

To give you more of an insight into our Christmas Fair, and the team at Orchard Events Ltd, below are some FAQ's answered by Nicky Stephenson, founder of Festive Gift Fair.

How long has Orchard Events Ltd been running Festive Gift Fair?

I launched the Fair at the NEC, Birmingham 29 years ago and Sharla has been an integral part of the team for 17 years now! We have both worked on a whole host of shows in our careers, trade and public. Both good experienced all-rounders... creativity, administration, sales, marketing and a huge amount of passion and energy!

Not only are we professional event organisers but we also have a great understanding of the gift industry - know loads of stallholders and consistently deliver 30,000+ Christmas shoppers each year. It's always a very busy, buzzy, happy show!

How many Christmas shoppers do you expect at Festive Gift Fair?

Without question, Festive Gift Fair is one of the most anticipated consumer events held annually at the NEC. For many years visitor numbers have consistently been between 28,000-33,000 over the four days.

Numbers in the hall are dictated to us by the Health & Safety regulations of the NEC. It's so busy, at peak times we occasionally have had to stagger visitors entering the hall if it's full to capacity.

What makes you different from other Christmas Fairs?

- 29 successful years! Still under the same original ownership... familiar faces and friendly voices! You're dealing with the same people at Orchard Events all year round.
- We go to town on presentation with lots of Christmas decorations. Our main claim to fame is the quality and quantity of the entertainers - Festive characters and live musicians that bring the show alive!
- Easy build up and breakdown - drive into the hall for loading/unloading and the best on-site floor management team!

Why do you stage the Fair at NEC, Birmingham?

Because it's indoors, in the Heart of the Country, has great road and rail infrastructure, easy access for stallholders, and easy to get to with plenty of parking and a train station onsite. We don't want to be in the middle of a field in November!! Plus, we have the best floor management team in the UK, who are local to the NEC and have helped us run the Fair for many many years!

How many stands are there?

Our floor plan is tried and tested - it's the right size and right layout for the shoppers to see everything and not get overwhelmed or disorientated! So... we don't try and change or enlarge it, we keep the number at around 300 making sure there is a good ratio between volume of stands and shoppers. The majority of stallholders are recommended by our existing exhibitors.

How many stands do you allow selling similar products?

We try not to put likeminded products next to each other. We like to mix up in the hall so there is a surprise around every corner which increases the fun shopping experience. If we're getting too many enquiries from a specific category, we make the hard decision to turn some stallholders away and cap that particular product early in the year.

We do not offer exclusivity unless very specific. To be honest, despite all our efforts in advance (talking to customers and learning their product/price point), we don't always know until the day exactly what each stallholder will bring. Most have a lot of different stock and sometimes make last minute changes unbeknown to us! Nowadays it also depends on other factors such as supply and freight.

How much can I expect to take at Festive Gift Fair?

That's a difficult one to answer! In the main, our sellers are reluctant to share their takings with us.

We monitor and gauge the success of the Fair by the visitor footfall (always great) and the number of stallholders that rebook year on year. Plus... we rely on feedback from our onsite team. The guys that run the Exhibitor Store have a good handle on this, as they witness all the re-stocking that takes place throughout the day. Likewise, the Present Creche (where purchases can be left securely in crates) gives us a very good indication of the huge amount of shopping that goes on.

Despite economic challenges and venue/contractor price increases, we have taken the decision not put our stand costs up again this year. We appreciate that the investment, the logistics, setting up, staffing and selling is full on and we want all our stallholders to enjoy being part of the Fair and make a good return.

How do you promote Festive Gift Fair?

For many years, we attract 30,000+ shoppers to FESTIVE GIFT FAIR. So the hall is busy and buzzy all 4 days. Although our Fair is, no doubt one of the most established and popular consumer events at the NEC, we are continually investing and looking at ways to spread the word... through GLOSSY FLYERS, EDITORIAL IN LOCAL AND NATIONAL PRESS our SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN is beyond exciting!

However, our CORE PROMOTION concentrates on KEEPING IN REGULAR EMAIL COMMUNICATION with the many thousands of shoppers that have actually visited the Fair over recent years, love it and return - our current database is HUGE. When we announce tickets are 'NOW ON SALE', thousands of tickets are BOUGHT that same day!.

We work in tandem with our ticket Box Office - SEE TICKETS, a national ticket provider, who promote through their website and send targeted emails to thousands of people that regularly visit the NEC and ARENA for other shows and music events.

Also we work closely with the NEC venue, who focus on promoting Festive Gift Fair on their website and to their huge database of visitors that regularly attend the NEC site.

What happens when I reserve a stand?

It's pretty straight forward... we'll send you a short email confirming your stand details along with the floorplan and our T's and C's.

It's three equal payments... the first due on booking, the 2nd stage due 13th July and the 3rd stage due 13th October 2025. Payment can be made by credit/debit card or BACS.

At the beginning of September we'll email you the Exhibitor Manual containing all the info to help you plan everything smoothly in advance. End October, you'll receive the Final Exhibitor Instructions.

What's included in the stand cost?

- white shell scheme walls
- silver grey carpet
- snowflake name board with company name and stand number
- decorative Christmas icicle lighting along the top fascia
- free Exhibitor Store for easy restocking of your stand, before, during and after the show each day.
- link through from our website to yours
- 1 x vehicle car parking pass for duration of the show

It's then down to you to make your stand look gorgeous! It doesn't have to cost a lot to be creative and Christmassy ... make it bright and eye-catching and you'll attract more shoppers to your stand! The more you interact with our enthusiastic shoppers, the more you will sell!

When can we set up our stand?

The day before the Fair opens ... Wednesday 12th November any time between 8am-8pm. There will be a NEC traffic system in place. The great thing is you can drive into the back of hall to unload so no getting wet if it's raining or indeed snowing!

It's a good time to say 'hello' to our team who run our free Exhibitor Store and get allocated a defined area for your stock. On arrival in the hall, go to the Organisers Office to pick up exhibitor badges and vehicle pass.

What other Christmas Fairs do you run?

We don't! We work our socks off to make each year better than the last focusing all our energy and expertise on this **ONE BRILLIANT FAIR!** We have a large number of sub-contractors from electricians to musicians we need to connect with throughout the year to ensure the smooth running of the event. After all these years, Sharla and I still get excited about seeing it all come together and of course are here to advise you on any aspect throughout the year.