

Tradeshhow Tip Sheet

This month: Booth Design

Designing Your New Booth: Where to Start?

There are so many different aspects of booth design to consider: branding, company image, the 'look and feel' of the exhibit, the specific show message you want to impart, materials, what it takes to get people to stop at your booth, ease of set-up and dismantle- and so on.

So where to start? Begin by making a list. Who's in charge? Who's going to set-up the booth? What's your branding message? What functionalities do you need at the show? How much do you have to spend? What's the budget for each show? Do you want a modular booth from a catalog or should you create a unique custom booth?

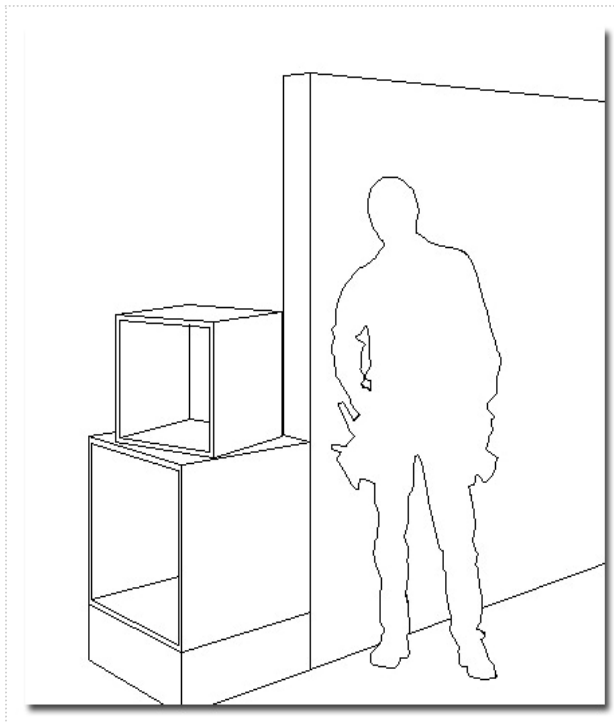
By answering these questions, you'll plot a road map of the various stops you'll have to make to arrive at your destination - which is **WHAT WILL YOUR BOOTH LOOK LIKE?**

"Look and Feel"

The 'look and feel' of your exhibit is the nearly intangible part of the design. Sometimes you won't know exactly what the impact of that 'look and feel' is until you see it. It's the piece that stops people in their tracks and makes them say "Now THAT'S what I was thinking of!"

So what goes into the look and feel of your booth? Color, graphics and fabrication materials are the main items. Graphics can be printed on a variety of substrates and mounted for display. Fabrication materials to consider: metal, wood, plastics, fabric. Color can be bold to dominate or subtle to simply

It's important to have a good sense of what the company wants *before* you approach an exhibit fabrication company. Once you've determined that, you can then work with a company you are comfortable with or already have a relationship with, or consider issuing an RFP (Request for Proposal) and solicit a number of companies to submit responses.



enhance the overall look of your booth.

What about Audio/Video elements? Do you need a flat screen to play a short company promo film? Are there any interactive elements that go into the booth?

All of these things contribute to the 'look and feel' of your booth. Add in dynamic lighting and your booth can be a show stopper.

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The 'look and feel' of your exhibit is the intangible element that stops people in their tracks and makes them say "WOW!"



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What's the most important function you need in your booth? Storage space? Product display? Client meeting space? Think of the important function elements to help give you an overall picture of the booth.

Your Message in a Tradeshow Booth

The message of your booth and company should be determined in conjunction with the look and feel. While this is similar to your brand, the message is not the same as your brand. Your message should be your Unique Selling Position. What do you do better than anyone in your industry? Do you do it faster? With more quality? Better price? Why? Be specific.

Your message should be crafted carefully, and articulated with specifics that explain exactly why your potential customers should do business with you. Avoid generalities such as 'decades of experience' or 'lowest price,' because, frankly, no one cares.

Communicate your message in terms of what you can do for the customer. Explain why you are the choice in the crowded marketplace. And once you bring them in to the booth, find a way to let them experience your product or service.

Be specific. If your widget is proven to save your clients 76.3 hours per year, say it. If your service helps them cut taxes by 34%, say it—and be prepared to show them how.

Bottom Line: your message should answer the visitor's question: "What's In It For Me?"

The Function Junction

Your booth may look pretty and draw in visitors, but if you're missing a crucial element or two that prevents it from functioning properly, you'll want to scrap it and start over.

Do you need computer stations to access the internet? Do you need shelves to display 50 products? Sit-down tables to chat with your client? Demo stations to give your visitors a hands-on experience with your product?

While some elaborate tradeshow booths are built to create a unique experience for visitors, many of these are high-budget, one-time exhibits. A more normal and natural approach is to ensure that the booth functions properly. Does it set-up with ease, whether you do it yourself or whether you hire labor? Do you have enough storage for both product and personal items?

As part of your original list, go over all the various functions that your booth must accommodate – and make sure they are built in to the final design.



Results That Count

Your booth design should reflect your company's goals and image. It should function properly. It should "WOW!" the customers. But most of all, it should get results. While your goals may vary from show to show (sales vs. branding vs. lead generation, etc.), you should be able to point to the booth and say that the design was a large part of the process – and a critically important one.

Whether you work with a design company or design your own booth, the ultimate goal is to come back with enough sales and leads that you can't wait to see the booth set up at the next show.