

Tradeshows Tip Sheet

This month: Booth Graphics

Which Approach Should You Take to BOOTH GRAPHICS?

There are two basic approaches to booth graphics: down and dirty (meaning 'cheap') or nice and pretty (meaning 'could be expensive!').

So which should method should you use? Either one can work and the answer is usually driven by two things: your budget and how long you expect to use the graphics. There are other considerations, too, of course. The main one is – what level of quality is the rest of your booth? If your booth is a custom island booth, you don't want to skimp on the graphics budget. On the other hand, if your booth is a rental pop-up, perhaps you don't need to go all-out for the most expensive, highest-quality graphics you can find.

If you expect to use the graphics for several years, consider a higher quality print, mounted to a hard substrate such as sintra. Tradeshows graphics get bounced around a lot and abused, so if you plan to use them for several shows, your investment in quality production will be worth it.

On the other hand, if the show is a one-time only show, you can probably get away with mounting graphics on a foam or gator board substrate. Not as durable as a graphic mounted on sintra and overwrapped, but they will look fine for the one show.



Types of Graphics

In the world of tradeshow graphics, there seems always be something new: fabric hanging banners, metallic, backlit, tension fabric stretched over aluminum frames – the list goes on.

You may have an idea of what kind of graphic you'll want, but if not, work with your exhibit company. They should be up on all the latest, as well as the tried-and-true methods that have lasted for years. Tension fabric graphics and banner stands, for instance, are very popular because of their relatively low cost and low shipping weight.

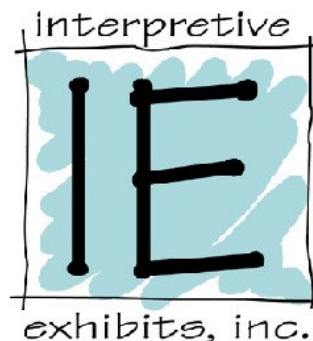
Even within a specific type of graphic, there are

numerous choices. Fabric graphics may offer poly-duck, poly-satin, poly-poplin, dacron, poly-silk, poly-lucent, wrinkle-resistant, and more. There are flexible and hard vinyl substrates. Printing processes include dye sublimation, Lambda, Lambda metallic, Lamba Duratrans, inkjet and more.

Chances are if you visit your local print or exhibit graphic shop and ask to see what's available, you will leave with a new understanding of the huge variety of choices – and perhaps a spinning head.

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Does your message tell about you—and miss the boat with what your visitors need?

Or does your message go to the heart of what's most important to them NOW?

Design: Use Powerful Words in Your Headline, But Keep it Short and Sweet

What about the design of the graphics? Simply put: the simpler the better. Why? Because a tradeshow graphic is generally meant to stop people and invite them in to your booth where you then engage them with qualifying questions.

Your tradeshow graphic should do all the work, too. In other words, don't make your visitor work to figure out who you are, what you do and if they have any interest. A quick glance should tell them in an instant if they should stop or not.

So this means BOLD graphics or photographs, and short and simple headlines. Describe key benefits. Use words your audience understands, avoiding buzzwords and industry jargon. Of course it also depends on your audience. If it's a high-tech show and you're advertising a new whiz-bang computer

with the greatest specs on the planet, there's nothing wrong with considering that exact element.

Don't degrade your competition, either. Far better to highlight your benefits and features instead of pointing out the negatives of your competitors. Consider taking two or three different versions of your main 'billboard graphic' and test them out each day to see which draws more traffic.

Size of type: one good rule of thumb, as mentioned by Ruth P. Stevens in "Trade Show and Event Marketing" is to make your font one inch high for each three feet away that your visitor will be. So if you want your visitor to see your sign from 30 feet away, the lettering should be about ten inches high.

It's About YOUR VISITOR, Not About Your Company

When your visitor approaches your booth, they don't really care who you are or what your company name is, or if you've been in business for 35 years or if you feel your product is 'innovative' and your staff is 'experienced.' That doesn't do anything for the visitor – it's too much work for them.

Instead, think about the message of your sign from your client's viewpoint. What do you do? How can you help them? If your software can save them 28 percent over the industry-leading software, tell them that. If your widget is able to cut hours off of their production time, tell them. Does your potato chip win all the taste tests against the leading brand? Is your product so eco-friendly it'll help your client save the planet?

Spell out the benefits of your product or service in a headline that makes a visitor so curious they just HAVE to walk up and say "Tell me more!"

Bottom Line on Graphics

Generally speaking, graphics are a significant part of your tradeshow budget. But they're one of the most critical pieces of your tradeshow booth. They need to spell out what you do and entice visitors to come in to your booth requesting more information. You have literally hundreds of options for graphic production, and based on experience it seems that the higher-quality graphics a company

invests in, the better-looking the booth, and the happier the exhibitor.

