



The business of fashion and textiles

Guidance Notes for UK Applicants for Pitti Uomo:

Pitti Uomo is the main international menswear and accessory trend show. It attracts over 30,000 visitors every January and over 20,000 every June. Of the overall visitor numbers, over 50% come from Italy. There are important buyer groups from most countries but of special note are Japan, the USA, Korea and the rest of Europe. China and Russia are also well represented but these countries attendance figures fluctuate in line with their economies. The UK is especially well represented at the show.

Pitti Uomo is usually the first show of the season; whilst orders are sometimes placed, most people are there to browse the key trends and collections and plan orders and relationships to follow up on as the season progresses.

Over 100 UK companies show regularly at Pitti Uomo, making us the second largest group at the show after the host nation, Italy. Third in line, and in hot pursuit, is France.

The **show has a long waiting list and** works differently from many other shows. In particular, it is a trend showcase. This is important as it means that **Pitti Uomo aims to cover the key trends but does not aim to include every seller of a particular product type.** The selection criteria for the show vary from season to season in line with the trends. Whilst the selection process can be quick, the space allocation depends on space becoming available in the right part of the show.

Potential exhibitors should read these notes very carefully before applying for space at the show. They should also visit the show to get a better understanding of how the show works.

The application is in two stages:

Stage 1: Selection by the Technical Committee (“Comitato Tecnico”)

To apply for space at the show, you first have to request the official application forms by emailing the Technical Committee (Comitato Tecnico) at ct.uomo@pittimmagine.com. At this stage, it is advisable to cc Paul Alger at UKFT paul.alger@ukft.org so that he can support the application and send the UKTI TAP grant application forms when these are ready.

Pitti Immagine will send you the formal application forms in the form of a link. Fill in as much of that form as you can, bearing in mind that some areas may only be relevant to Italian companies. There are a lot of questions but this information enables the organisers to understand your company and collection. The information you give has a direct impact on how the organisers treat your application and, if you are accepted, where they place you in the show. Once the forms are received by Pitti Immagine, they will let you know whether to send images and pricelists or actual samples. **Do not send samples unless they specifically request them. Be careful to follow their instructions very carefully.**

Based on the information you submit (Bio/Brand history, Pricelist, images etc), the Technical Committee will decide whether the collection would be a useful addition to Pitti. It is important to stress that Pitti Uomo sees itself as the key international Trend show for menswear and accessories (rather than a Commercial show).

They aim to have all the key trends represented but not necessarily all the brands or collections. When looking at new applications, this means the Committee will look favourably on collections which are unique or have key elements which are ‘of the moment’ and not seen in the collections of other companies. As a general rule, they look to promote collections which are “Made in Europe”, unless the look and brand are very special. This is especially the case in product areas where Italy is a strong exporter, for example in footwear and bags.

Once the Technical Committee has made a decision, if it is a “No”, you will be informed of this in writing. There is no appeal. They will usually encourage you to apply again but this is a standard procedure aimed not to offend... If the Technical Committee decision is a “Yes”, the organisers will start to look for space for you in the show. **Exhibitors should be aware that the acceptance letter from the Technical Committee is not confirmation of space or participation.** This will follow later if space becomes available and will usually be accompanied by a request for payment.

Stage 2: Application for space

If your application is approved by the Technical Committee, Pitti will inform you of this and will start looking for space in the right part of the show. This can be fast, but in most cases nowadays it is extremely slow because there is a long waiting list for the show. An additional complication is that the organisers are very loyal to their existing exhibitors and give them a long time to reconfirm. Only when they know which of their “regulars” are taking part do they start to allocate the spaces which are left. These spaces will be offered to companies deemed to be right for each sector of the show.

In practice, most new exhibitors receive their confirmations and stand allocations fewer than three weeks before the start of the show. This makes planning for the show very difficult, especially if you are allocated space in one of the areas of the show where you will have to build. Many parts of the show have a compulsory or optional organiser shell scheme but third party stand builds are usually essential in the Central Pavilion (all floors), the Nazioni and Ronda A.

UK Trade & Investment Tradeshow Access Programme (TAP) Grants:

A limited number (approx. 15) of UK Trade & Investment TAP grants is usually available for Pitti Uomo. You must apply for these through UKFT well in advance, and before your stand confirmation is made. In real terms, this means that the initial application process for screening will need to take place before your grant application but ***the grant must be applied for before you commit to space*** with the organisers. UKFT will work with members and non-members and is happy to support stand applications from all UK companies, including those which may not be eligible for grants.

First timer applicants to Pitti Uomo should bear in mind that grants are not automatically available for start-ups; UKFT and UKTI will expect grant applicants to be able to demonstrate that they have an existing business (i.e. stockists and sales). Some UKTI regions will decline applications from companies with an annual turnover less than £30,000. Most will decline companies without a proper website.

Because the Pitti Uomo space application process takes place separately from any TAP grant applications, this can cause problems the first time around. ***Even if you are approved for one of the UKTI TAP grants, if you are unable to confirm space at least 5 weeks before the show the chances are that the grant will have to be reallocated to a company with confirmed space on the waiting list.***

This can mean that there is a chance you may be approved for a grant and be accepted by the Technical Committee, only to lose the grant if you do not have confirmed space at least 5 weeks before the show. If space then becomes available after the 5 week deadline, it will then be too late reapply, as all the grants will have been reallocated. In practice, some ***companies end up participating in their first Pitti Uomo show without a grant, and reapply for grants in subsequent editions.*** This is almost unique to this show.

Other issues and considerations:

The show organisers prioritise European manufactured collections and consider the views of established competitors when looking at new entrants to the market. Some of these may have direct or indirect input into the Technical Committee.

The organisers will not allow applicants to choose a space or a sector in the show but will base their allocation the information supplied with the application. It is possible to express a preference for a particular part of the show but this is not binding on the organisers.

With specific relevance to tailored collections, whilst the organisers are keen to see more, our experience with recent applications from tailoring companies has been patchy. Many have found buyers resistant to tailored collections which are not made in Italy, or much more cheaply and with an established brand in the Far East.

On footwear, in a similar way, the show organisers and buyers prefer to see Made in UK or Made in Italy footwear unless the price is extremely low. Italian buyers in particular are often reluctant to look at new footwear collections which are manufactured outside Italy or the UK.

Once a company is accepted and is allocated space, they will usually be offered the same space in the following season. Many companies manage to get into the show in summer when the waiting list is very slightly shorter. As long as they commit to showing at both editions (AW and SS) this usually continues. If a company requests a change of section or space from one season to another, they will have to go through the same agonising space application all over again. Companies wishing to do this should reconfirm their space, keep their previous stand “on hold” and request a transfer but be prepared to take the original stand if no viable alternative becomes available 2 months before the show.

If a company skips a season, for whatever reason, they will be treated as a newcomer on next application.

Costs and other important considerations:

Because of the complicated application process which is unique to Pitti Uomo, applicants will need to consider whether they can afford to show on a basic 16 m² stand without a grant (see above) at approx. £4800 (excluding VAT) the first time around. If the organisers allocate a stand in Make or the Pop Up, this could be less (around £3800 or £2800 respectively). It usually takes at least three seasons before buyers really begin to respond to the collection...

Companies are expected to commit to two shows per year, usually in the same location.

Pitti Immagine reserve the right not to accept repeat exhibitors whose collections or display are not in line with their applications or where the stand display is not up to a high enough standard. This includes companies in the Central Pavilion who are using the organisers' shell stand.

For more information visit www.pittimmagine.com. For lists of UK exhibitors and photographs of previous shows visit www.ukft.org and the UKFT's Facebook page at @UKFTorg.

Paul Alger, © UKFT 2016