one on the team fits, hire a bilingual host for the show days. Agree in advance what staff can discuss on the spot, because a buyer who hears "I'll need to check with my manager" on a basic question will often move on to the next booth. Finally, agree when to bring in a senior colleague, so promising buyers reach the right person straight away.



WHAT TO DO

1

Agree on a two-sentence company message covering what you do, where you sell and one project that proves it.

2

Give staff three quick questions to qualify visitors: their market, their project type and their buying timeline.

3

Decide in advance what staff can say about pricing and terms, and when to bring in a senior colleague.

05

Prepare your materials and documents

The datasheet a buyer picks up at your booth often goes home with them and gets passed around their office, long after your conversation has faded. Make sure it opens with what they care about most: the markets you've delivered in, the size of those projects, and one or two references they'll recognise. Certifications still belong on the page, but most buyers assume you have them, so put them underneath as support rather than using them as the headline. Before anything is printed, have a native English speaker read every page. Awkward translations and inconsistent product names make a company look less established than it really is.

Financial health matters too. With China's leading solar manufacturers still under heavy financial pressure in 2026, buyers want to know you'll be around to honour your warranties. Prepare a pack with traceability documents, independent test reports, warranty terms and a short financial summary, all in English and ready to email the same day someone asks.



WHAT TO DO

1

Rework datasheets and brochures so they open with the markets and projects you've delivered, with certifications underneath.

2

Have a native English speaker check all printed materials before your print deadline.

3

Prepare a due diligence pack with traceability documents, test reports, warranty terms and a financial summary, ready to send.

06

Plan your follow-up before you leave

Leads usually go cold for a simple reason: by the time someone follows up, nobody remembers who said what. After three days at SNEC you'll have a stack of business cards and very little context about which visitor had a 50 MW project, who asked for samples and who was only comparing prices. Decide before the show how every conversation will be recorded, whether that's a lead-scanning app, a shared spreadsheet or a short form. Keep it the same for everyone and limit it to the essentials: the visitor's market, their project, their timeline and the next step you agreed. Notes should be written the same day, while the conversation is still fresh.

Planning this sounds obvious, but many companies skip it. One study found that fewer than 70% of exhibitors had a formal plan for following up trade show leads, and only 47% tracked those leads through the sales cycle. Decide now who owns which leads, and set a deadline for first contact, ideally within three working days of getting home. Draft your follow-up emails before you fly, so each one only needs a personal line about the conversation you had. A few weeks after the show, compare the results with the goals you set at the start, so you know what to change next year.



WHAT TO DO

1

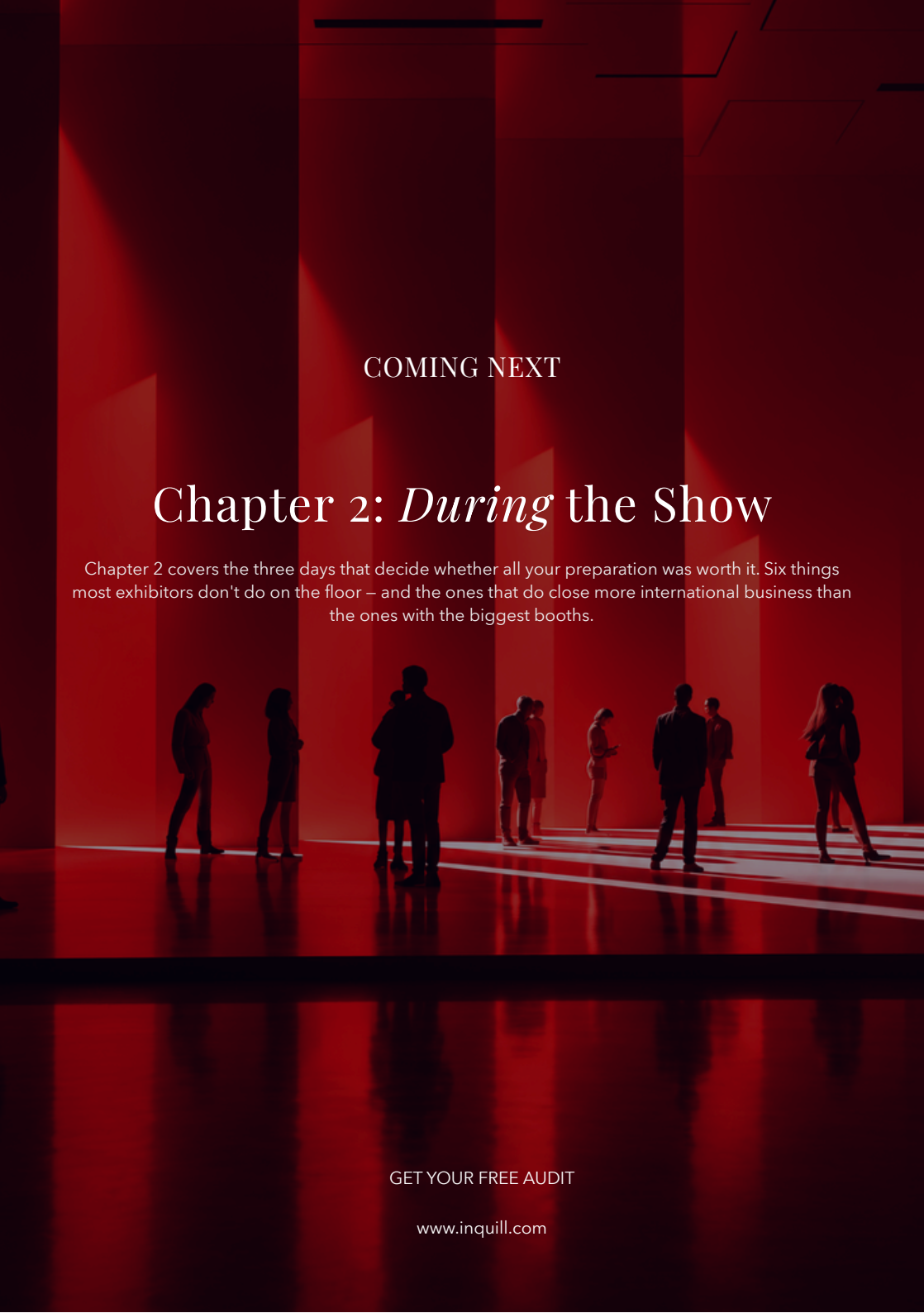
Choose one way to record every conversation, covering market, project, timeline and next step.

2

Decide who follows up on which leads, and contact the best ones within three working days.

3

Draft your follow-up emails before the show, leaving space for a personal line about each conversation.

The background of the entire page is a red-tinted photograph of a trade show floor. In the foreground, the silhouettes of several people are visible, standing and talking in small groups. The floor is highly reflective, mirroring the silhouettes and the red light. The background shows more people and the structure of the show booth, all in a monochromatic red palette.

COMING NEXT

Chapter 2: *During* the Show

Chapter 2 covers the three days that decide whether all your preparation was worth it. Six things most exhibitors don't do on the floor – and the ones that do close more international business than the ones with the biggest booths.

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