

# Planning for Profitable Meetings at the Electronic Distribution Show & Conference

A service to EDS Exhibitors from   
*Electronic Components, Assemblies and Materials Association*

Planning Guide

**EDS**  
Where the Electronics Industry Connects

## Why **ECA** publishes this guide

### *ECA, Electronic Components, Assemblies & Materials Association,*

is the voice of and support group for manufacturers of electronic components and related products. Since a significant percentage of the components manufactured by ECA members and their peers are brought to market through distribution, ECA uses many avenues to facilitate the manufacturer-distributor relationship.

Probably the most prominent of these avenues is ECA's sponsorship, in partnership with the National Electronic Distributors Association and the Electronics Representatives Association, of the Electronic Distribution Show and Conference (EDS). We help our members, and the industry constituency we represent, when we add value to EDS by improving the quality of the meetings and other interfaces among industry executives at this annual gathering of decision makers.

Many of the suggestions contained in this guide are useful in planning for other trade shows, but here we concentrate specifically on EDS, and on information to make EDS as productive as possible.

### *Planning for EDS centers on two basic principles:*

- **EDS is appointment-oriented. Floor traffic is a plus, but don't rely on it totally.**
- **Make a plan for each type of encounter: how to qualify a new prospect, how to increase sales with current customers, what problems in a relationship need to be solved. The ECA Planning Guide is designed to help you make the right plans for the right results.**

## *What is EDS?*

Although the industry “shorthand” name for EDS is “the Show,” actually EDS is two events in one, and both of the events have dimensions that make EDS much more than just a show. To get the most benefit from participating in this unique event, participants have to understand its multiple dimensions, and plan in advance to capitalize on its distinctive features:

EDS is an appointment-centered meeting place, and becomes more so each year. Planning for EDS should include contacting the people you want to see, well in advance of your arrival in Las Vegas.

Appointments are not enough. Whether your purpose is to refresh an existing relationship or to create a new one, you should have a checklist of what you want to accomplish at each meeting. Planned objectives, and preparation to meet those objectives, are the basic elements behind every successful EDS meeting.

EDS is a marketplace, where conversation and conference lead to commerce. Every meeting at EDS has to explore or confirm a “fit” between the products a manufacturer offers and the markets a distributor or representative serves.

EDS is a resource center and a forum. Your planning should allow time to visit Tri-Association Central, where the three associations that bring you EDS also put their resources at your disposal. As a forum where industry trends are explored, EDS provides both formal and informal methods of learning what’s new, what’s happening, what’s going to be happening, and what it means to your company and your prosperity. Keynotes, workshops and networking events all put you on top of the trends that shape your future.



Where the Electronics Industry Connects

*What is EDS?*

# Who attends EDS?

## *Manufacturers of electronic components, materials, accessories*

Most of the people wearing Exhibitor badges at EDS sell products they manufacture, or have manufactured for them, through the distributor channel. They may be at EDS to find new distributors, or to meet with their established distributors, or primarily to recruit manufacturers' representatives

## *Providers of goods and services to EDS attendees*

Other companies with Exhibitor badges offer products or services that the companies attending EDS use in their own businesses—software, Internet services, consultants, etc.

## *Distributors of electronic components*

An important audience at EDS is distributors of electronic components and related products, especially those who buy and re-sell interconnect, passive and electro-mechanical components. They come from all over the world, and they include those who do business primarily in their own local markets, those who do business nationally and even globally, those who specialize in particular component categories, such as switches or batteries, and those who specialize in particular customer categories, like institutions or security. EDS attracts about 1200 distributor personnel from 500 companies.

## *Manufacturers' representatives*

Many manufacturers participating in EDS outsource their field sales to professional organizations (rep firms) that serve a clearly defined territory, do not take title to the goods they sell, and are compensated primarily through commissions on sales results. (Many also receive fees for providing special services and/or retainers for introducing "missionary" product lines—new market entries without an existing customer base in the territory.)

## *Industry trade associations*

The three primary U.S. trade associations concerned with distribution, ECA, ERA, and NEDA, sponsor EDS and have key personnel on site to answer questions about the industry as well as about the associations. In addition, many offshore associations and domestic "niche" organizations attend and/or exhibit.

## *Industry press and analysts*

All of the major electronics industry trade publications (print and online) that cover the channel, and many of those that cover products and technology attend EDS, thus making EDS a prime venue for interfacing with editors and reporters. As with the other aspects of EDS planning, you need to tell the media in advance what you have that's new and suggest a time to meet, either one on one or through a press conference in Media Central. In addition to trade press attendees, EDS also is visited by two types of analysts, those that cover the industry to advise on investments, and those that follow various product segments, such as switches, connectors, etc.

## *Why do they attend?*

### ***Distributors***

Distributor attendees are looking for new lines to carry, compatible with the needs of their distributor base; or for new products from their existing vendors, and/or to build relationships and to find out what's going on in the industry. Be prepared to tell them who uses your products, and how they differ from similar and/or competitive products, they expect new vendors to have a program in place, including recommended inventories, selling prices, return policies, lead generation and marketing support.

### ***Representatives***

Representative attendees are at EDS to facilitate dialogue between the distributors that they call on and the manufacturers whose products they bring to market. They may also be looking for new line opportunities, and to meet with their current principals for review and planning. Representatives who are looking for product lines want to be sure that a new line will fit well with the other products they sell. They want exclusivity in their clearly defined territories. If you do not have an established customer base, expect them to want to be paid fees for introducing your missionary line.

### ***Manufacturers***

Manufacturer attendees may be looking for new distributors, or new representatives, or both; or they may be at EDS only to interface with their existing channel network. They may be planning to introduce new products for their distributors to sell, or new strategies and programs. They know that at EDS they can get more done at less expense than via any other way of meeting with their channel partners.

**Why Do They Attend?**

## Plan your participation for functionality and results

It doesn't matter whether your EDS "home" is a booth, a Euro-Suite, a conference room, or a hotel suite – your company is on exhibit!

### Make sure your environment projects the right message about your brand

This is particularly important if product display is an important component of your EDS participation—but even if product is not the focus, graphics help create an impression and draw visitors' attention. Determine what you need to display, and what you need to demonstrate. If you're going to use audiovisuals, make sure there are connections for your laptop, and if you're showing to audiences of more than one or two, that you have a screen and projector.

### Welcoming guests/Making notes/Recording leads

In a booth or Euro, be on your feet to welcome guests, whether drop-ins or appointments. If you're staffing your space alone, and you're with a guest, acknowledge the next visitor and provide something to look at while you finish your prior conversation. Make sure you are equipped to take notes on action items and keep a record of everyone you've talked with. Even if the conversation goes nowhere, after EDS, send a letter or an email acknowledging that it took place. Qualify the people you're talking to, so you don't appear busy when you're with someone you can't do business with, and meanwhile discourage a real prospect from waiting.

### Multiple meetings

It will sometimes happen that you'll have more meetings happening than your space can accommodate. In a suite, arrange for early housekeeping, so you can move a meeting into a bedroom that's been made up. In the convention area, remember that Tri-Association Central has lounge facilities that you are welcome to use, even if you are not an association member. If your meeting is with an editor, reporter, or analyst, you may be able to reserve a private room in Media Central.

### Capitalize on trade show trends

As different as EDS is from the typical trade show, you can still learn from what's happening in convention centers around the country:

- Attendees are coming with planned itineraries and agendas—so you have to get on their radar screens before they leave home.
- Both exhibitors and visitors (distributors and reps) are looking for ROI from their participation. Make sure your visitors can quantify the value they received from their time with you. Make sure you can quantify the value you received from your time with them.

Looking at a show as a PR opportunity is as outmoded as looking at your booth as a billboard. Shows are about commerce—whether the deal is made on site, or the site visit is setting the stage and building the relationship for later, the ultimate goal is to sell something. ***At EDS in particular, the attendee is not looking for something to buy—but for something to sell.***

Branding is still a buzz word—and branding is not necessarily a function of the biggest booth, but may be a function of the biggest presence. Advertising in the Show Daily and Directory—sponsorships—hospitality – these are all ways to look big and build brand, even from a 10 x 10!

## Appointment scheduling and planning

### How to get an appointment at EDS

- Ask for it. Make a list of whom you want or need to see, and call or email with a suggested time. Tell them what you'll have at EDS, and what it can mean for them.
- Using the EDS mailing list of registered distributors is one way to get appointments or drop-ins from people you don't know. Tell them what you'll have at EDS, and what it can mean for them.

The experts tell us it takes three repetitions to get an idea across. If you get a response from the first or second message, instead of the third invitation, send a confirmation. Tell them what you'll have at EDS, and what it can mean for them.

Use your own list too—and don't worry about cross-checking it with the EDS list. Your invitation may be the tipping point for someone who hadn't previously registered. Tell them what you'll have at EDS, and what it can mean for them.

*Note: You didn't catch us in a mistake, using the same line repeatedly. This is our way to emphasize that getting an appointment is a direct function of WIIFM—what's in it for me.*

Use the EDS Matchmaker service to announce that you are open to seeing new distributors, whether in specific regions or across the country. It's free, it's easy, and it's effective, because it prequalifies mutual interest. Go to [www.edsconnect.com](http://www.edsconnect.com) and sign on.

Use the EDS Online Scheduler to keep track of your appointments. Before the show, you can download it to your PDA.

## Making your appointments effective

Every appointment needs an agenda, although it won't necessarily be the same agenda for each meeting.

Ask the distributor or rep you're meeting with what they want to talk about, and integrate your agenda with theirs. Have necessary support data on hand.

- Sales history
- Market share/competition
- New product information
- Business plans
- Problems and opportunities

Here are some of the issues that are likely to be on any agenda. Be prepared to answer them as well as to ask them.

- How's business?
- What's affecting business in your market area?
- What are your forecasts for the year ahead?
- How are we doing? How can we improve our service to you and your customers?
- How have you been impacted by the major trends and issues in the marketplace
- Globalization and manufacturing moving offshore
- Impact of the Internet and e-commerce, industry consolidation
- Environmental pressures, technology advances—wireless and others?

### Booth Tips:

- **Make sure your booth staff create a good impression**
- **Neatly and professionally dressed**
- **Act like you're glad to be here**
- **Welcome your visitors, and ask them questions so you can touch their needs and interests in your responses**
- **Stay on your feet—people are more likely to stop than if you're seated**
- **Don't talk about your product—talk about what your product can do for your visitor and their customers**
- **Don't scare people away because you're so busy talking to your own staff**
- **Take notes, collect business cards—and follow up**

## Hospitality Guidelines

An industry sage once remarked that the two basic elements that make EDS tick are new opportunities and old friends. Certainly the EDS environment is conducive to adding a personal element to every business relationship.

Here are some of the planning considerations for EDS hospitality:

- Consider the objectives of every planned distributor or rep meeting.
- Discussions over food or drink always take on a more relaxed mood than those that are strictly business. Keep that in mind in determining which meetings to set at breakfast or lunch.
- If the objectives are strictly relationship building, cocktails, dinner and/or a show might be an excellent alternative (or supplement) to a formal business meeting.
- Your meeting site impacts the hospitality you might be expected to offer.

In a booth, the level possible or expected, is limited—at most, think about a bowl of hard candies or a dish of cookies.

In the private area of a Euro-Suite, you might want to add soft drinks or coffee.

Floor conference rooms give you more flexibility and higher expectations. But you can keep it simple—coffee, tea and soft drinks all day, donuts or muffins in the morning, cookies in the afternoon, sandwiches only for meetings right at lunch time.

The same guidelines can apply in a hotel suite, keeping in mind that your distributor has come for business, not for refreshments. Alcoholic beverages may be appropriate in the late afternoon, and you may even want to invite people you have met with earlier to come back for cocktails and socializing.

## Marketing at EDS

No matter what the specific objectives you have set for EDS, ultimately your goal is to sell something. Consider the following options in support of sales:

- Offer an incentive for coming to see you. This might be special pricing, or extra promotional support, or a free gift with purchase, or a free gift just for stopping by. But tell people in advance what you've got for them.
- Have a program in place. Remember that this is a show for distributors, not OEMs. Be prepared to discuss not just your product and its applications and markets, but also your pricing structure, merchandising support, return privileges, warranties, etc.
- Offer test and trial programs  
– liberal return policies, etc.
- Show off your new products by presenting them to the media at a press conference (Media Central is available as a venue) and to distributors at the EDS New Product Seminar.
- Do something outrageous (outrageous, but not offensive). Get people talking about the booth where everyone is in costume, or where you're slicing a giant wedding cake, or where a magician is doing sleight of hand.
- Use the tools on the EDS web site ([www.edsconnects.com](http://www.edsconnects.com)) including the Meeting Facilitator to find interested distributors ([www.edsc.beganto.com](http://www.edsc.beganto.com)) and use the EDS Online Press Guide [www.edsconnects.com/exh\\_PP\\_PressSupport.asp](http://www.edsconnects.com/exh_PP_PressSupport.asp)
- Get Expert Advice. There's a team of 20 people ready and willing to help you get the most out of EDS—the professional heads of the three sponsoring trade associations, the EDS staff and public relations counsel, and the four manufacturers, four distributors, and four representatives who sit on the EDS Board of Directors. Their names, phone numbers and email addresses may be accessed at:  
[www.edsconnects.com/exh\\_ExpertAdvice.asp](http://www.edsconnects.com/exh_ExpertAdvice.asp).

When EDS is over, it isn't over. Contact everyone you met with, and express appreciation for their taking the time to meet with you. Remind them of what you discussed, and what are the action items—yours and theirs. Send the literature or other information you promised—FedEx or similar will show that your message is important and their business is important. Thank them for their business, past, present and future. And then keep in touch. If you see a good “fit,” plan on 6 more contacts between now and next year's EDS.

## ACTION ITEMS TO REMEMBER

Action Item	Start Date	End Date	Responsibility to:
Hotel reservations			
Air/rental car reservations			
Reserve meeting space for pre-show sales meeting			
Set up master billing account			
Review Exhibitor Manual			
Plan exhibit (theme, graphics, construction)			
Define show objectives, sales strategies			
Order exhibit furnishings			
Develop show promotions and literature			
Plan publicity and advertising:			
News releases			
Show Directory			
EDS Daily stories and ads			
Giveaways			
Order exhibit utilities (phone, electric)			
Order exhibit services:			
Labor			
Floral			
Signage			
Security			
Booth cleaning			
Photography			
Audio-Visual			
Order badges			
Make and confirm rep and disti appointments			
Plan rep/disti entertainment			
Order materials to ship w/booth (literature, appointment forms, giveaways, etc.)			
Send promo information to reps			
Confirm hotel arrangements (rooms, food, beverage, etc.)			
Plan which workshops to attend			
Finalize booth staffing schedule			
Develop plan to gather competitive info at show			
Establish benchmarks for show evaluation			

## PLANNING FORMS

List the distributors and reps you want to see at EDS.

Company Name	Contact Individual's Name	Phone	Email	Rep or Disty

After appointment is confirmed, transfer to your EDS Scheduler

### Meeting Planner (fill out for each scheduled meeting)

Meeting with (company): \_\_\_\_\_

Attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Day and time: \_\_\_\_\_

Here are some of the questions you may want on your agenda for meetings with your current distributors:

Where do we rank among all your lines, and how can we improve our position?

What's your current volume on our line? GP? How can we improve those numbers?

How many active customers for our line? How can we grow that number?

What problems do you have with us? With selling our products?

Agenda item

Resolution or necessary action

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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## Setting Objectives

Why are we attending EDS? \_\_\_\_\_

What are our general objectives? \_\_\_\_\_

What are our quantified specific objectives? \_\_\_\_\_

How many reps do we expect to meet with? \_\_\_\_\_

How many distributors? \_\_\_\_\_

How many of these will be new relationships? \_\_\_\_\_

What is our sales goal, in dollars? \_\_\_\_\_

In number of orders? \_\_\_\_\_

For particular line items? \_\_\_\_\_

What is our plan for getting appointments with the reps and distributors we need to see?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What new products, programs, or policies will we be introducing? \_\_\_\_\_

Do we have documentation in place or in work? \_\_\_\_\_

Who will be attending from our company? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the work plan for each of them? (Time in booth, after-hours time entertaining customers, responsible for logistics, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

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## Meeting Follow-Up Email

(Be sure to share comments received with the rep, whether or not the rep attended the meeting)

Thanks for meeting with us during EDS. While they're fresh in your mind, please share your thoughts about the meeting itself, to help us plan better for next year's EDS and work with you more effectively through the year.

Good or bad, we'll really appreciate your candid responses.

Did you think our meeting was successful? \_\_ Yes \_\_ No

Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How could the meeting have been improved? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Was there anything left open we should be talking about? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thanks for your input.

## Logistics

You'll find complete information about logistical support on the EDS web site: [www.edsconnects.com](http://www.edsconnects.com). Advance arrangements are advisable wherever possible.

For year-round assistance, the three trade associations that sponsor EDS are here to help you. Look for ECA, ERA and NEDA in Tri-Association Central, in the main exhibit hall.

### Here are the organizations to contact for specific EDS services:

#### **Food service in your booth or conference suite**

Contact Catering

#### **Food service in your suite**

Contact Room Service

#### **Package pickup**

Contact Business Center

#### **On-site printing and letter service**

Contact Business Center

#### **Show services**

#### **Signs, Electrical, Phone, etc.**

Contact Champion Exposition Services

#### **Trouble-shooting**

Visit Show Office

#### **Photographs**

Contact Show Photographer

Contact EDS Show Daily

#### **Space at EDS the following year**

Visit Show Office

#### **Trade association information**

Visit Tri-Association Central

#### **Press Kit Drop-Off**

**From noon on Monday**

**Media Central**

#### **Reserve Press Conference or Press Meeting space**

#### **Pre-show,**

Contact EDS PR Counsel

At EDS, visit Media Central



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