



Vinyl Industry Plant Tour Guide

Showcase Your Plant
and Build Relationships

A Guide to Successful Plant Tours for Elected Officials and Their Staff

Conducting manufacturing plant visits for members of Congress and their staff is a good way to build relationships for your company and increase support for a pro-growth, pro-business agenda. Likewise, they provide excellent opportunities for lawmakers to meet with their constituents, hear the success stories and the struggles that manufacturers face and see first-hand how their policies work in real life. Plant tours educate lawmakers on the importance of manufacturing's role in the economy.

These visits can provide excellent press opportunities for your company. Better yet, the member of Congress will remember your role in your community and your hospitality. This guide will help you plan, prepare for and conduct a successful plant tour. You will find a simple yet thorough checklist to follow to ensure your plant tour runs as smoothly as possible. Plant tours paint the perfect picture of manufacturing at work.

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Checklist for Plant Tours

- Decide the purpose of the tour
- Decide who to invite
- Send the invitation (see page 5)
- Track and confirm RSVPs and follow up as necessary
- Coordinate length of event with congressional staff
- Distribute memo of visit to employees

Planning for the Media

- Clear media participation/attendance with congressional office
- Draft a media advisory, if desired (see page 7)
- Prepare area for news media
- Prepare a message from the CEO

Organizing The Plant Tour

- Put together internal planning group and include the Vinyl Institute for assistance
- Decide who will meet with the legislator
- Craft lawmaker introduction
- Establish look and feel of welcome area
- Reserve a room for the guest to address your staff
- Create name badges for guest and staff
- Determine required safety equipment
- Brief tour guide(s)
- Craft tour script
- Hire/designate photographer
- Prepare an information package
- Research lawmaker's background
- Research talking points, your company story, current events, legislative tasks, etc.
- Prepare a map of the tour route
- Write out questions for the lawmaker

Preparing Displays/Literature

- Determine product display, if applicable
- Gather company literature and background materials
- Display Vinyl Institute materials, if appropriate
- Provide list of attendees' names and companies

Preparing For Arrival

- Designate a note taker
- Determine what machinery will be in operation
- Provide directions to the plant
- Welcome guest on arrival

Conducting The Tour

- Provide safety equipment to tour guests, if applicable
- Show lawmaker how your production line works
- Let your visitor be an active participant
- Mention any prepared talking points during the tour
- Show lawmaker samples of products produced by your operation (and end products they go into).
- Explain how your plant is impacted by laws and regulations

Following Up After The Tour

- Send thank-you note to guest(s)
- Thank your own staff
- Send photos to members of Congress
- Provide press coverage
- Use social media to recap the tour
- Continue to communicate with the lawmaker post-event

Setting Up the Plant Tour

Decide the purpose of the tour

Is your goal to introduce the legislator to the facility and employees, highlight issues and their impacts on operations, ground breaking, or showing off a new product or plant addition?

Decide who to invite

Is this a visit for candidates, other members of Congress and/or congressional staff? Consider starting with a local or state staff person and working up to a visit from the elected official. A staff-level visit can be just as important as a member visit.

Send the invitation

Send a letter to the candidate and staff explaining who you are and what you would like to showcase. Include directions to the plant, as well as a requested amount of time. When inviting a legislator for a plant tour, be flexible and allow for several options. Once a date is set, be prepared for last-minute schedule changes. See page 5 for a sample invitation letter.

The ideal time to schedule a tour is during a recess period. They generally occur during the following holiday periods:

- Martin Luther King, Jr., Day (mid-January)
- Presidents' Day (mid-February)
- Easter/Passover (March or April)
- Memorial Day (late May)
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Summer (August through the week after Labor Day)
- Rosh Hashanah (late September or early October)
- Yom Kippur (10 days after Rosh Hashanah)
- Columbus Day (early October)
- Veterans Day (early November)
- Thanksgiving
- Late December through early January



Arrange the tour around the legislator's schedule. In addition to formal recesses, members of Congress are most likely to be in their home districts on Mondays and Fridays.

Track and confirm RSVPs and follow up as necessary

Call the candidate's scheduler to make sure the invitation has been received. Make follow-up phone calls if the scheduler has not gotten back to you to confirm the lawmaker's visit. Don't be discouraged if a visit is not scheduled immediately. Be flexible and persistent. Invite him or her to drop by for a tour and cup of coffee the next time he or she passes through town. Most candidates will occasionally have a few minutes of free time during a busy campaign schedule. Leave the date open-ended, and the candidate may take you up on your invitation.

Coordinate length of event with congressional staff

Once the scheduler confirms the lawmaker is able to attend, work out a length of time for the plant tour. Determine how much time the lawmaker has for the visit. The tour itself should last approximately 30–60 minutes.

Distribute memo of visit to employees

Share the news with employees of the lawmaker's planned visit and encourage them to attend. Set aside approximately 15 minutes for the lawmaker or candidate to meet with your employees.

Leverage the visit

Some of your stakeholders may appreciate an invitation to join a tour for a member of Congress. Check first with the legislator's office to make sure they are comfortable with your list of invitees. Possibilities:

- Local officials
- Customers
- Suppliers

Sample Invitation Letter to Member of Congress

Via Fax—1 Page

E-mail

The Honorable John/Jane Doe
United States House of Representatives/United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515/20510

Dear Representative/Senator Doe:

I am writing to invite you to participate in a plant tour here at [company name]. As a member of the Vinyl Institute [or other vinyl sector association], we encourage every member of Congress to visit the plants of their local manufacturers for the opportunity to see why “Manufacturing Means Jobs!”

[Insert information describing your company in two to three sentences. Include the number of employees.] This plant tour is an informal opportunity for you to see our plant and speak candidly with our employees. The format usually calls for the tour, brief refreshments, open discussion with our employees (including a question and comment period) and a photo opportunity. We expect the entire event to take no more than 60 minutes. Let me suggest the following dates:

[Insert Day, Month, Date—suggested time frame]

[Insert Day, Month, Date—suggested time frame]

[Insert Day, Month, Date—suggested time frame]

We sincerely hope you will accept our invitation to participate. Please let me know at your earliest convenience if one of these dates is convenient. If not, please feel free to suggest alternative dates or call or e-mail me directly at [phone] or [e-mail]. Thank you and I look forward to working with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Your Name
title

Planning For The Media

Clear media participation/attendance with congressional office

Once the congressional office approves media attendance, contact your local media outlets, including large daily newspapers, as well as local weeklies. Offer to send your own report and photos to the paper if they cannot participate in person.

Draft a media advisory, if desired

Once the date is set, draft a media advisory containing the date, time, specific location, parking accommodations and lighting requirements, if any (see page 7 for a sample media advisory). Note whether the tour itself is open for press coverage and if the legislator will take questions after the tour. Give the location. E-mail the draft to the legislator's local press officer for approval. When approved, fax or e-mail the advisory along with a press kit and company information to everyone on your press list.

Prepare area for news media

Arrange for an area outside of your facility for presentations, ribbon-cutting, award presentations (if appropriate) and informal discussions with the news media. This area should be in front of your company's signage or logo.

Prepare a message from the CEO

Prepare an "op-ed" or letter to the editor from your CEO to your local newspapers on an issue related to the legislator's visit. Better yet, arrange a meeting with the newspapers' editorial boards seeking support for your position. Reach out to local radio stations for an interview.

Showcase the fact that a lawmaker is planning to tour your plant.



Sample Media Advisory

NEWS ALERT
[ALERT NUMBER]

NEWS CONTACT
[COMPANY CONTACT] (XXX) XXX-XXXX

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Advisory

What: [NAME OF COMPANY] PLANT TO HOST [NAME OF LAWMAKER] ON [DATE]
[Name of company and city, state] will host [name of lawmaker] for a plant tour tomorrow morning as part of an effort to make legislators more aware of both the benefits manufacturers bring to communities and the unprecedented challenges now facing America's manufacturing sector.

The member of Congress will observe the facility's production of [give a brief description of what the lawmaker will see while on the plant tour] and offer brief remarks to gathering employees.

[Company name] is a member company of the Vinyl Institute, [or other vinyl sector association] the trade association representing manufacturers of vinyl resins used in a host of products that conserve energy and resources and bring value to life.

Who: [NAME OF LAWMAKER]
[COMPANY NAME]

Where: [COMPANY NAME]
[PLANT ADDRESS]
[CITY, STATE, ZIP]

When: [DATE AND TIME]

Organizing The Plant Tour

Put together internal planning group, if necessary

The planning group should be responsible for organizing the logistics of the plant tour. The Vinyl Institute can assist.

Decide who will meet with the legislator

Don't be concerned with party affiliation. After all, your intent is to develop a good rapport with public officials who may influence the future of your company and your industry.

Craft lawmaker introduction

Decide who will provide remarks and the topics you want to cover in welcoming the elected official.

Establish look and feel of welcome area

Determine how you want the entrance to your plant to appear when your guest arrives. Think about the type of signage and displays you want to use and where.

Reserve a room for the guest to address your staff

Determine the best room for the lawmaker to talk with your staff. Set up a podium and microphone if necessary and arrange seating. Determine if refreshments will be served.

Create name badges for guest and staff

Name badges are a must for your plant tour. Create name badges for your guest and any staff who accompanies him or her, as well as employees of your plant. Have some blanks available for unexpected staff.

Determine required safety equipment

If your plant tour requires it, determine what safety equipment will be needed. These include construction helmets, goggles, gloves, etc.

Brief tour guide(s)

Inform your tour guide(s) of what the plant tour will entail (what machinery, if any, will be shown on the tour, who the guest will meet with and where, the length of the tour, etc.). If necessary, work with tour guides to keep remarks non-technical.

Craft tour script

Outline what you hope to cover during the plant tour.

Hire/designate photographer

Have a photographer on hand to take pictures. These photos are excellent opportunities to publicize the event and for the lawmaker to remember the visit.

Prepare an information package

Emphasize the benefit that good manufacturing jobs bring to workers, suppliers and your area's economy. Put together a one-pager that highlights your company's accomplishments.

Research lawmaker's background

Research your guest's background, including committee and subcommittee memberships and voting record, to identify areas of common interest. Try to match your legislative agenda with his or hers. The Voices for Vinyl website can help.

Research talking points, your company story, current events, legislative asks, etc.

Educate the legislator on the great things your company does. Share your personal stories and examples of how government regulations and policies, as well as partisan politics and red tape, all impact manufacturing and your workers. Be prepared to highlight your company's health, safety, and environmental performance. Don't just talk economic data or statistics.

Prepare a map of the tour route

Consult with employees to determine a route for the tour, noting which areas contain sensitive information or any safety hazards. These areas should be off-limits to the legislator, staff and press.

Write out questions for the lawmaker

Include any questions that you want to ask your lawmaker. These can be questions on regulations and policies that are currently in effect, proposed legislation, manufacturing in general, etc.

Be mindful of Federal Ethics Rules

Federal legislators and their staff are not permitted to accept gifts other than small, low-cost items—a company baseball cap or a coffee mug. If you want to serve meals or refreshments after the tour, get advance approval from the legislator's office, and keep the cost down. Also ask about special dietary needs.

Preparing Displays/Literature

Determine product display, if applicable

Proudly display your product for your visitor to see. A special exhibit, promotional materials and company literature will enhance the visit.

Gather company literature and background materials

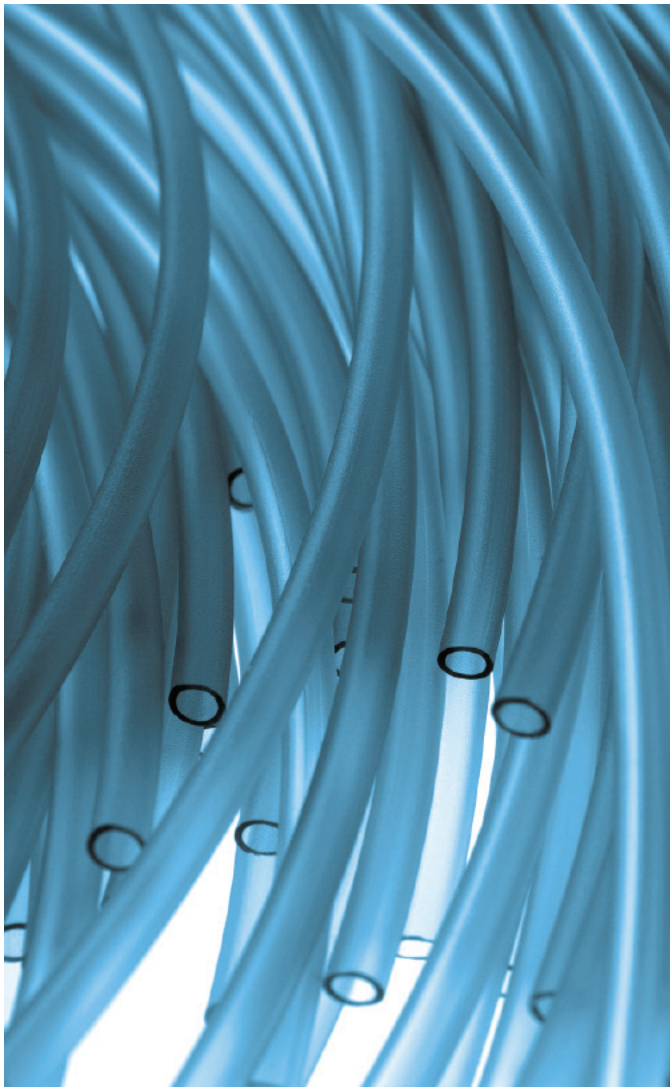
This information helps tell the story of your business to your guest. Include the story on your company history, philanthropic efforts, employee team news, etc.

Display Vinyl Institute materials, if appropriate

Displaying VI policy materials, literature, posters, etc., will serve as a reminder of your commitment to manufacturing.

Provide list of attendees' names and companies

This is great to have for networking opportunities and putting names with faces.



Possible Information to give or show your visitors

- Company overview/history
- Aerial photos of the facility
- Products made at the facility
- End products that incorporate what the facility makes
- Employment figures — especially important in a struggling economy
- Export numbers
- Average salary/benefits
- Energy use
- Water use
- Federal/state/local taxes paid (and, if possible, calculated multiplier effects)
- Photos of the guest and employees taken during the tour
- Safety record
- Environmental record
- Recent awards (internal or external)
- Community involvement

Make your best Impression

- Make sure your facility is thoroughly clean.
- Have a welcoming message posted at or near the front door.
- Issue guests new safety equipment.
- Give the visitors a tour overview.

Prepare for contingencies

The best plans may need last-minute adjustments. Plan for the unexpected.

- Legislators' schedules are demanding. If they are running late, consider rearranging the order of events or dropping a stage of the tour.
- Make sure housekeeping standards are met. If useful, do a walk-through before the visitor arrives.

Preparing for Arrival

Designate a note taker

Assign a team member to take notes on any discussions, if possible. This will help with post tour follow-up.

Determine what machinery will be in operation

This is important, especially if you plan to highlight or show a particular piece of machinery during the tour.

Provide directions to the plant

Ensure your guest knows what entrance to use; reserve a parking space for him or her.

Welcome guest on arrival

Greet officials at designated area. In the event of rain, provide an umbrella if possible. Hand out name badges. Have blank badges on hand in case the legislator brings extra staff. Prepare guests for the possibility of going through security before entering the plant.



Conducting the Tour

Provide safety equipment to tour guests, if applicable

Provide your guest with any items necessary for a tour, such as a construction helmet, safety goggles, gloves, etc.

Show lawmaker how your production line works

Show your guest how your machinery works, how different items are put together, what new technologies are being used and your workers' overall productivity.

Let your visitor be an active participant

If feasible without shutting down production lines, offer your visitor the chance to address your entire workforce. Have the member of Congress do something "physical," such as shake hands, participate in a ribbon-cutting, run a machine, examine your product or look at a computer screen. These are prime photo opportunities.

Mention any prepared talking points during the tour

You have an important story to tell, so prepare specific answers to expected questions, particularly about your company's impact on your lawmaker's district. When developing your presentation, work in the following information:

Success stories: Discuss how the plant has improved and contributed to the community. Inform visitors about your company's history, including total investment in facilities and equipment.

Jobs: Discuss the number of people employed in your plant and others around the state or country; labor unions represented in your plant; and worker health, safety and training programs.

Payroll and benefits: Discuss wages and the types and value of employee benefits, including profit-sharing, recreational programs, voter registration activities, health or sports facilities, child care, educational support and discount purchases of company products. (Remind your visitor that each wage dollar multiplies in the wage earner's community in the form of rent, food purchases, clothing purchases, medical expenses, etc., before it goes to out-of-town suppliers.)



Trade facts: Do you export? If so, do any of the recently passed free-trade agreements affect your business?

Community impact: How much does your company pay in federal, state and local taxes? What are your local expenditures to purchase supplies, materials and services? Do you host town hall meetings? Does your company participate in community charities? Tell the legislator about your active role as a good corporate citizen.

Show lawmakers samples of products produced by your operation.

It's important that lawmakers come away from touring your plant with an appreciation for the many life enhancing and energy saving products that you produce or are produced by using your vinyl resins. Have samples available to reinforce the importance of your manufacturing operation.

Explain how your plan is impacted by laws and regulations.

Take time to assemble a legislative and regulatory impact assessment on your operations. Use this information constructively with your lawmaker to help them appreciate how your operation is impacted. Also use this occasion to let them know about the advances you have achieved.

Following Up After the Tour

A plant tour enhances the mutual understanding between you and your elected official. To make certain that he or she remembers your company, follow-up efforts are important.

Send thank-you note to guest(s)

Write a thank-you note reiterating any key issues discussed during the tour. Invite the legislator to return at any time. Consider inviting your legislator to your company's annual picnic or other outing.

Thank your own staff

Recognize employees who contributed their time and expertise to make the tour a success.

Send photos to members of Congress

Many times photos you send to members of Congress will appear in a constituent newsletter, and often they will wind up on the legislator's office wall or website.

Provide press coverage

Provide the lawmaker's office with your company newsletter and other publicity the visit generated.

Use social media to recap the tour

Publish photos, details, etc., on company social media platforms. Coordinate with the VI's Communications team to post on any VI platforms.

Continue to communicate with the lawmaker post-event

Offer the member substantive policy advice. Track how your legislator votes on future legislation, and express your thanks when he or she votes in favor of your positions.

