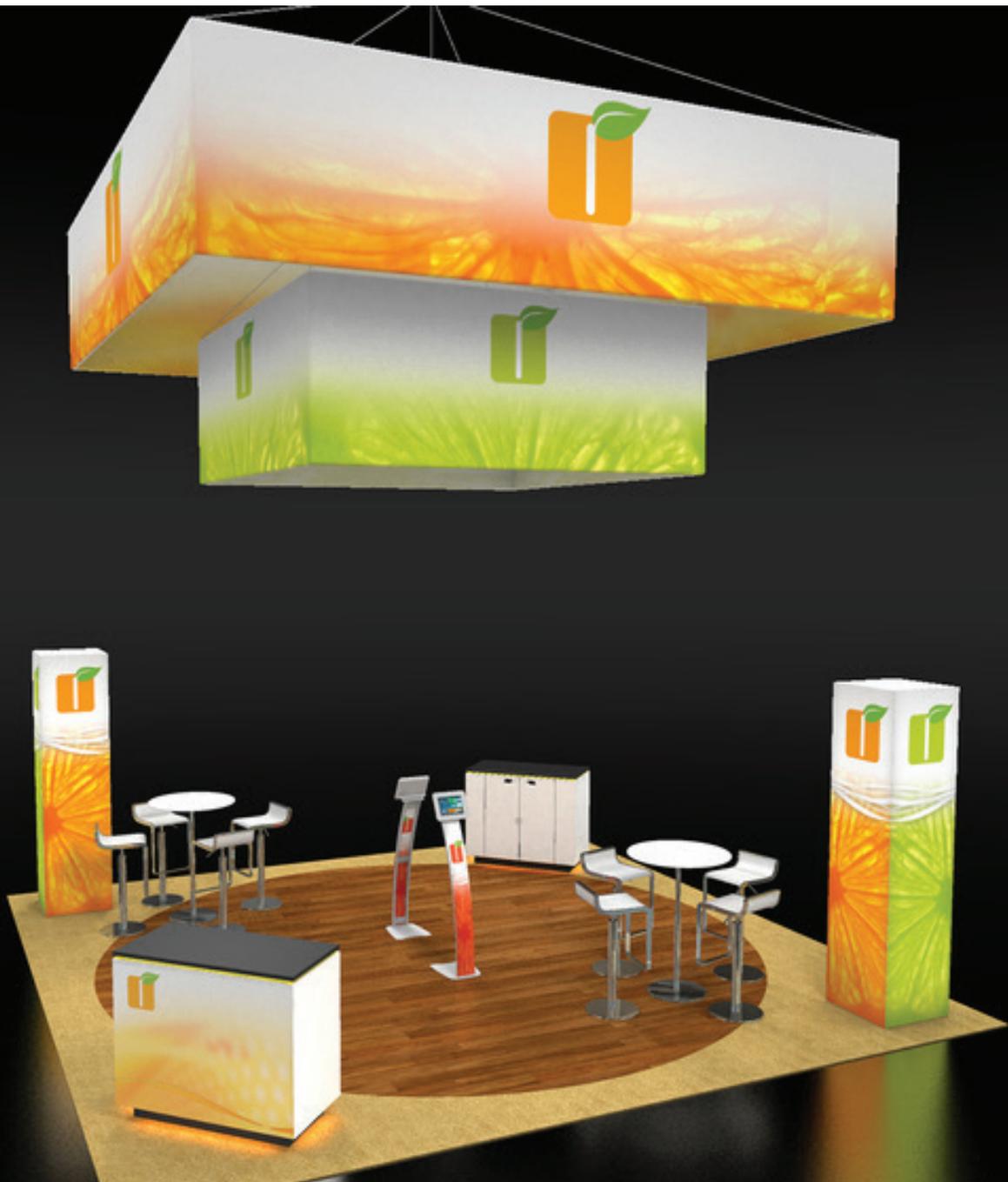


# BETTER BRANDING & BOOTH DESIGN





# INTRODUCTION & TABLE OF CONTENTS

***In this book, Skyline has compiled 29 blog posts originally published in Skyline E-Tips (formerly Skyline Trade Show Tips). The posts combine valuable information about booth branding, booth design and integrating technology.***

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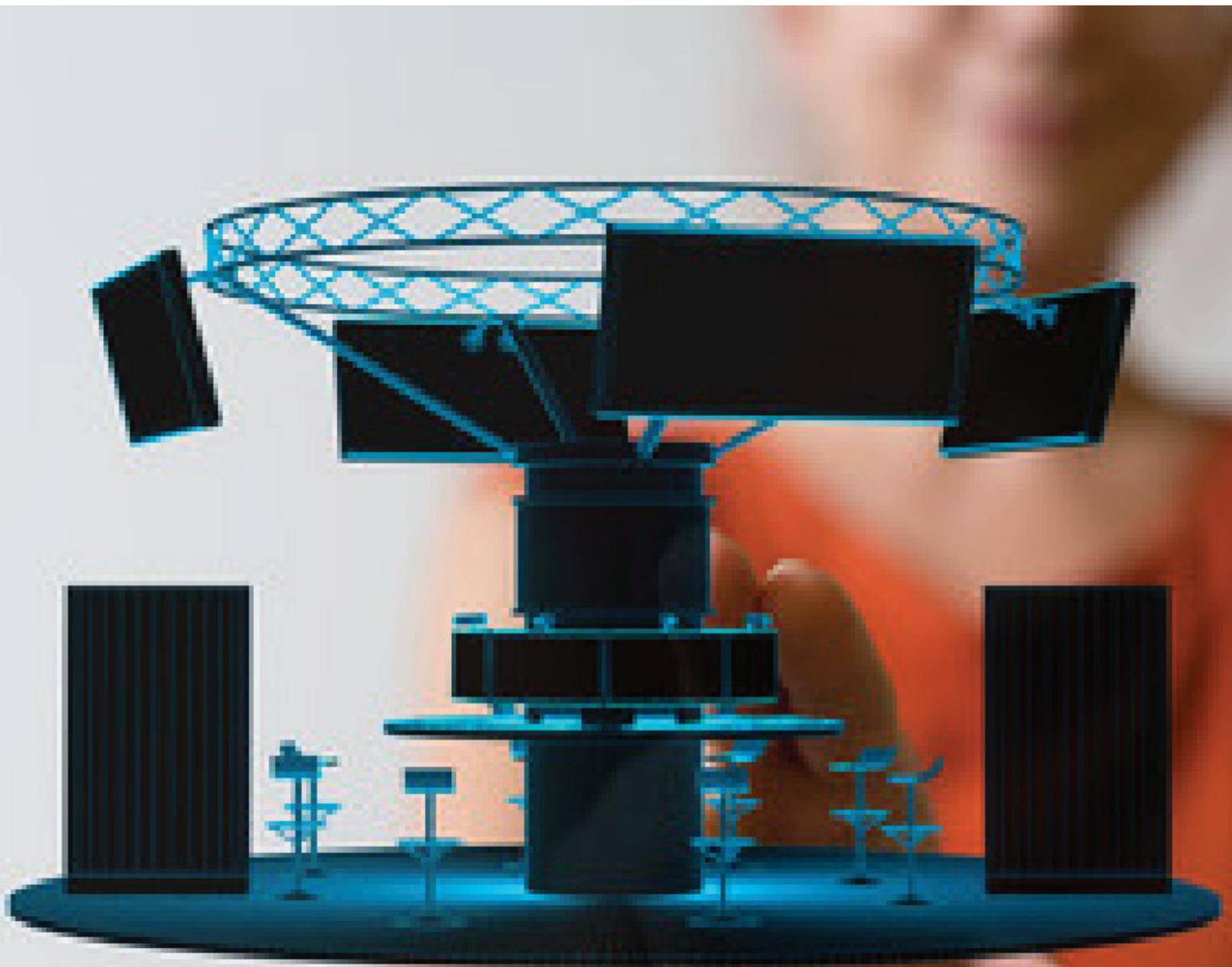
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# BRANDING YOUR BOOTH



# HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR 10×10 TRADE SHOW BOOTH SPACE

— *Tammy Scordo*

You don't need to have a large booth space to make a big impact at a trade show. There are plenty of successful exhibitors that use 10' x 10' spaces. It really all comes down to maximizing your brand and building relationships with prospective clients.

Below are some ideas to help you maximize your brand while increasing lead generation:

- **Budget** – Set a realistic budget and buy a quality exhibit. Realistically a 10' x 10' exhibit can range from \$2,000 – \$15,000. An exhibit is a representation of your company. You don't want to buy an inexpensive one that will break down after a couple uses and represent your company poorly.
  - **Work With a Reputable Exhibit Company** – Working with a company that has a local presence and a good reputation will put your mind at ease. Make sure they offer great service and continued support long after a purchase is made. You may be tempted to purchase an exhibit online because it's a great deal, but remember that sometimes things are too good to be true and you get what you pay for.
- Working with a company that has a local presence and a good reputation will put your mind at ease.**
- **Graphics** – This is a great way to tell your brand's story. When designing the graphics, think about the target audience. People don't need to know everything about your company up-front. You want to pique their interest, so they want to talk to you and build a relationship.
  - **Lighting** – Don't skip the lights. LED lights are durable, help highlight graphics and brighten up a space.
  - **Backlighting** – This a great way to make your graphics and brand pop. It adds interest to the booth space and will make your exhibit stand out from the competition while attracting attendees.
  - **Merchandising** – Only bring products you want to showcase at the show. You can store a couple of additional products, add other product photos to the graphics, or add them to collateral or videos.
  - **Movement** – Use a monitor in your booth with a looping video or images to add movement to the booth space.
  - **Booth Staff** – Having well trained staff is a necessity at trade shows. They are meeting the prospective clients face to face and need to be able to qualify what type of leads they are.
  - **Qualifying Leads** – Create a ranking system to qualify leads: low, medium and high. Doing this will help your sales team be more efficient with their time and close more deals.
  - **Games and Promotions** – Attract attendees with interactive games and promotional giveaways. The participants will be more likely to give their contact information if they have a chance to win something.
  - **Social Media** – Post about the upcoming trade show and create hashtags for attendees to use. Do live videos during the show and post photos to encourage attendees to stop by.
  - **Email Marketing Campaigns** – Create targeted campaigns before and after the show.
- If you follow all of these tips you will have great success gathering leads and attention with a small space and get a positive return on investment.

# TRADE SHOWS – HOW DO YOU CREATE AN UNFORGETTABLE BOOTH?

— *Kristi Schulz*

There are a variety of giveaways being handed out at expos, conferences and conventions. How can you prevent your stress balls and key chains from being thrown away? Listed below are a few techniques that will allow your brand to leave a footprint in a passerby's memory.

The main reason to have free giveaways is to draw in new leads. But we all are a witness to "trick or treaters" who collect as many free items as they can on expo day. Think of your giveaway as an award. It should be treated as a gift for the individuals that took the time to stop by your booth. These people took an interest in learning more information about your company.

## WHAT KIND OF MERCHANDISE WILL BE BENEFICIAL FOR MY BOOTH?

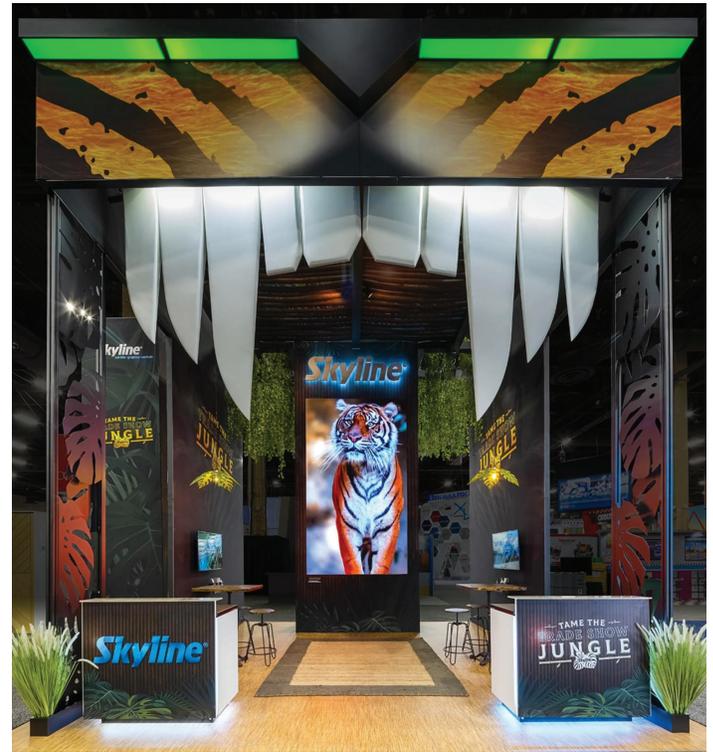
Be sure you are narrowing your ideas down to your specific target market. A target market is a niche within your industry identified as a specific group of people who are likely to be good candidates to use your product or service. Are you trying to attract adults? Teens? Kids? Is your company construction? Banking? Farming? Ask yourself what your target market needs. For example, if your company is a bank. A merchandise giveaway could be piggy banks with your company's logo on the side. People will save that piggy bank for a while.

Now, imagine a little child having that piggy bank. The child will likely show it off to grandma, grandpa, aunt, uncle, brother, sister or whomever. If little Sara is super happy with her piggy bank, one of her relatives might start banking there because the bank is related to happiness. When Sara is older, she will have an attachment to her piggy bank, she has a higher chance of banking with the bank that gave her a piggy bank to

save all her money. These moments can attract new lifelong clients.

## WHAT MERCHANDISE IS ATTRACTIVE TODAY?

- Technology is a big hit in the world today. Many people who travel to a conference bring their phone everywhere. This is a perfect area for real estate. Put your logos on electronic accessories such as phone portable chargers, car adapters, phone wallets, pop sockets, computer mouse, phone charging cord, phone cases, phone screen protectors, computer security over the camera lenses, or selfie sticks.
- Think of items people need but do not want to buy. Since the conference members traveled to the show think of items they may need on their trip. Some travel supplies ideas are toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hand sanitizer, shampoo, conditioner, earplugs, earphones, facial mask, first aid kit, sunscreen, lip balm, lotion, hair spray, makeup remover, mints, gum, wet wipes, hair bands, razor, eye drops, travel bag, and a makeup bag. Just make sure the item has no negative connotations that could be associated with your brand.
- People form attachments to their clothing. Clothing is a free advertisement that can be displayed to people outside of the expo walls. Your booth can handout T-shirts, tank tops, hats, gloves, mittens, headbands, socks, flip-flops, jewelry, sweatshirt, and sweatpants depending on your company's purpose.
- More items that get used daily are water bottles, can koozies, lunchboxes, Tupperware, silverware, plastic plates, disposable plates, napkins, tea bags, flavor water packets. These are all great items for giveaways, for the right brand.



- Some great advertising can be displayed on food items. This could be mints, granola bars, and food samples. Try to stay away from messy food like hotdogs, tacos or spaghetti. Some conferences will charge you additional fees for clean up or charge for having food in general. Be sure to check the rules before you plan your food orders.
- Go with the trends. The boom in slogans or even a simple fidget spinner will create a buzz in conversations leading more people to checkout your booth.

#### HOW WILL ATTENDEES REMEMBER US?

Besides having outstanding merchandise, it is important to have your booth have outstanding activities as well. Remembering your target market, expo theme, and your company's brand can help you narrow down which interactive activities to include in your booth. Create an unforgettable experience. When individuals see other people enjoying themselves in a booth, this makes the observer want to join in on the fun. Having a game that can award attendees prizes will allow you to have higher quality merchandise for them to win. This will ensure a recall of that memory every time they use the prize.

#### WATCHING YOUR BUDGET?

Social media is free advertising. Having a catchy hashtag for attendees to tag your company will create exposure and reach people outside of the expo walls. People are inclined to believe in companies their friends believe in. This is great exposure and will result in new prospect exposure. Having a selfie area, playful props, and someone to take the photos can make it easier for attendees to post on their personal networks. You could set up an online contest incorporating the hashtags. Have the best photo win a Bluetooth speaker, flat screen TV, or a unique experience off the show floor (like a helicopter ride)! This is the easiest way to get your social media pages talked about and shared online.

Make sure you keep an eye on what your competition is doing. Be open minded in how they plan to promote their brand. Include activities and merchandise that your personal team would never forget. Visualize the idea on your competitor, would it work? These are some tips that will transform an average booth into an unforgettable booth!

# BRAND IT LIKE BONNAROO

— *Shawn Lacagnina*

## Brand Activation Tips from June's Hottest Summer Music Festival

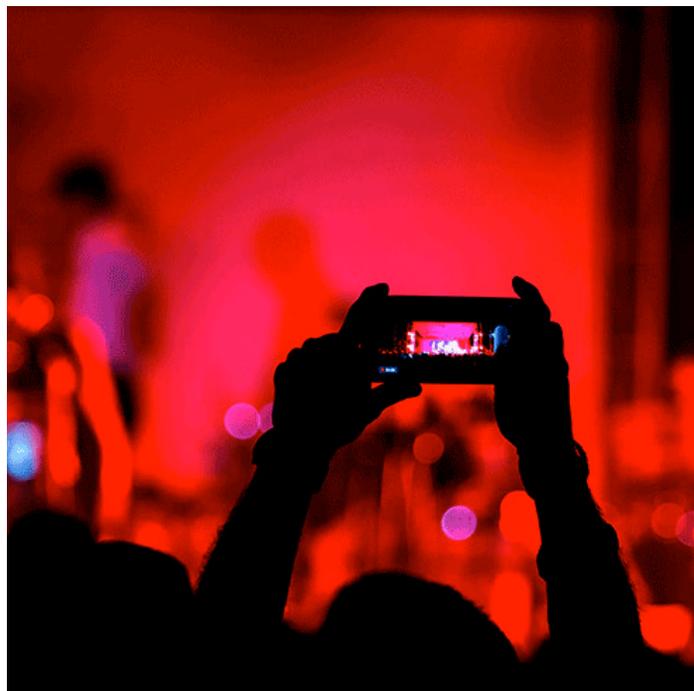
From Coachella to SXSW, today's hottest festivals are increasingly becoming as much about branding and merchandising as they are about the musical lineup. Such is the case at the legendary Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival, which will lure 80,000 attendees outside Nashville even though it runs in conjunction with CMA MusicFest. The festival's reputation as THE place to see emerging and established pioneers in music, comedy and cinema has also made it the go-to destination for companies looking to build brand affinity, especially among millennial audiences.

As the father of an up and coming singer-songwriter, and as a Marketing & Design Consultant for Skyline, branding consumes me. So, when planning your next live event, consider these experiential marketing take-aways from festival organizers and exhibitors:

### CREATE AN INTERACTIVE CENTER STAGE

Most of the on-site activity at Bonnaroo takes place in Centeroo, the main village featuring the performance stages, vendors, tents, food trucks, cinemas and attractions. Brands including footwear, energy drink and electronics manufacturers provide relief from the sweltering heat in the form of air conditioning, beverage coolers, nutrition and wellness demos, lounges with hammocks and device charging stations and more.

Does your booth provide a similar oasis to trade show attendees? Games, photo booths and live presentations can all provide distractions and photo opportunities, however they need to communicate your company's value proposition to attendees in an organic and intuitive way.

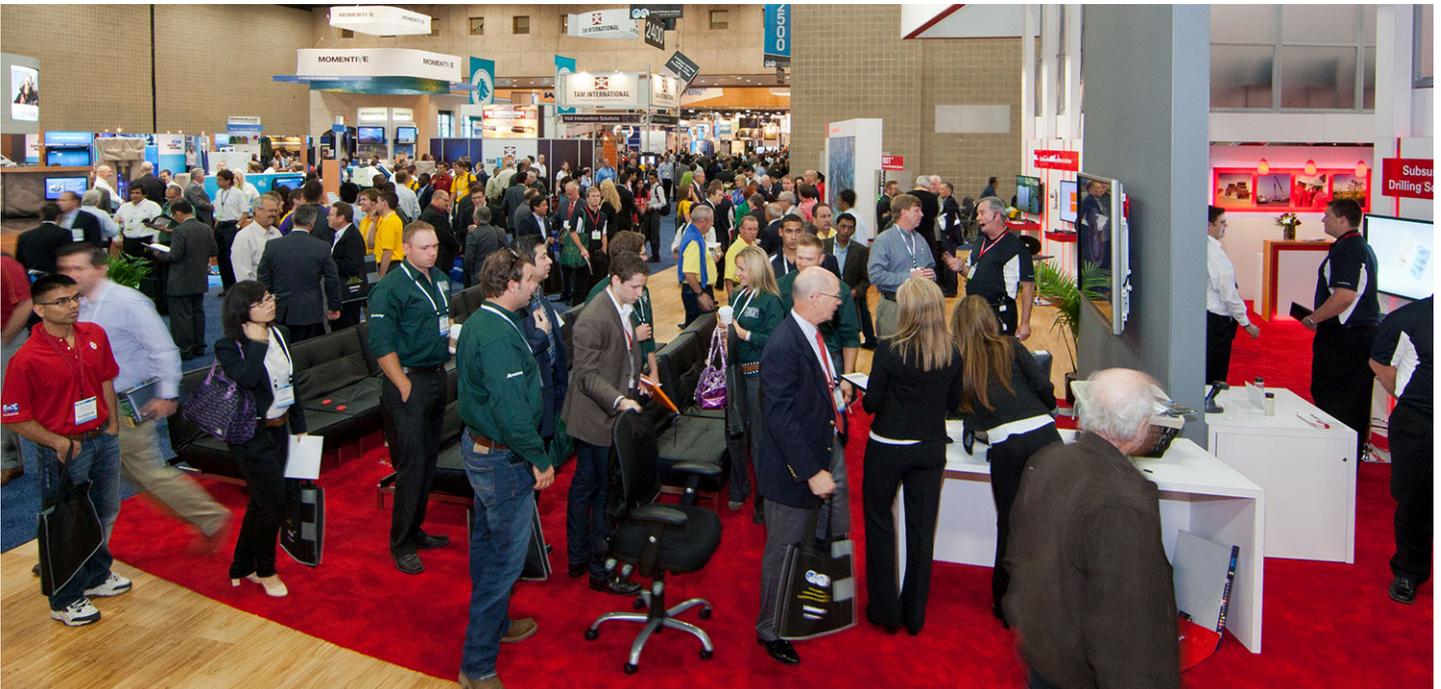


### HOST PRIVATE, OFFSITE EVENTS

At both trade shows and music festivals, brands are a big part of the draw: they sponsor private onsite mixers, host social events outside the venue, and offer other private perks to VIP attendees. While your booth should be center stage, remember to spend quality time with your core customers and prospects outside of the exhibit hall. Your marketing efforts should not be contained to the exhibit hall in space or time. Take every opportunity to engage with your market.

### INTRODUCE CLASSICS TO A NEW AUDIENCE

Despite Bonnaroo's cross-genre music lineup, it's likely that many young attendees have never been to nearby Nashville's Grand Old Opry. So, event organizers are bringing Opry performers to the festival. Doing so will not only provide a massive, receptive audience to the Opry's alt-country, bluegrass and Americana acts, it may also give the Opry a chance to rebrand itself with a new generation of music lovers.



If, like the Grand Old Opry, your company has been a long-standing fixture within your industry, consider a breakout exhibit of your latest offerings at a new/different trade show. Like at Bonaroo, attendees at a specialty trade show often use the event as a filter for discovering anything that is emerging, relevant and of high quality. In fact, “to see what is new” is consistently listed by attendees as the top reason for being at the show.

**In fact, “to see what is new” is consistently listed by attendees as the top reason for being at the show.**

#### **USE SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS**

While having a booth at Bonnaroo lets brands reach tens of thousands of event-goers, celebrity attendees who share brand-sponsored content can push those messages to a much larger audience outside the festival gates. Most trade show exhibitors are obviously

unlikely to ever have major recording artist Instagram a photo of their booth. However, each industry does have social media luminaries who Tweet or Snapchat from the leading shows expos.

If you’re unsure of who those influencers are or how to get on their radar, free and paid software such as Followerwonk and Buzzsumo allow you to find them. Both programs allow you to export the data for use with your other interactive marketing campaigns and reports. Again, do not contain your efforts to the exhibit hall.

“Bonnaroo” is Creole slang meaning a really good time. By using some of the field marketing techniques of the major music festival brands, your next trade show experience can be a great time for both you and your customers.

# 3 BASIC RULES WHEN DESIGNING FOR EVENTS

— *Martin Miller*

In an age where technology brings the world so much closer, the ability to segment design for the immediate audience (without leaving out the crucial message elements) has never been more important. Putting your brand on display through trade shows and events magnifies the attention you will receive and the scrutiny that you'll be under. While many marketers worry about attracting enough attention to generate the leads they need, the visual image you present will get noticed. The question is whether you are inspiring your prospect or merely polluting the space.

*The question is whether you are inspiring your prospect or merely polluting the space.*

## BALANCE

One of the earliest principles taught in design school is the concept of balance. The idea is to visually distribute the elements in an image to convey some sense of equilibrium or emphasis. A heavily symmetrical design can feel rigid but also may convey a strong foundation, while asymmetrical compositions are often used to place emphasis on particular areas or elements in a visual. In contrast to a balanced design, the use of a discordant (off-balance) composition can be used to make a viewer uncomfortable. Discordant balance is often used when relating negative emotions and situations.

Especially in the context of designing for events and exhibits, balance also refers to managing the amount of information presented. When we know how wonderful our product or service is, it can be very tempting to try to present every feature and benefit we have. However, too much information becomes visual pollution and runs the risk of overwhelming the viewer.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, taking a minimalist approach and relying on a single simple graphic may

give the viewer the impression that you underestimate them. In some situations, this approach may be effective, but generally you need to appeal to a more discerning audience.

Usually, the most effective approach is to balance the presentation. Provide enough visual impact to capture the eye, then present the most important facts for the immediate audience. Finally, provide a clear path for more information. The events in which you participate will dictate the form that these actions take. An unattended information kiosk requires a fully self-contained display while traditional trade shows and staffed events need to factor in the display and the role of your on-site personnel.

## FOCUS

With a large product line or full portfolio of services, effective focus can be a daunting challenge. Even for businesses with well-defined offerings, deciding what to display at an event can prove frustrating for even experienced marketers.

Generally, businesses are more successful when they limit the active presentation to three specific areas (the "rule of thirds"). First, you should introduce what is new. Trade shows are a time for renewal and attendees often say they are going "to see what's new." Satisfy that predefined expectation by stating clearly what you are introducing at the event. Whether or not that involves price promotion, special offers or other hooks, the key is to make space (visually and actually) for your freshest products and services.

Next, share what is already popular. There are many ways to present your best seller and the value of doing so is that you can extend the product lifecycle with strong presentation and by taking advantage of positive association. Even if they will not admit it, consumers



(both B2B and B2C) are influenced by the purchasing actions of other consumers. We all like to think that we make good decisions and one of the best reinforcements is when others agree with our purchasing decisions. Presenting a product as a best seller often suggests to the consumer that this is a smart purchase, thus the term “positive association.” Presenting your best seller can capitalize on our basic desire to be accepted and can give a skeptical consumer an easy way out if they are faced with a hard purchasing decision.

Finally, promote what you need to sell. Sometimes one product or service may span several of these categories, but the rule of thirds is applicable here too. Determine the offering that will have the greatest impact on your business and make space for it in your display. Be sure that you consider why you need to promote this offering, so you can manage expectations. For example, if you need to clear inventory, be creative in the presentation, but honest in the communications. No one likes to feel like they were sold last year's goods.

Naturally, some spaces are large enough for a more diverse offering. But if you start with these categories in mind, you'll have a more concise display strategy to support. Even with a large display, attendees quickly become saturated at trade shows. Plan your display and ensure your team can sum up your offerings effectively.

### REPETITION

It has been said, several times, that repetition is the best teacher. In a trade show environment, it can also be the best differentiator. We generally suggest that our client's brand everything. If something can be seen by the public, make sure your logo is on it. If your tagline is concise and easy to read, include your tagline too.

When your booth is set up in your office or warehouse, repetitive logos may seem tedious. However, on a busy show floor or event venue it will help draw your booth together and identify all your space with your brand. If

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your presentation is well-design and executed, you want event attendees to identify your product, services and people with your brand. The quick and easy way to do that is to brand everything. Your display, your literature, your apparel, everything you put on display needs to be easily matched to your brand. Don't worry so much about how the display looks by itself, the true measure is how well you are identifiable on a crowded show floor.

Imagine yourself at a trade show for your favorite pastime. You're attracted to a booth with dynamic graphics and an interesting logo. You've got a casual familiarity with the company, so you stop in to discuss their new products or just to learn more about them. The booth staff (wearing company shirts) is helpful and the styling fits your personal preferences and needs. As you leave the booth, their logo is clearly visible and fits the culture you just observed through conversation and demonstration. You walk away having a complete experience with the company, the people and the

product. That experience is now embodied in the branding that was consistently displayed.

Now imagine this setting without the branding. The overall mix is good; you like their product; their people seem genuine and you can identify with the culture they project. But as you leave their booth, you struggle to find the company name. As marketeers we may make the exact effort to determine who they are, but the average consumer won't. Moral to the story: Make your branding pervasive in the space.

When your brand is on display in a space with numerous visual distractions, even the smallest details can set you apart. Master the art of balancing the information on display, focus on products that sell, engage and produce results, and repeat your brand message to form the backbone of a solid event strategy. Pair those concepts with a visually dynamic booth and you've laid the foundation for your very own image impact environment.



# THE IMPORTANCE OF BRANDING

— *Craig Koopersmith*

We've all been there, right? Spending large portions of a budget on giveaways and prizes in order to draw people to your booth. Or spending weeks recruiting the right volunteers to go out and represent your name, inviting people to learn more about you and your company. Both of those efforts are resourceful and worth putting time into, but...come close, we have a secret to tell you. With good branding, people will come to you. Either out of intrigue or because they recognize who you are. There is a reason why design and branding jobs are in abundance – and the reason being that good branding alone can maximize your marketing efforts drastically, and quickly grow your business.

Don't know where to start? Discovering your brand can be boiled down to a few key bullet points:

**What are you selling/offering?** Quickly being upfront with what you offer and/or sell is key. Research shows that you have about 7 seconds to capture someone's attention. People will want to know what you're offering them right away. How can you make their life better with your product? What will you say to get that across?

**Who is your target audience?** For example, if you're offering life coaching to business professionals, you don't want to have a brand that will attract...say, teenage girls. So, your brand's appearance (color scheme, website design, written content, social media, etc.) really matters. It can attract the right people or send them running.

**What is your business personality?** Are you funny? Are you serious? Academic? Masculine? Kid-friendly? These questions will be answered by identifying the audience you're trying to reach. Will you want to write your content with some wit, or focus on research? Will you want your photography to be loud and colorful or clean and monotone? There are free resources out



there to help you discover the base answers to these questions:

**Consistency is key.** "Focus plus consistency over time will produce a brand that endures forever, theoretically. You can see this formula at work with some of the biggest brands today. For instance, Coca-Cola has dominated the soft drink industry by staying focused (one product) and consistent (one formula, discounting the 'new coke' experiment that failed quickly) since it was introduced in 1886." – The Wire

If your brand stays consistent across the board, with both digital and tangible marketing efforts, people will begin recognizing you. And the more often people recognize you, the more likely they are to eventually engage with your business.

Having a solid, recognizable, and consistent brand is extremely important when growing your business. We encourage any of you that feel overwhelmed by the thought of discovering your brand to hire professionals to help. You don't need to be the expert in everything! Designers and marketing professionals are trained to guide you to answer these questions well.

# THEME YOUR EVENT & BOOST PROMOTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

— *Sofia Troutman*

On a regular basis, we get the question from clients about how to pick a promotion or a theme to use for a trade show or event. Often these promotional messages or themes are intended for a trade show, but sometimes they are for the launch of a product or just to generate awareness or sales. Here are 12 quick steps to help you pick the right promotion to grow your leads, sales or improve your overall marketing results.

**1.** Identify if your company has a brand promise or brand image that should be considered before you evaluate alternatives. Find out the details and determine whether it is current and resonates with your customer base.

**2.** If your company does not have a brand promise or brand image identified, work with your marketing team and leadership to develop one or hire out a company to help you do it.

**3.** Find out – or decide – what you are trying to promote or sell. Whether you are exhibiting at an event or creating one, consider the audience expected to attend when picking your theme or promotion.

**4.** Determine the company's goals beyond incremental sales for the product, service or event being promoted.

**5.** Communicate and confirm goals with your company's leadership, marketing and sales teams.

**6.** If you are planning to promote a new product, ensure that you understand key differentiators for the product along with the client for the product or service. These may be the same as for your broader company message or it may be narrower or even different if you are seeking new markets.



**7.** Determine how much you need to sell or save because of this event promotion to justify your investment. This could be estimated new sales revenue or estimated savings in alternate advertising costs to get similar client engagement (this will help you determine a budget if one is not already set).

**8.** If you don't know how to calculate the expected revenue or savings you can ask your sales, marketing or leadership teams to give you a revenue estimate or look up results from similar promotions in the past.

**9.** Regardless of where you get the estimated goals, ensure to get approval and agreement on said goals before proposing a theme, event or promotion. You want to make sure that when you propose your promotion you can explain how it can contribute towards achieving the approved goals your company has set out.



10. Brainstorm with your team a theme or promotion that will tie in with your brand, be relevant to your target clients/event attendees and will help you achieve your goals (and that you can execute within budget).

**Brainstorm with your team a theme or promotion that will tie in with your brand, be relevant to your target clients/event attendees...**

11. If your company provides a service and not a tangible good, think of what benefit that service provides for your users. For example, it could be savings, peace of mind or efficiency. Then tie that benefit into your brand and promotion. If your company provides peace of mind for their clients, you can offer a relaxation app or game.

12. Create a tagline or statement to describe your theme and how it ties to your company, brand or product. Make sure to utilize that tag or statement to reinforce your theme wherever possible. For example, if your theme is all about superior performance you could have race car giveaways, race car colors for staffer shirts, a promotional email message that ties into the theme or social media hashtags that tie it all together like #SuperiorPerformance, #TradeshowYear, #YourCompanyName.

Enjoy picking and promoting your event theme and make sure to communicate it internally and externally throughout your execution to maximize your impact.

# BOOTH DESIGN FOR SHORT ATTENTION SPANS

— *Sofia Troutman*

With countless exhibitors competing for their attention, conference and expo attendees tend to make quick, visual decisions on who deserves their focus. Effective booth design thus means quickly grabbing their curiosity, and then shifting that attention to the products or services most relevant to their needs.

The following booth design and on-site tips are among the tried and true steps used by effective exhibitors:

## **MAKE NEW ITEMS PROMINENT**

If you've been exhibiting for any length of time, some attendees will likely already be aware of your company. To make sure they don't pass you by, put your newest offerings front and center. Front-of-booth podiums, islands, and other booth fixtures are often ideal placement locations for new products or service literature.

## **CENTER YOUR DESIGN ON BEST SELLERS**

Whereas the familiar faces in attendance may be interested in your new products and services, your best sellers still define your company in the eyes of first-time attendees. Make sure your backwall display and your signage clearly and instantly communicate these defining elements of your business.

## **USE SIDEWALLS FOR THE "SURPRISE" FACTOR**

If you have an inline display utilizing modular design, your booth sidewalls are often the first things seen by attendees as they approach from either direction. Make use of this by decorating these panels in such a way that they elicit curiosity from afar yet require attendees to come in closer to see the full appeal and functionality of your products or services.

## **ADD MOTION**

Even the best designed booths and graphics can fade into the background when your audience is suffering



from viewer fatigue. Adding an element of motion or interactivity can help your exhibit stand out from all the other exhibitors' more static displays. If you're selling hard goods, a product demo can be helpful. If you're selling a more intangible service, then activities such as educational workshops or booth elements such as touchscreens can help bring attendees see and understand your value proposition.

## **DON'T DISMISS ANALOG OR BASIC TECH**

In this era of HD video, voice search, virtual reality and artificial intelligence, it can be tempting to think that the only way to attract eyes is through high tech. But analog games and old-school technology can sometimes make for clever, eye-catching booth gimmicks. They can also be handy in uncommon situations such as a recent power outage at a major U.S. tech show – during which, the biggest attendee draws were flashlights and the daylight from outside-facing windows!

Competing for attendee attention is a never-ending process. But if you remember the basic principles of effective booth design, you can have an eye-catching presence in any exhibit environment.

# NOT A DESIGNER? THAT'S OKAY!

— *Steve Hoffman*

Not a Designer? That's OK, you're probably also not a Certified Public Accountant, but you still get your taxes filed. You're likely not a lawyer, but your business still enters into contractual agreements. Every once in a while, there are functions that a business needs to outsource to experts and the design of a trade show environment is one of them.

Solutions for an effective trade show design run the gamut from simple to complex. Your designer and exhibit solution provider need to operate in your interest and not propose "something" because that is all they have to sell! Look for a provider that offers a wide breadth of products. In fact, "buying" a booth might be a waste of your money, so also seek the option of renting a customized solution to preserve capital and retain flexibility going forward.

Whether a display need is a small portable booth, a purely custom fabricated large island design, or a hybrid custom modular solution, to varying degrees the design process has to address functionality, aesthetics and messaging. Particularly on larger projects, deciding on what company you want to work with to refine and

develop the final solution should be (at least if not) more important than deciding between pretty pictures!

As our firm's (Skyline) products and services have evolved over the years, we now find ourselves competing against traditional Custom Houses as often as we compete against Internet catalog companies. Part of our Unique Selling Proposition vs. the old-world Custom Houses is to be able to provide both design and execution of a booth and related services that are on par or superior, but at a lower cost-of-ownership. Conversely, most clients that compare online vendors to working with our Marketing Consultants often come to realize that just a bit of the interaction they experience in our Discovery Process will generally make up for any price premium many times over. In the same way, we understand positioning of our brand, your designer needs to ferret out your target audience(s); offer options that will allow for the greatest return on your marketing objectives and have the capacity to not only meet and exceed your expectations, but to have contingencies as required by the world of trade shows.



# GETTING THE DOUBLE TAKE – 10 TIPS FOR AN EXHIBIT THAT STANDS OUT

— *Sofia Troutman*

How do you stand out at the conference, trade show or event? How do you have the exhibit or environment that represents your brand well yet rises above the rest? Here is a hint...it is not all about having the tallest booth on the floor. Having a great designer who can help translate your brand into a three-dimensional space is ideal. They can take your marketing strategy and brand and create an experience. However, you don't always have the budget or the time to go all out. Here are some tips gleaned from some of our Skyline designers you can use to elevate your "look" so your company brand gets the attention it deserves.

## 1. Use Color Wisely

One of the first elements of your brand that will be noticed and likely remembered by viewers is color. In fact, a Marketing study done by the University of Loyola on color indicates that the right color can increase brand recognition by 80%.

Ensuring that the exhibit elements you select are brand appropriate yet don't blend in along with everything else on the show floor is key. Know your industry and your competition. If all the other exhibits are green and white, then consider using one of your brand accent colors as the main background color if your logo is green and white. This will help you stand out on the show floor.

## 2. Higher Is Not Always Better

While you want to be visible on the show floor, hanging a sign as high as possible is not always the best choice. Other factors to consider include; how to tie in your ground supported elements to hanging structures, what other exhibitors are likely to do (if you all hang a sign at 24" that will not help anyone stand out) if you



The right color can increase brand recognition by 80%.

are not sure what they will do, look at photos of the show from prior years or talk to someone who attended the show to get some insights.

By integrating your ground elements to any hanging or tall signage you will help draw more eyes to your exhibit and define the space. By doing this your exhibit is more likely to stand out among a sea of hanging signs even if it is not as tall as the others.

## 3. Contrast Trumps Brightness

Backlit is a great way to get attention if you are the back booth in a dark show. Yet, if everything in your booth is backlit then the eyes of the viewer don't know what to focus on. It is too much. Instead, consider backlighting key elements of your message or logo and using regular down lights or no lighting for the rest. You will create contrast and the eyes of your viewer will go to where you need them to go.

Spotlighting just key areas on your sign like logos or just a couple of sides of a hanging cube can be just as, or even more effective than lighting everything. Also, you can save some money by being selective about what you light.

#### 4. Take Your Logo Out to Play

Your logo does not have to stay flat at a show or event. This is your chance to showcase your brand from a different perspective. Whether it is creating a 3D sign and lighting it from different angles, mirroring the logo image in a hanging sign, or even using it to create a unique, yet subtle, background pattern so you can create a surprising element for your audience.

You can have the structure mirror the logo a couple of different ways in the exhibit. The structure captures additional interest by having a high signage element that ties into the ground structure.

#### 5. Don't Forget About Context

Are you exhibiting in Las Vegas? Maybe there is something about your brand that can speak to that. You can either play up the Vegas look by including some neon signs or go completely counter-culture and provide an oasis to escape from that. What is the rest of the competition doing? You want to be sure not to do that. We saw a company do sparkly lanyards in Vegas. Very simple but it was a huge hit with that crowd.

What message are you trying to send at the show? What does your brand stand for? Is there something newsworthy or transformational happening in your company or with the industry? Do you have a theme that follows that messaging or ties into benefits for a product you are launching? This should all be commu-



3D logos can be backlit to attract attention and create interest.

nicated to your designer as they can use that information to create a space that communicates these messages in a unique and memorable way.

#### 6. Creating Curiosity

While you don't want the name and brand of your company to be a mystery, you can get attention by inciting curiosity about the experience you are providing, the new product you are launching or just the environment of your exhibit.

You can do so by sending a carefully worded invitation providing clues about what you are doing but leaving some details out for prospects to wonder about. For example: "We will be demo our new product and give away gift certificates to top rated restaurants in downtown Chicago to the first 10 people to try out the demo."

*Continued on page 18*

*Continued from page 17*

You can also create mystery by providing a peek into the experience you have created with partial walls, curtains, windows or sheer material. Prospects can see there is something fun going on but they can't quite tell what it is. Layering fabric can create different views of the same space creating another chance to make a first impression.

**You can also create mystery by providing a peek into the experience you have created with partial walls, curtains, windows or sheer material.**

One particularly intriguing exhibit I saw at EuroShop had three displays with windows in them. They looked like little birdhouses. To look in the window you had to climb the ladders and look in. I saw multiple people climbing that ladder and later having conversations with the staffers.

## 7. Make Motion Effective

A pet peeve of our designers is being asked for a round rotating hanging sign. Why is that? Do they have an unfounded aversion to round signs? No, but they do have a natural aversion to doing the same thing for every client. They want our client's exhibits to look great and to stand out. While there may be times a round, rotating sign can accomplish this, there are many other tactics that are likely to work even better. Assuming your objective is to draw passersby to your exhibit through movement here are some options:

**Use Digital** – A monitor with a great video or just a presentation showing your logo, top products and key messaging can create movement and tell a complete story especially when your staffer takes the time to explain the content to visitors.

**Fabric Movement** – An exhibit can have hanging fabric that moves with the natural breeze in a show or the air of a fan. Only do this if it makes sense for your brand.

**Project Your Brand** – Depending on the lighting at the show you may not be able to clearly project words or a complex message, but you can certainly project shapes or a repeating pattern of your logo or a shape associated with your product or theme.

**Demo Your Product** – Do you have machinery that could move in a demo periodically. What a great way to create attention! A great demo one of our designers created was showing a clients' waterproof product functioning under a waterfall. This not only created motion and attention with the water but showcased the benefits of the product very well.

## 8. Impress with Less

It is so tempting to want to show all your wonderful products! And, I know many of you are pushed by conflicting interests and often must answer to multiple teams who want you to show what they are working on. However, think about your last experience at a store you were walking by at the mall and entered. What made you go in? Would you have gone in if they had 20 products showcased on the window instead of 3? Would you have noticed the one thing that drew you in?

Also, think of the nicest stores you go to at the mall, such as Apple, Ann Taylor or Nordstrom. How many times do you see the logo out in front? The logo is certainly very visible at every entrance but once you are inside, they rely on the ambiance, their sales associates, and merchandise to tell the branding story. Keep this in mind when you consider how often and how large a logo needs to be. A good rule of thumb is to use the com-



Impress with less! Clean, concise messaging, select product display and video presentations contribute to a successful exhibiting experience.

pany logo as a focal point in your normal field of view. Instead of repeating a logo you can expand your visuals and create space to use your other visuals.

Another trick is to be picky about what you merchandise. You can always bring extra product that you think you may want to show clients but store it in a closet or cabinet until you need it. This way you don't have to clutter up your exhibit yet have the product you need just in case. By keeping the space cleaner, you reduce the stress of the viewer and you can better define the focus of what you want them to look at.

## 9. Tell a Story

People remember stories. A fun way to hook your audience is to give them an unexpected element and get them curious to find out more. Telling a story works better if you have a more involved client but, done right, it can create that double-take and, bonus, talk

value after that. At the EXHIBITORLIVE show, we set out to do just that. We started with an insight. Our clients were stressed out and needed someone to take care of all their exhibiting needs so they could relax.

Our internal agency, Skyline 360, came up with the theme 'Experience Trade Show Zen.' Our designer was then asked to create an environment that would showcase a show-stopping Zen Garden Experience that would also showcase the full capabilities of Skyline demonstrating that we could take care of the broad range of exhibiting tasks so they could sit down and relax – Experience Trade Show Zen. We wanted clients to stop in their tracks and ask themselves if this was the Skyline they thought they knew. We sent out digital and paper invitations, we created a website, we blogged about the experience we were creating.

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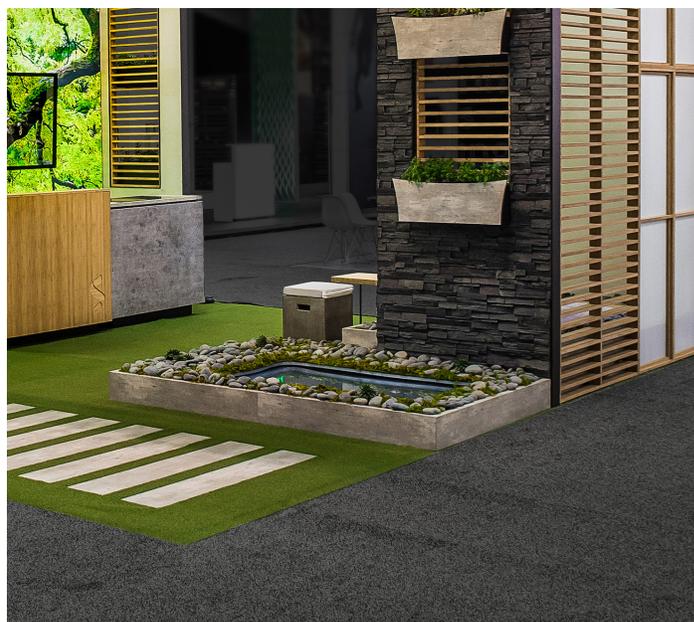
The draw was an environment with a digital Koi pond surrounded by real plants, larger than life tree graphics, hot tea, and Japanese sweets. The entire structure was inspired by nature and created the calm feeling of being in a garden. The clients we welcomed felt understood, they loved the exhibit and we were able to start some great conversations and win Best of Show!

### 10. Be Different & Relevant

Can you create an element of surprise that is not expected in your industry show, yet ties into your company or messaging? Some industrial companies assume they need to use truss hardware for their exhibit because that is what is expected of an industrial company. However, if the objective is to stand out and get a double take, you may want to stay away from what everyone else is doing and convey your message of strength, reliability or innovation without the truss.

Another way to stand out is to use crowd gatherers, mascots or unique giveaways. Crowd Gatherers get a bad rap but can be invaluable to communicate your basic messaging to someone walking by your booth. They can be especially helpful if you can have them wear something that ties into your theme. One year our dealer in Spain had staffers wear and give away black rimmed glasses with tape in the middle to highlight how they were trade show nerds who could see things differently. It made people stop and ask and then they would share how these were special glasses that could help you see things differently and encouraged visitors to use them.

Well-thought-out giveaways can help you stand out and tie into your company or theme. One of our clients sent out golf balls to high-value prospects and then invited them to participate on a hole in one contest for the chance to win a high-value driver. Not only were



Digital koi pond created movement and intrigue.

they able to attract top prospects to their booth, the activity itself attracted attention from people walking by. Also, the messaging tied into their brand message about quality and accuracy in their field.

In summary, people are attracted to beauty and notice what is different from their surroundings. When someone walks into a space, they stop and look if the space is attractive to them. They are more likely to come in, if they have an open pathway, and if there is something of interest and a reason for them to enter the space. Is there interesting content? Maybe a video, a presentation a demonstration? Also, there must be a reason for each product or message featured on your display. It is best to have less product, as a cluttered space is not inviting. Ensure your company brand is recognizable and stands out. One designer put it this way, "Imagine how you would display a valuable piece of art in your livingroom. You would ensure it has a place of honor that is noticeable, uncluttered and well lit. Treat your logo in that same way."

EXHIBITORLIVE  
**BEST  
OF SHOW**



Skyline's 'Experience Trade Show Zen' exhibit was named best of show at EXHIBITORLIVE, the trade show industry's premier event.

# HOW DO YOU MAKE A BRAND IMPRESSION THAT LASTS?

— *Scott Young*

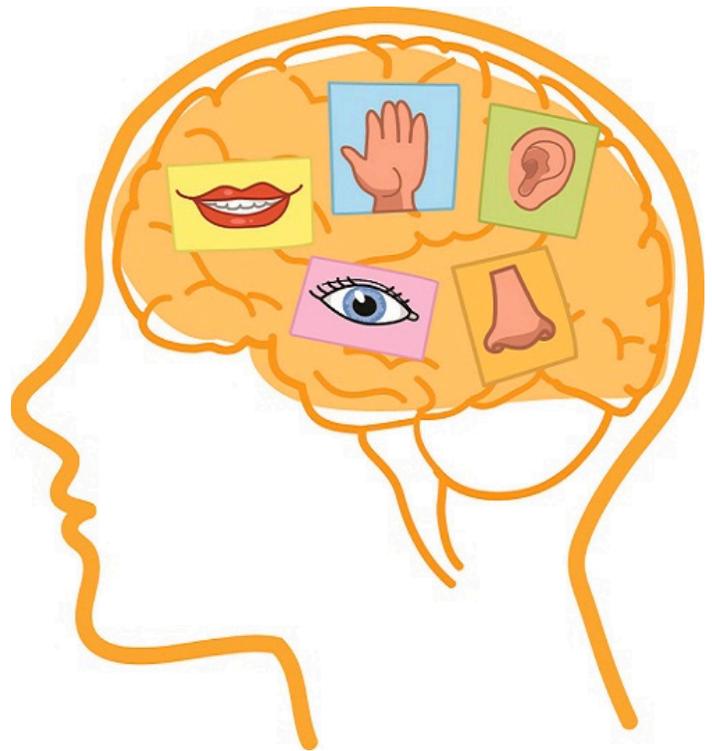
Whether the target audience is experiencing your company at an industry trade show, in a branded corporate environment or even at an experiential marketing tour stop, you should be marketing to all 5 senses to give yourself the best chance of being remembered. A total sensory experience is an effective way for you to make a lasting impression. Just ask Disney!

## SEE IT

Humans are very visual creatures. A high-quality design can make all the difference in the world. If you want to be remembered, you have to look your best from every angle. Be strategic in how you represent your organization visually. A well-planned creative design that is appropriately themed and carried throughout the experience goes a long way in helping people to remember you and your messaging. Visual marketing is often the first opportunity you have to introduce your brand and message to the audience.

## TOUCH IT

Go ahead and touch it! You know you want to. People like to touch. A good touch can lead to a memorable experience. If you sell products, you will probably still want to have a selection of physical samples on hand for people to touch and feel if possible. But in many cases, physical samples just aren't practical or interesting. So what is there to touch if there are no products? Why do you think the stress balls continue to be such a popular promotional giveaway at trade shows? Touching can be therapeutic. Insert your favorite fidget device here. And while you are at it, just slap your logo on a fidget cube or fidget spinner and hand those out – with a related story of course! These kinds of touches can help, but what you really need is a WOW factor. This is where technology can allow you tell your story and educate



your audience in a memorable format. Large format interactive touchscreens have a significant 'bug light effect' and they can change the way people engage and interact with your organization. Customized touchscreen experiences can perform well in corporate lobbies, showrooms, boardrooms, trade show exhibits, training facilities, traveling road shows and the list goes on.

## HEAR IT

Remember those songs that take you back to a time and place in your life? People hear a lot of noise. As a marketer, you often have the power to control the noise they hear when they are engaging with your brand. Don't overlook this particular sense as an insignificant opportunity. Have your staff properly trained and armed with verbiage and catch phrases that are concise and in line with the overall messaging and experience. Take the time to



understand your audience and give them an audible experience that is pleasant, and well-executed. This particular sense can significantly help to support the overall experience you want people to have and remember.

### **SMELL IT**

Yes, I said smell it. Unless you work for a fragrance designer, coffee distributor or a cookie company you probably don't have specific smells associated with your brand. But that doesn't mean you can't use the sense of smell to have an impact on the experience of your customers. Companies like ScentAir have perfected the science of aroma marketing and it is amazing how well it works. Scent marketing has been proven to be effective and has a significantly positive impact from a marketing perspective. Use scent marketing to your advantage whenever possible.

### **TASTE IT**

Again, most people don't work for an organization that has a particular taste associated with their business. But that doesn't mean you should ignore the sense of taste from a marketing perspective. People are more likely to remember the company that gave them free food, coffee, candy, beer, wine, lemonade, popcorn and other yummy treats. Especially if the taste was part of a total sensory experience you have created around your brand. Just find a way to promote it and creatively weave it into the overall experience and it will be memorable. Maybe that is as simple as giving the tasty treats creative and funny names that feel like part of your brand and help to extend your key messaging. Who wouldn't remember that cool car company giving out cups of 'motor oil' branded coffee and 'rubber tire' doughnuts?

# THE FUTURE OF EXHIBIT DESIGN

— *Kayla Goeman*

Some may say that design is not new, it is simply a new application based on historical designs. In the ever-changing industry of trade shows and events, one thing is consistently desired; intriguing design. We wanted to explore the history of design and felt there was no better place to start than with 30+ year veteran, Greg Mathieson, a Senior Exhibit Designer at Skyline and Scooter Hendon, a Skyline Sector 5 Exhibit Designer with multiple industry awards under his belt.

Although technology and social media have changed the demands of what clients want within their trade show exhibit, one factor has remained constant through 30+ years according to Greg; “impress me.”

According to Greg, “The client is becoming harder and harder to impress. With the advances in CGI (Computer Generated Imaging), digital imaging, and technology capabilities, we are finding it harder to show the client something they haven’t seen before, which makes for an exciting challenge.”

The advances in technology; like video walls, social sharing, and experiential marketing have all drastically changed a factor of exhibiting that was previously an afterthought: digital content. “Content development is now more important than ever,” said Greg. “What’s the point of having a 14-foot video wall if all you’re going to share on it is a PowerPoint?” Standing out among a sea of competitors is a top priority.

## CREATE A MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE

Skyline Sector 5 Design Manager, Scooter Hendon, also commented on how he sees the future of exhibit design “The marketing needs of businesses have diversified to the point that showing up with nice architecture and graphics just isn’t enough to distinguish you from your competitors. A memorable,

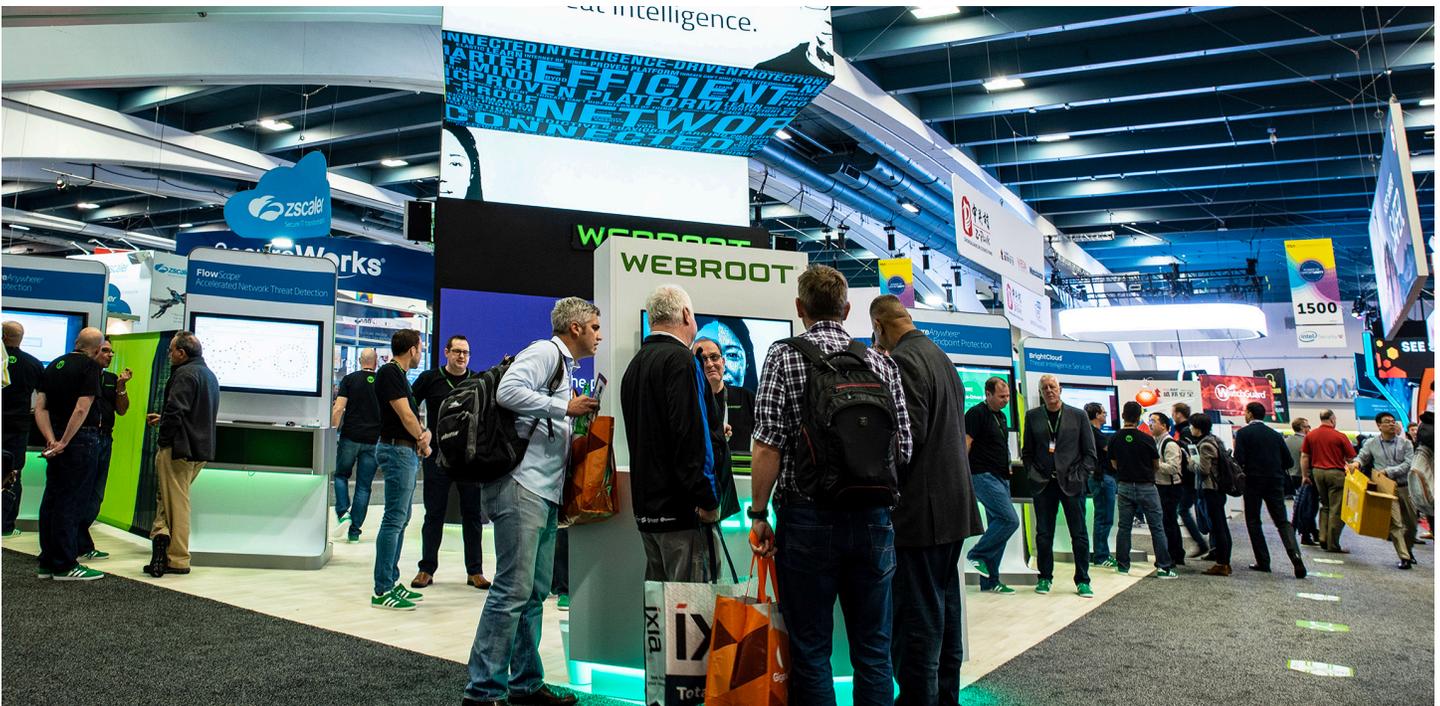


purposeful experience in your space is what really engages people and connects them to your brand. It seems common these days for that experience to be digitally-based, but there’s plenty of room for a well-thought analogue experience that is designed to make visitors interact.”

We recently published an article on the evolving role of a trade show manager, and there is no doubt that trade show exhibiting is evolving as well. In the next 10 years, “exhibiting will transition into more experiential environments rather than displays,” said Greg. More emphasis will be placed on the value, the emotional experience, a person receives from stopping at a booth.

## DRAW ATTENDEES IN

Think about it this way, a business person most likely stops by your booth because they feel that your company can satisfy their business needs. In the future, your trade show exhibit will not only need to satisfy the



business goals of an attendee but the personal goals of stopping by. What activity or digital content within your exhibit will draw the attendee in? What part of the experience will help them determine that your company is the best option? What game or activity piques their interest to stay a little longer? What types of food and beverages will make them feel at ease as a person, then help them transition into getting down to business? Exhibiting will transform into more than, “just a bright light shining on a product.”

### SOLVE NEW CHALLENGES

Staying ahead of trends and learning how to solve new challenges will always be a part of exhibit design for Greg. “A great design area that’s being overlooked is flooring. We are seeing a demand for flooring beyond carpet; something that could be raised or has LED lights within it. You have a wonderful graphic opportunity below your feet that can attract a lot of attention from people.” For Scooter, the possibilities of Virtual Reality

becoming more common on the show floor is what excites him. “Virtual Reality is obviously an exciting development that will become more and more common at trade shows. Being able to transport attendees into a completely different environment can be hugely impactful and impressive. Imagine the difference between showing a looping video of a manufacturing process on a standard TV versus being virtually present in an environment while the process happens. Content development can be expensive, but virtual branded experiences last well beyond a trade show and can make an impression that sticks.”

Whatever experience you decide to create with your exhibit company provider, make sure that it relates to your brand and marketing goal. Don’t let the bright lights of Virtual Reality and digital content distract you from what matters most: a face-to-face interaction.

# WHERE TO LOOK FOR INNOVATIVE EXHIBIT ACCENTS

— *Deanna Sealey*

Developing or customizing your own exhibit can be a money-saving approach for many small exhibitors. Even for mid-size or large exhibitors, adding distinctive flourishes can help you set your booth apart and communicate your company's unique vision or value proposition. But where does a busy exhibit manager come up with clever design ideas? Sometimes a fresh perspective requires looking outside your own industry.

## CREATIVE, DIY BOOTHS

So your booth has seen better days, huh? Whether you are getting ready to embark on a new exhibit design with your exhibit provider or come up with a few creative tweaks of your own, finding inspiration is always the best place to start!

...finding inspiration is always the best place to start!

## LEARN FROM THE CRAFTIEST

If you and your competitors' booth designs all seem like subtle variations on the same theme, it may be time to literally step outside your own exhibit hall. No one puts the "c" in creativity quite like the Arts/Culture or Interior Design sectors and visiting one of their trade shows (see the Skyline Trade Show Selector Tool to find for shows in your area) can reinvigorate your view of innovative displays. Exhibits in the sporting goods or electronics industries are also great places to discover the latest ways to add an interactive element to your booth.

## KING PINS

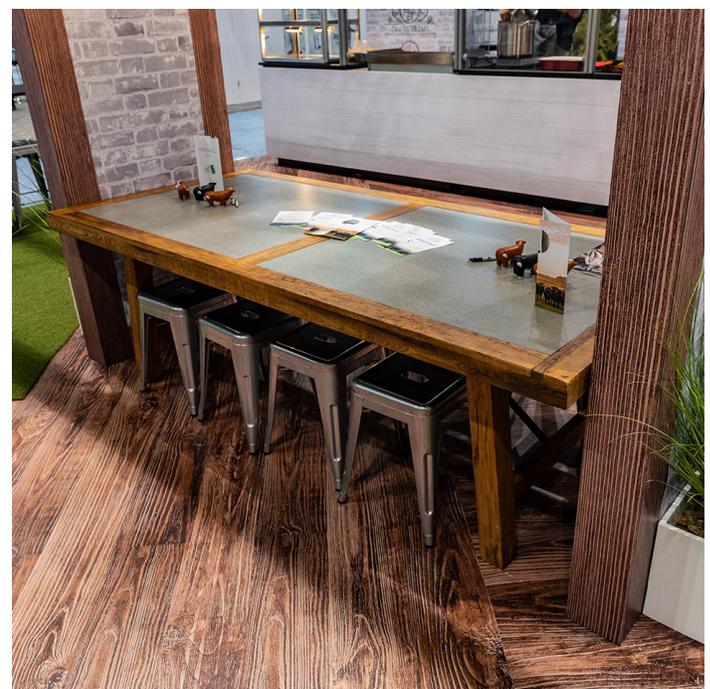
As the self-professed "world's biggest catalog of ideas," Pinterest long ago evolved from just consumer bulletin boards of dream vacations and wedding ideas.



Countless lists now exist for marketing and exhibit professionals, including this list of DIY booth ideas. From reclaimed or textured elements that contrast with modern booth construction – to display materials made from repurposed household or industrial objects — Pinterest has countless ideas for adding unique furnishing or display materials to your booth. If you like Pinterest, you should also check out Skyline's "My Idea Board" feature on the Skyline.com website. Like Pinterest, you create boards and pin your favorite designs directly from our exhibit portfolio!

## THE ORIGINAL EXHIBITORS

Long before our industry reinvented exhibitions with pop-up banners and folding display units, museum curators were busy crafting more permanent exhibits to delight and surprise their own visitors. While infrequent, museum garage sales are wildly popular events



for those looking for eye-catching display pieces for booths – from art easels to vintage display boxes. When the Bell Museum of Natural History announced a garage sale on Facebook, more than 5,000 cultural creatives indicated their interest in attending, all eager to score one-of-a-kind curios for their personal or professional design projects.

Coming up with creative booth elements doesn't require money or an MFA degree in art. The best approach is to literally "step outside the box" of your own booth or industry and learn from other exhibitors. Your creative eye paired with your exhibit house's expertise is the perfect recipe for transforming your ideas into an unforgettably unique exhibit!

# KEEP IT SIMPLE

— *Shawn Lacagnina*

Today's trade show floor is filled with a higher level of decision makers looking for solutions to their pain. Often working from a tightly formed agenda, if you are not on that list to visit, your exhibit has to grab their attention. Your graphic image and message play an important role in your success. These best practices are a great place to start.

**1. Keep it Simple.** Remember, you have 3-5 seconds to attract a prospective client's attention – especially on a busy trade show floor. Who you are must be obvious and stated clearly. And if you are part of a large organization, your division or region needs to be spelled out as well. For example, GE is not as clear as GE Oil and Gas. GE is known. However, GE Oil and Gas is specific and helps prospective clients understand how you might fill a need.

**2. What You Do** is the second most important message after your name. Does your tag line spell out that distinction? If your tagline could easily be used by almost any company, then it needs support to help inform attendees what it is you do. For example, "Quality Service and Support" is not as strong as "Auto Transmission Quality Service and Support."

**3. Support Your Message with Bullet Points** – if needed. Further define your message with 3-5 bullet points, not paragraphs. Your prospective client should be able to scan them quickly and answer the question as to how you fit into their world. You are helping them to qualify themselves before they ever step into your booth space.

**4. A Picture is Worth 1,000 words.** You have heard it your whole life and you know it to be true. Use images that will help your prospective client put themselves into that solution. The images should make your



prospective want that feeling the image represents. The idea of keeping it simple still applies.

**5. Keep the Look and Feel Consistent** with your other marketing materials. The first thing a new prospect does after a successful visit to your exhibit is gather more information about your company. If what they learned does not match other marketing materials (such as your website, business card, brochures, etc.) then your credibility goes down. Mixed messages, various logos, or a multitude of different looks raises concern about your stability in the minds of prospects. Think about how you make decisions about a new venture.

If this is not your organization's strong suit, utilize the skills of an artist that specialize in trade show graphics. The design meeting should focus on your goals and give the artist a clear direction to help you achieve those goals. It will be some of the best money you can spend.

# WHAT YOUR EXHIBIT DESIGNER WISHED YOU KNEW

— *Kayla Goeman*

You know which company you will trust to bring your brand to life at your next trade show and you've even got a call scheduled to talk to the designers about your vision for the show. Here's what you will need to bring to that initial meeting:

## WHY ARE YOU GOING TO THE SHOW?

It's a simple question, but your answer can be very revealing to an exhibit designer. Are you going to the show to connect with as many people as you can? Are you hoping to host executives of long-time partners with coffee & a conference space? Before you talk with exhibit designers, determine with relevant stakeholders, the specific objectives you're hoping to achieve by going to the show, and what your company hopes to leave the show with. "Define what you want to do at the show, what you want the customer to experience when they visit your booth, and what you as a company want to take away from the show," advised Adam Deming, Exhibit Design Manager and 10+ year Skyline Designer. If you can't answer why you're going, think critically about why you are exhibiting in the first place.

## WHAT IS YOUR BUDGET?

It's also helpful to have a pre-approved budget determined before you get knee deep into the touch-screens, video walls & virtual reality climbing walls. The designers will create based on what makes sense for your company and objectives for the show. Not having a predetermined budget ahead of time will likely mean design revisions and approvals from your director or leadership team, adding precious time to your trade show timeline. Technology is new and constantly changing, but think about the best way to incorporate that into your booth space. Just because it is cool, new and exciting, doesn't mean you need to include it.

It's no secret that events are a big marketing investment. Having an agreed upon budget helps the designer provide an option within the realm of possibility, and ensures your timeline is kept predictable and accurate.

## WHO YOU SHOULD INVOLVE AND WHEN?

In a productive design discovery meeting, the conversation will naturally flow, but should be driven by you as the client. You have the best knowledge of what you are trying to achieve at the show and you will be the one to oversee your company presence at the show, so this conversation is your time to make your objectives and goals known.

Here's who we recommend you include in that initial meeting with the designers:

- The highest level of approver - this keeps everyone in the loop and on the same page.
- Someone who will be at the show, or who has been at the show in the past – if that isn't you.
- The creator of the content produced or the creator of the product that will be announced at the show or conference.

Making the time to have everyone involved at an earlier point will save you time and help you hit your budget.

There's no doubt that managing an event presence is stressful, however, being prepared will save you valuable time and money.

Regardless of your prior exhibiting knowledge your exhibit house and designers should be able to take your information to create an exhibit to meet your needs.

# USING BANNER STANDS TO CREATE A BRANDED ENVIRONMENT

— *Greg Johnson*

Most often, when people think of banner stands, they think of using them at trade shows, or at sponsored events to help broadcast their message, show off their products, and increase exposure to their brand. It's little wonder since banner stands have earned a place as staples for those applications by being so thoroughly versatile. One less common, but equally effective, application for banner stands is creating a branded environment within your own facilities.

## LOBBY

Welcome customers, prospects, and other visitors to your office or showroom with custom graphics that convey a message while creating an impression of professionalism and worth. Custom banner stands in your lobby can be placed near windows, so passers-by can see them, giving you an opportunity to let them know who you are and what your company does.

## Welcome customers, prospects, and other visitors to your office or showroom with custom graphics...

Placing banners near or behind your reception desk creates additional display space where you can place a welcoming or introductory message, announce upcoming events, or showcase new products. Place a series of banners in the waiting area, and visitors are likely to absorb some additional information about your company and products before you even meet with them.

## MEETING ROOMS

Your conference rooms are another effective place to use banner stands for a custom branded environment. If you use your meeting rooms primarily for client meetings, consider using graphics that prominently feature



your visual branding, and use large, high-quality images to subtly send a message: We are the company you want to do business with. If your meeting rooms are more often used for staff or group meetings, consider creating banners that remind employees of what they are representing and working for. Because meeting rooms are typically multi-use, though, be careful not to place employee-aimed messages that might strike the wrong chord with clients in the meeting rooms.

## CAFETERIA

In your cafeteria or break room, you can create a message aimed entirely at your employees. Like in a conference room, you can remind employees of the reasons they should be proud to represent your brand. Beyond that more subtle message, a campaign of employee-targeted banners can be used to reinforce reminders on things like safety and timekeeping, or, possibly most valuable of all, to make a focused effort at letting your employees know they matter. Employee



retention is an important economic factor for all companies in the current economy, and retaining engaged employees takes a system-wide strategy. Because banner stands are easy to move and graphics are easily changed out, it's easy to keep them a fresh part of your employees' environment, and one they'll notice each time.

## TOURS

In a manufacturing or production facilities, banner stands can be used to describe a process or procedure at a designated station. When used as a self-guided tour it can allow for less disruption to staff while still educating the non-employee.

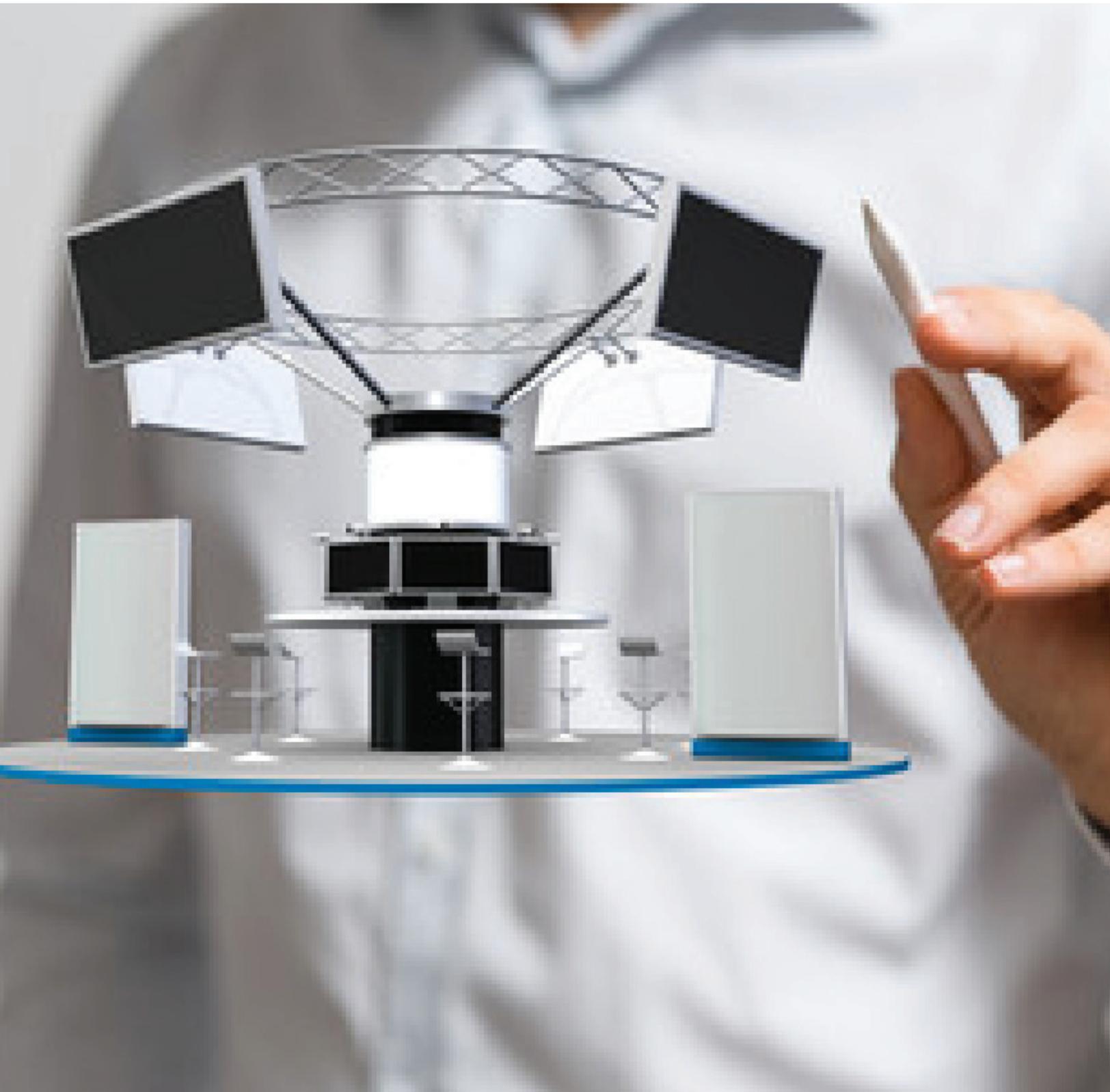
## PLAN AHEAD TO SAVE MONEY AND KEEP THE MESSAGE FRESH

If you plan your campaigns ahead, you can throw the spotlight on each new product, change messages seasonally, and help ensure that everyone who walks into

your space finds your branding familiar, but the specific message and visual that is fresh enough to gain their notice. Once you've made a plan, you can save money by printing double-sided banners that can be flipped over for a change, instead of single-sided banners for every message.



# BOOTH DESIGN



# "LESS IS MORE" BOOTH DESIGN

— Adam Deming

Gone are the days when attendees expected to be confronted with stacks of product literature. Whether you have a limited design budget or if you're just trying to set your booth apart in a crowded exhibit hall, minimalist designs can offer a fresh, inviting, and modern alternative to busier layouts. Here are some helpful design tips to make sure your booth doesn't cause attendee overload:

- Declutter your graphics. Think about the overly busy billboards you sometimes see along a highway – you often can't tell who the advertiser is, let alone what value proposition is being communicated. Does your signage suffer from a similar problem? Leave plenty of negative space in your signage so the viewer can focus on what is important – unused white space is your friend, not your enemy.

## Leave plenty of negative space in your signage so the viewer can focus on what is important...

- If your booth space is small, you need to be especially selective in your choice of furnishings. The old "rule of thirds" often applies in these situations, whereby you limit the design elements to three areas, such as an information table, a product area and your sales area.
- Keep lighting simple and try not to combine both warm and cool lights. Contrast is key: If you have key products on display, position your brighter lights above them, to help them stand out as a feature in the booth.
- Consider lighter color selections for your booth. Light colors tend to make spaces appear larger. Select colors from your brand to accentuate your brand presence but keep it simple to avoid competing visual elements.



- Consider incorporating hanging structures in your booth design. Suspended graphics open up the floor plan to draw attendees into your booth. With this, also consider graphically or structural ways to tie your overhead elements into the ground level so the attendee can connect both elements and stay focused on you, not your competitor at every level of your booth space.
- Use a simple interactive element to increase engagement and add levity to your booth. Active or playful booth games can not only attract foot traffic to your booth but can be used as symbols of your company's innovative approach to product selection and service solutions.

While your booth staff should always be accessible when needed, be sure to build room into your exhibit for customers to explore products or services on their own, without being hassled by a sales rep.

Minimalist trade show design doesn't mean anything is missing from your booth. Instead, it means there's an ideal amount of what attendees really need.

# IMPORTANT QUESTIONS AND TIPS FOR CHOOSING A CUSTOM EXHIBIT DESIGN

— *Erin Adrian*

Is your company considering a custom design for a large trade show exhibit? It's an important decision that should be approached as a process rather than a one-time event. You have to think long-term to successfully design an exhibit that will grow with your brand.

## You have to think long-term to successfully design an exhibit that will grow with your brand.

A custom designed exhibit can provide flexibility, increase booth traffic and offer a memorable visit. Exhibits are becoming more sophisticated as trade show attendees look for more unique experiences that offer a deeper sense of who you are as company and what you bring to the business relationship.

There's a lot to consider when planning a custom booth design, and there are some common mistakes that can cost you even more. Spending extra time in the planning phase can help you design a booth that will not only meet your immediate trade show needs, but continue to deliver over the life of the exhibit.

### WHAT DO WE NEED THIS EXHIBIT TO DO?

You probably already have ideas for what you'd like to see in your new exhibit. It's important to discuss what you need in terms of features, functionality and content, not just colors and trends. If you want to look professional on the show floor – hire a professional exhibit design company. This is not the time to wing it.

Designing a trade show booth is very different from designing other kinds of marketing collateral. Do research and take the time to find the right exhibit company with the experience and talent to bring your

ideas to life. An exhibit design company will offer a great deal of help in planning a strategy so your exhibit can grow with you and maximize your investment.

Typically, companies that purchase exhibit pieces use them for four to five years. What does your company's five-year trade show marketing plan look like?

- How much flexibility do you need to change out messaging or layouts for each show?
- Are you displaying merchandise or sample products at shows?
- Will you expand into doing so over the next five years?
- Do you need space for demonstrating products, workstations or interactive areas?
- Do you need to mount monitors for multi-media presentations?
- What about conference rooms, desks, or large storage?
- What about booth amenities for visitors like promotional items, beverages, or other conveniences?

Start with a list of what you need from an exhibit today and anticipate what changes you may need to make over the next few years. Too many exhibitors throw all of their time and effort into the initial booth design without re-visiting the need for updates and changes. Make your exhibit part of every post-show discussion and keep fine-tuning with an eye on how to make it new for the next show. Keep the energy and the momentum going.

### HOW MUCH WILL THIS REALLY COST?

After you've thought through your custom booth design, you'll be ready to start evaluating exhibit options that will meet those needs. This is one area where it's easy to make an expensive mistake if you don't compare with great care. Your initial investment is a significant component in the total cost of any given



exhibit, but additional costs can dramatically change the bottom line since their total typically outweighs the initial investment.

...account for costs like freight, drayage, in-and-out preparation, storage...

How do you evaluate the true cost of ownership? You'll need to account for costs like freight, drayage, in-and-out preparation, storage, installation & dismantling (I&D), updating custom graphics and other miscellaneous exhibit details. The weight and packed size of the exhibit assets you choose will affect these costs. Be sure you calculate costs for each exhibit option you're considering, and total five years of those costs with the initial investment for each option.

#### IS OWNERSHIP OUR MOST COST-EFFECTIVE OPTION?

Once you have credible numbers for the cost of ownership for the exhibit you need, you can make an informed decision as to whether ownership is the best value for your company and your specific needs. One alternative is customized rental from a full-service exhibit company. If you work with a premium supplier, you'll be able to choose from their full range of exhibit systems. You get the flexibility to create exactly what you need, give it a uniform, customized look, vary the size or configuration of your set-up as needed, and often the only items you purchase are the graphics, which you can re-use every time you rent the exhibit piece it fits. You don't have to purchase your trade show exhibit to get custom booth design.

# WHAT'S THE BEST POP-UP DISPLAY ORIENTATION FOR YOUR BOOTH SPACE?

— *Cam Rooney*

Pop-up displays are most commonly used in a trade show booth as a backwall. They're efficient and economical solutions for many exhibitors. If your company is looking for ways to go beyond basic with your pop-up displays, you can get excellent results and increased traffic by changing the orientation and arrangement of your pop-ups and making the biggest impression possible given the specific space you have to work with. Start with a basic understanding of the most common set-up rules used by trade shows, add a little creativity and you may be surprised at the attention-grabbing configurations you can come up with!

...add a little creativity and you may be surprised at the attention-grabbing configurations you can come up with!

## INLINE BOOTH – SIZES AND LIMITS

A standard inline booth is a 10- by 10-foot space in an aisle that backs up to another aisle of booths. The backwall height of a standard booth is almost always eight feet at U.S. trade shows and, in many cases, you'll be limited to that height for everything you place in your booth. Some shows allow exhibitors to pay for permission to use taller elements in an inline booth, but in general, everything in the back half of your booth will need to be no more than eight feet high, and everything in the front half of the booth will need to be a maximum of four feet tall, to prevent obstructing the view of neighboring booths. If you get a corner space, you may be allowed to remove the divider on the aisle-facing side of your booth for added visibility and access.

This standard booth space offers less flexibility to change the orientation of your pop-ups, but you still



have some options to make your booth a standout. Placing a pair of eight-foot, triangle-footprint towers in the back corners of your booth is a space-efficient way to add impact and re-orient your imagery. If you use backlit towers, it can help draw visitors' attention all the way through your space, instead of just at the front, by eliminating the impression of dark corners "way back there." Adding a backlit table or display cube at the front of the booth can tie the look together and attract more attention by adding more light.

## PERIMETER BOOTH OPTIONS

The perimeter booth is very similar to the inline booth, except that it backs up to a wall, so you're typically allowed a maximum rear height of 12 feet, and you're likely to have the option of going up to 16 feet for an additional fee. Attendees often use perimeter aisles as expressways to get from point A to point B without



having to push their way through the more crowded center. Plan your exhibit to grab their attention and stop them in their tracks!

This is a perfect application for a multimedia or interactive display. Light and motion are strong attractants, and if you combine those with an opportunity to interact with something fun or watch something interesting, you're more likely to succeed. Use towers with monitor mounts at the rear of your exhibit, and your message will be high enough to be seen from a greater distance or make your entire backwall a multimedia display with a rear-projector screen and custom graphic surround.

### ISLAND VERSUS PENINSULA

Peninsula booths (bounded on three sides by aisles, backing up to another booth) and island booths (surrounded by aisles on all sides) give you the most flexible



set of options for arrangement, orientation, and traffic flow in your trade show exhibit. A peninsula space may be limited in height to match the booth it backs up to, but island spaces usually allow heights of 16 to 20 feet, depending on the specific venue and event.

Even in such a large space with open access, all the way around, creatively placed pop-up exhibits can make a big visual impact. One good tactic for these open spaces is to place your big visuals in the center. You can do this with towers, which point your message in three or four directions at once, or by using pop-up backwalls or projection walls to create a triangle or square in the center of your space to give visitors the big picture from every angle. This also provides you with a space to store cases and boxes out of public sight during the show.

# DOS AND DON'TS FOR TRADE SHOW MERCHANDISING

— *Mary Rita Crowe*

Just as in a store environment, products merchandised at a trade show need to be displayed to attract attention, draw in traffic and maximize sales. To avoid displays that are either too sparse and boring or overly cluttered and overwhelming, use the following guidelines for your next trade show layout.

## START WITH YOUR TYPE OF DISPLAY

Begin by deciding whether you need a showroom or a storefront type of display. Storefront displays are intended for portable products that attendees purchase and take home from the show, whereas showroom merchandising is meant to instigate orders that will be fulfilled after the event. The growth of e-commerce and modern supply chains has led to more people embracing the showroom model, but it's not one that works for all sellers. Imagine how unfulfilling it would be to go to a Wal-Mart or Target and only be able to look at samples!



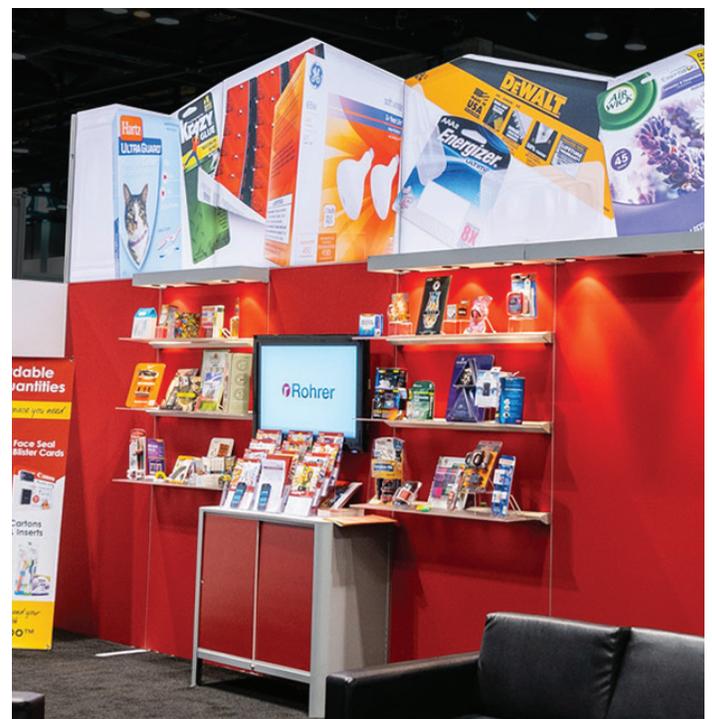
## SELECT ONLY THE BEST MERCHANDISE

Don't overwhelm the audience with quantity. Choose a broad enough selection of products to appeal to discriminating tastes, but keep the display simple, open and inviting. Focus on your bestsellers, newer items and anything of special interest to that particular show's attendees.

## CHOOSE THE RIGHT BOOTH MATERIALS

Many factors will determine what type of booth materials will work best with your merchandise. Large floor items may be best paired with an adjoining kiosk. Complicated items may need a product demo conducted around a table or island. Smaller items may need to be secured for safety or amplified with signage and lighting.

Of vital importance is a floor plan that's easy to navigate.



If your booth creates a bottleneck, visitors can get temporarily trapped in corners, blocking other visitors' access. Try to create a floor plan that allows people to enter and exit the booth without any backtracking. End-cap displays can allow passersby to see some of your products even when the interior of your booth is full of people. And to ensure a speedy checkout and open up the booth for new shoppers, make sure all booth staff have some sort of portable payment-processing device.

### PRODUCT PLACEMENT AND PROP STYLING

Make all aspects of your booth reflect your aesthetic, from your furniture to your table covers, draping, signage and lighting. Group your products in logical ways, whether by color, material, price or function.

Create visual variety in your product placement, with some placed at ground level, and others cascading

upward. Fan out some items at waist level. If applicable to your merchandise, try to use the “pyramid principle” in product placement — place the largest item at the center and smaller products on the outside, creating a “step down” effect. Don't just display items unadorned — use props as accents to help buyers envision end-use. Use props sparingly and choose them carefully; neutral colors and textures ensure they won't visually overwhelm your merchandise. If you're uncertain of how best to stack your products or how to accent them, consider hiring a professional prop stylist to setup your booth.

Think of your booth as a retail store window, and consider what would compel you, as a shopper, to walk into that particular store. Experiment with your layout and observe how attendees interact with your products. With time and modification, you'll end up with merchandise placement that is appealing to the eye and that maximizes in-booth sales.



# PRACTICAL TIPS TO CREATING SUSTAINABLE EXHIBITS

— *Mary Rita Crowe*

Despite all the wonderful elements of our profession, there is one unfortunate aspect to exhibiting that can be hard to ignore: it can often be extremely wasteful. From shrink wrap to marketing collateral to packing material to obsolete booth components, we exhibitors are constantly discarding our excess. Add to that the fossil fuels burned when traveling to conventions or shipping our materials, and exhibition suddenly starts to look like one of the least “green” sectors of the business world.

When looking to eliminate waste or reduce the carbon footprint of your exhibit, consider these practical tips.

## BOOTH & SIGNAGE DESIGN

Because exhibitors often increase or reduce their floor space every few years, it can be tempting to do a complete booth redesign to accommodate the changes in your square footage. But scrapping your old booth every few years is expensive and often results in more material in the local landfill. Utilizing modular booth design can help you easily add or remove components from show to show, or from year to year.

When you are building a new booth, ask your provider what recycled or recyclable construction materials are available and which materials can be used to reduce shipping weight or changing signage. Be sure to build to standard trim sizes to reduce the waste that comes from custom cutting (especially true with carpet). Nature’s Path Organic Foods saved more than one-third on shipping costs and two-thirds on installation costs with their booth design, which was made from lightweight materials.

Other green booth building materials include FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certified wood, biodegradable polystyrene and LED lighting.



Try to utilize as much evergreen signage as possible, rather than signs intended for one-time use. When you do need to frequently change your messaging, digital signage can often provide you the flexibility you need. Look for the Energy Star logo whenever buying this or any type of electronic equipment.

Finally, if you’re not sure what your long-term exhibit needs may be, booth rental is a much greener alternative than buying something only for the short-term.

## LITTLE THINGS ADD UP

Make an effort to reduce marketing collateral, which is one of the most common things attendees leave behind in their hotel room wastepaper baskets. Instead of handing out flyers and brochures, encourage booth visitors to scan a QR code with their smartphones, to access to digital documentation or offer to email PDFs of your materials.

Similarly, give some thought to your booth swag choices. Cheap plastic premiums often have a very short life-spans. Instead, consider ordering locally-sourced items, reusable items, or items that promote sustainable behaviors with the end user — such as reusable tote bags, water bottles or metal straws.

Food is one of the biggest sources of waste at conferences; it's been estimated that 50% of all conference and expo food ultimately ends up in a landfill. Much of this responsibility comes down to the caterer, but exhibitors can factor this by not over-ordering food for VIP events, or even when by selecting venues with food recovery systems in place. Savor, a caterer at McCormick Place in Chicago, won last year's Regional Food Recovery Challenge from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

### **SELL OR DONATE YOUR OLD BOOTH**

If you've outgrown your exhibit materials, some manufacturers may offer you a trade-in credit on your old booth. If that's not an option, try to find an interested buyer. Many used booths will fetch a resale price of 10-40% of their original purchase, depending on age and condition. Ask your colleagues or take out some ads on exhibit industry and association publications. Craigslist and eBay are also great alternatives for finding local buyers outside of your industry.

If you can't find a buyer, you may be able to donate your used booth to an area school or nonprofit. A growing number of trade associations have organized ways for their members to donate their obsolete booth materials to a worthy cause. To show their commitment to the future of material handling, MHI has developed a program that allows exhibitors from their ProMat

and MODEX shows to donate booth materials to high schools, technical schools, community colleges, universities and similar training organizations. Talk to the meeting planners of your own professional trade association to see what options exist for donation within your profession.

"Going Green" with your trade show activities requires a long-term vision and commitment. Whether you're buying high-tech or analog materials, always consider obsolescence in your decision-making process. The more you can reduce, reuse or recycle your exhibit materials, the further you'll go in reshaping the sustainability of our entire industry.

Skyline's commitment to the environment includes the following:

### **REDUCE**

Skyline modular systems are designed to be lighter weight and pack smaller than traditional custom exhibits, which significantly reduces shipping emissions.

### **REUSE**

Skyline offers almost all its systems as rentable options. This means that exhibit hardware can be rented/reused by clients and customized with only purchased graphics.

### **RECYCLE**

Many of Skyline's modular systems are made of recyclable metals. And Skyline's main production facility in St. Paul, Minnesota recycles metal, cardboard, wood, paper, plastics, electronics and more, averaging 138 tons per year over the past three years.

# STOP TRADE SHOW ATTENDEES IN 5 SECONDS FLAT

— *Brian Gordon*

The goal of any trade show exhibitor is to stop attendees in their tracks in just five seconds before they take a few more steps and are gone. But how do you do that?

## STOP TRADE SHOW ATTENDEES

I've found in my years of trade show experience there are five things that reliably have the stopping power of disc brakes:

### A POWERFUL DEMONSTRATION

Attendees are walking the aisles looking for answers to their problems, but they also have their guard up. A demo creates a movement that attracts the eye, plus it allows an attendee to see for themselves that your product does what you say it does. Put together a great demo and watch the attendees pile up. Just be sure to design your exhibit so that the demo is easily seen. And speaking of your exhibit...

*Attendees are walking the aisles looking for answers to their problems, but they also have their guard up.*

### A BOLD, CUSTOMER-FOCUSED EXHIBIT

Your exhibit can appeal to attendees through size, color, imagery, and messages. Large exhibits allow you to build your brand at a monumental scale. Color appeals to their emotions and helps convey your brand. Cover your exhibit with big images of things that matter to your attendees, be it your products (that they are looking for), or images showing them or your staff in action. And messages honed to concisely convey your advantage, written in large letters, quickly seize attendees' attention.

### AN ENGAGING OPENING LINE

If you really understand your target market, know what they are looking for, and can boil that down into a short statement, the power of your voice is as good as a wizard's spell. You can charm people out of the aisles by asking a short, essential question. Or tell them how they will benefit from visiting you. Or tell them the experience they will get in your booth. You can try several different opening lines at the start of the show and then stick with the ones that work best.

### A COMPELLING PROMOTION

When you offer a promotion that your target audience really wants to experience or take home, you appeal to their self-interest enough to get them out of the aisle and into a discussion with you. The best promotions offer learning, an experience, or an exchange of value. Giveaways can work and work even better when they appeal more to your buyer and not to everyone else.

### A WELCOMING BOOTH STAFFER OR CROWD GATHERER

Your booth staffers make the most difference of all. Great booth staffers stop attendees, by assertively (without being too aggressive) engaging them as they pass by. Your best booth staffers keep their focus on attendees venturing by your booth, rather than each other, or their computer, or their smartphone. Welcoming booth staffers exude positive energy and provide the human connection that is the hallmark of trade shows.

If you are not getting enough attendees in your booth, consider this list and see how well you measure up. Maybe there is something you need to stop doing and start something else in order to get attendees to stop by your booth.

# 5 NEW WAYS TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR BANNER STAND INVESTMENT

— *Mary Rita Crowe*

A cornerstone of trade show advertising is the banner stand; a simple display that can make a big visual impact in your space and help your customers get a feel for your company in an instant. This incredibly versatile tool is an investment you need to make, even if your budget is tight.

Banner stands can do much more than advertise your business at a trade show or event, they can educate, inform, and entertain year-round in a variety of ways. Here are five innovative ways to make the most of your banner stand investment between events.

## LOBBY DECORATION

Take a look at your office lobby or reception area. What does it say about your business? The lobby or reception area is often the first impression for your customers, so it should be relaxing, welcoming and visually interesting. Rather than spending money on expensive décor, use your banner stand to bring some structure and color to your lobby. A banner stand can act as a visual anchor to the space, naturally drawing visitors and customers in to learn more about your products or services.

## DOUBLE-DUTY GRAPHICS

Typically, the housing for a banner stand is the priciest part of the investment; the vinyl or fabric graphic is not only less expensive, but is also replaceable. Get more mileage out of your banner stand by printing a second graphic to fit in the metal housing. Double-duty printing will give you flexibility; create different graphic messages for separate services, and then use them at different events, rather than buying two banner stands.

## INVEST IN THE BEST

Sales and discounts can be great, but as the saying goes, “you get what you pay for.” Cheap banner stands

are inexpensive for a reason: they are often made from flimsy material, so they are more prone to break. Many inexpensive banner stands last less than two years. Investing in a better quality banner stand will save you time and money in the long run, especially if it’s used often for trade shows and events. Imagine the embarrassment of setting up a cheap banner stand at your important event, only to watch it wobble and bend. Your brand is reflected in the strength of your image, make sure you are presenting yourself in the best possible way.

## SPONSORSHIP EVENTS

Between trade shows, use your banner stand to support other organizations in your community by sponsoring a local event and using your banner. Sponsorships are a great way to build positive public sentiment in your community and showcasing your business through your banner stand at a public event will create top-of-mind awareness for potential customers. Sponsorships are often inexpensive and can make a big splash.

## STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

Think of your banner stand not only as an informative marketing tool, but also as a movable office. Standing out at a trade show is similar to creating a welcoming and interesting space in your lobby; it should draw customers in and make them feel welcome. Stand out among the crowd and attract more customers by coordinating your table throw with your banner stand. The combination will wow your customers and act as a welcomed change from the standard show package.

These tips can help you justify your banner stand investment. Use this versatile marketing tool to make a name for yourself in your industry.

# THE DESIGN OF THE SCENT-URY

— Erik Koglin

Almost without fail, the last thing anyone (even experienced exhibit designers) think about is the smell of your exhibit. Even now, after reading that last line you're wondering where can I possibly be going with this?

For a moment, stop. Close your eyes and put yourself in a place you can recall by smell.

I can easily recall the smell of baking bread with my grandmother, my grandfather's pipe tobacco, apple orchards and burning pine needles in the fall at our family cottage. It's amazing how well you can mentally recreate the smell without really having it available. Equally amazing is how a smell you encounter can trigger a memory.

**It's amazing how well you can mentally recreate the smell...**

My mom used to decorate cakes for fun, and when we were kids, she would make all kinds of fun cakes for birthdays and holidays. I can't smell buttercream frosting anymore without seeing my favorite sailboat cake; chocolate buttercream frosting, coconut on the sail and peppermint ring candies for portholes (seriously, it's pretty stellar), and I haven't had one in nearly 35 years (mental note: put order in with mom).

## WHY DOES IT WORK THAT WAY, AND HOW DOES IT RELATE TO EXHIBITING?

Let's start with the best understanding we have of "why." Science has discovered that the sense of smell is handled in the olfactory bulb in your brain, which is closely connected to your amygdala and hippocampus. These two regions of your brain handle memory and emotion. Before the sense makes it to your thalamus to be run through your brain's "processor," it interacts with your memory and emotion regions.



Okay, that covers the "Thank you, Mr. Wizard" portion of this article. How does this relate then to exhibiting? When you're interacting with attendees on the show floor, how much value is it to you to make an emotional and memorable impact? See that connection? Most of



us manage to engage our prospects visually. And, in many cases, we find ways to talk with them and engage the auditory sense.

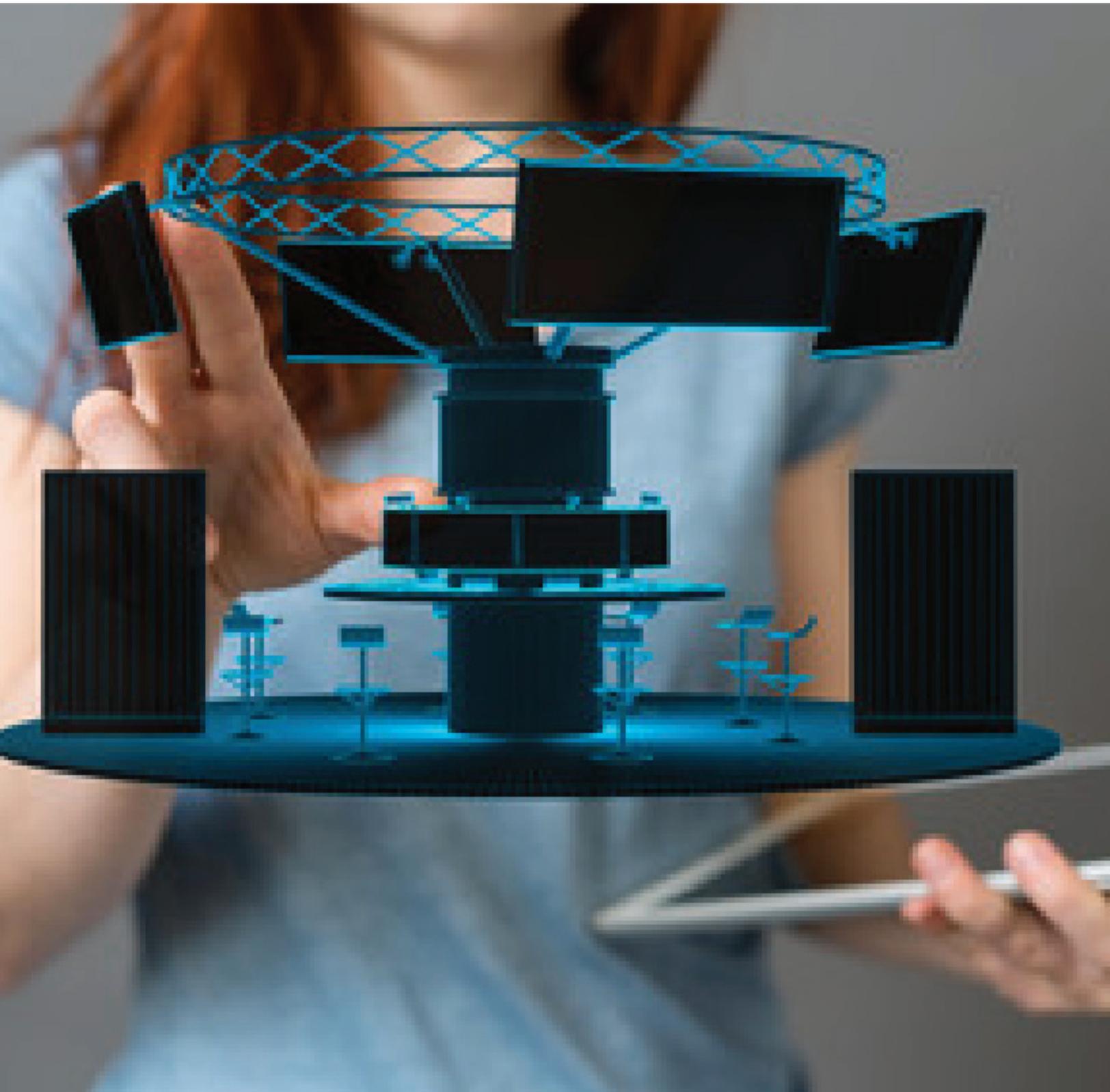
According to some studies, you can achieve a 70% increase in brand impact when you trigger three out of five senses, particularly if you can trigger smell because it connects so directly to memory and emotion. Research tells us that ambient scents increase positive product ratings by 25%. That same research suggests that people linger in places that smell nice 40% longer and that the intent to purchase can be increased by nearly 80%. If we can attach an aroma to something, we're 100 times more likely to remember it than if we see it, touch it or hear it.

Imagine on the trade show floor, through all of the hustle and bustle you manage to attract attendees to come visit your exhibit. You really want to reinforce the idea that your company is trustworthy and takes the hassle and errors out of your customers' way. So, as people enter your exhibit they are immediately introduced to the smell of Lavender or Jasmine. Either of these essential oil scents have been shown to calm nerves and reduce emotional stress. Both have been shown to address headaches and migraines, and Jasmine has some uplifting properties that can help boost confidence, optimism and revitalized energy.

Almost immediately through the sense of smell, you're imprinting the exact message you were going for and giving your visitors a boost to take on the rest of the show. How much of an impact would it be if over half of the people leaving your exhibit felt better than when they entered it? Imagine being able to boost people's memory of your exhibit by over 60% and impact them in such a positive way. That's some pretty spectacular power to achieve for a marketer.



# INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY



# A BUYER'S GUIDE TO TRADE SHOW DIGITAL DISPLAYS

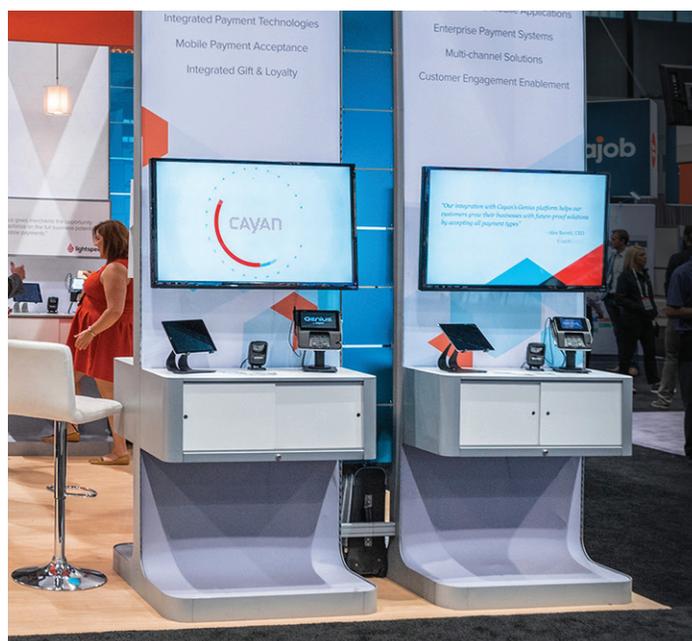
— *Pierre Menard*

Digital images displayed on digital displays open up a new world of changeable and moving images. When it comes to selecting digital displays, exhibitors are faced with a staggering choice of options – from small tablets to mid-sized TV screens and multi-panel digital walls. If there is video input, virtually any display screen can be adapted for use at an exhibit. But, to help you pick the optimum hardware for your budget, venue, and expected audience, we've broken down the features, benefits and strategies to mitigate risks of each type of display. In this article we will cover tablets, kiosks, and TVs along with computer monitors, projectors and video walls.

If there is video input, virtually any display screen can be adapted for use at an exhibit.

## TABLETS

Tablets such as the Apple iPads, Amazon Fires and the Samsung Galaxy Tabs have become increasingly popular at trade show booths. They're economical, interactive, and are already familiar to many of your booth staffers and attendees. With a variety of proven apps, they are often a versatile and practical choice. Although they represent the smallest available screen option, their screens can be easily mirrored on a larger, nearby monitor. This can help prevent bottlenecks when you are trying to demo content to a small group, and when you only have a couple of tablets available. At a trade show, it is recommended to either tether the tablet to furniture, branded display stand, or a person. Staff people holding tablets should practice introductions, exchanging of contact information, etc. The tablet should not hinder the connection, and the best implementation of tablets enhance the face to face connection. If attendees are



expected to interact with the tablet, take the extra time to lock-out settings, and hide other icons, so that your tablet is not hi-jacked to display irrelevant information. Because of the low cost, consider having extra backup tablets to mitigate failures and low batteries, and be sure to plan a strategy to recharge the tablets overnight so they are ready for the next day.

## KIOSKS

Kiosks can be display-only or touch-screen. Touch screens add interactivity, as well as cost, thickness, and weight. Interactive kiosks are typically expensive to ship, because the best way to mitigate risk is to have everything assembled and tested prior to shipping. For the best interactive experience consider custom apps or software. Kiosks running a looped video or other simple content such as way-finding maps can usually be accomplished with a USB enabled display.

*Continued on page 48*

*Continued from page 47*

The optimum location and orientation of a kiosk depends on the interaction that is desired. To communicate information that is not interactive to multiple people, choose a tall kiosk above people's heads with clear fonts and simple graphics that communicate the message in less than 10-15 seconds.

## The optimum location and orientation of a kiosk depends on the interaction that is desired.

If the content is interactive with many options, the best option in an exhibit is a "guided interactive tour." A staffer engages the attendee and guides them through the interactions asking questions, digging deeper, and guiding the attendee to the information that best answers their questions. In this case, the display of the kiosk should be mounted vertically, so that multiple people can view it, but a limited number of people can interact and disrupt the tour.

If the content is engaging, and the expectation is that the attendee will self-inquire and self-guide, consider mounting the display of the kiosk horizontally. The limited visibility of the display, except by people standing very near the display, gives the attendee more confidence to explore.

Do not expect to do a "guided interactive tour" with a table display kiosk in the center of a crowd. The interaction is too tempting and your presentation will be co-opted by attendees. Many times, the optimum interactive kiosk has a slanted display. The slanted shape limits the size of the audience and generates some privacy for the attendee creating an obvious interaction zone. This same slanted form can be used for "guided interactive tours" as well.



### TV SCREENS

TV screens are the most common display choice for exhibits because they are typically the most cost effective. They're widely available in many brands, sizes and resolutions. They're also easy to set up. All come with built-in speakers, but for the trade show environment, the speakers integrated in the flat screens are insufficient in both quality and volume. If sound is included with the visual, plan to add inexpensive bookshelf speakers with a built-in amplifier.

Most trade show booth requirements are easily covered with a consumer-grade TV, but if the expectation is to repurpose the exhibit into a more permanent installation like a corporate lobby, consider upgrading to a commercial model. Commercial models are typically brighter, longer lasting, designed for continuous professional use, and come with better warranties. These extra features come at a price as commercial monitors are often up to three times more expensive than their consumer-grade counterparts.

## LCD SCREENS ARE TODAY'S MOST COMMON TYPE OF TV DISPLAY

LCD TVs can display content at several resolutions. An HDTV can display content at HD resolution (1280×720 pixels). Full HD (the most common) is another step above HD, with a resolution of 1920×1080 pixels. Ultra HD – also known as 4K – is a resolution of 3840×2160 pixels. Unless the expectation is that the attendee will be within 24" of the screen and reading 12 PT font, avoid the cost of 4K screens. 4K digital displays cost more, weigh more, and 4K content is much more expensive to create.

As the size of the display increases, it becomes a significant, integral part of exhibiting success. Do not be "that exhibitor" who has a black screen or a progress bar. Have someone who is knowledgeable make on-site adjustments to brightness, contrast and color settings for the local environment once the booth is set up. Disable auto-brightness functions so that your picture is stable regardless of the surroundings.

### THERE ARE THREE CHOICES FOR MOUNTING A TV:

- **Mounting a TV on a stand** is a good option if portability and reconfiguration of the exhibit space is desired. Be sure to test for stability both when the stand is stationary and moving. Avoid TV stands if reconfigurability of the booth space is not necessary; they are trip hazards.
- **Mounting a TV on the face of a wall** is a good, inexpensive option and great for conference rooms, alcoves, and inline spaces. With this option, the TV sits in front of the wall. Consider putting a shelf below the TV if it is in a high traffic area. This will help visually communicate that the TV is protruding out from the wall.
- **Integrating a TV into a wall** is the best solution for an island exhibit. Ideally, the digital image and sur-

rounding static image are integrated. Because the monitor face is flush with the face of the wall, this both looks better and can be installed in high traffic areas. Consider a wall system that is able to flush mount the monitor even if you do not know details regarding mounting hole patterns, bezel width or TV thicknesses in advance.

Mitigate shipping damage, or installation damage to the display by renting from a reputable exhibitor supplier or show services. Ownership can be easily justified for multiple shows, but be sure to include a case designed for protecting and shipping the TV as part of the investment and justification.

## COMPUTER MONITORS

Computer monitors are quite often much smaller than TV screens and come in a smaller range of sizes. Many TVs come in sizes in excess of 50 inches, while computer monitors often top out at only 30 inches. Typically, computer monitors have more pixels per inch than TV screens because they are designed for up close, long-term viewing. Choose computer monitors over TV monitors for longer interactions where the attendee will be reading text, typing answers or playing a game. Be sure to adjust the brightness of the screen to the ambient light conditions.

## PROJECTORS

At first glance, projectors seem to be an ideal trade show technology. Projectors are reasonably priced, in a small package, and capable of displaying large moving digital content. However, for trade show success, projectors require 3 things:

- **Enough brightness** (measured in lumens) to overcome

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show hall lighting. We've determined that projectors need to be at least 13-15,000 lumens to deal with show hall ambient lights. (A typical office projector is around 3,500 lumens. A home projector is less than 2,000 lumens.) Less lumens require a strategy for controlling the ambient light by installing in a darkened room or enclosing the screen in a darkened "tunnel."

- **A projection screen.** Just putting up a white fabric will result in sub-par results. Projector screens have evolved as much as projector technology. Light gray or silver screens result in much better images because blacks look blacker and bright colors are not as washed out as when projecting onto pure white. Reflective coatings can also dramatically improve the brightness and a dark border surrounding the projected image absorbs stray light and gives the impression of a brighter image.
- **A clear light path** between the projector and the screen that is free from obstructions (including attendees.) Depending on the projector, that usually means a distance free from obstructions of at least 8-12', which prompts mounting the projector overhead. That may bump into show hall height regulations, depending on the booth size.

A strategy for a shorter clear path (without reducing image size) might be to use a short-throw projector or short-throw rear projection. This type of projector reflects the image off a mirror to simulate greater distance. The mirror is not 100% efficient so brightness is lost, both in the reflection and project from the rear. At the time of this writing, short-throw projectors should only be used when you can control the ambient light.

Two final considerations when implementing projector technology is aspect ratio and sound. Many projectors have a native aspect ratio of 4:3 like an old TV or laptop computer. In this type of projector, 16:9 content is

emulated by dynamically resizing the content at a lower brightness and lower image quality. Regarding sound, it can be disconcerting if your audio source is separate from the screen. Be sure to place the speakers near the screen and test before going live to make sure it feels like the sound is coming from the screen.

Although, not currently an ideal trade show technology, we will be watching projectors over the next several years. Current laser projectors are bright, and do not have the lamp-life issues of older projectors. These have already moved from the large 4K digital cinema experience into the home theater market where ambient light is easy to control, and the content display is native 16:9. Expect that brighter, smaller, cheaper, innovation will bring this projector technology back to the trade show as a viable compelling option in the future.

## VIDEO WALLS

A video wall is made up of multiple displays placed together to create one giant image. Each individual screen shows a portion of the image, sometimes referred to as a "zone." The displays used in video walls are commercial displays, because they must have a very thin bezel around the screen to stack them close together, and they must be capable of displaying "zones"—which isn't generally possible with consumer-grade TVs. (A simple 2X2 array can be displayed on consumer grade TVs if a connected to a PC with a higher-end graphics card.) The modularity of video walls enables digital images much, much larger than even the largest single-screen monitors.

If the distance from the viewer to the screen is less than 8-10', an array of narrow bezel, commercial TVs result in a sharper image. The trade-off that comes with the higher resolution is a grid of thin black lines created by the thin bezel of the display. Large gridless video walls



are constructed using borderless video tiles. Most video tiles are 500 mm X 500 mm, (1:1 aspect ratio) although some newer tiles are conforming to the modern 16:9 aspect ratio and are sized 365 mm X 640 mm.

One specification that impacts the quality of a video tile image is distance between the individual LED lights, known as the pitch. The image quality improves as the pitch decreases because there is less space between the lights. However, the reliability and durability of the tile decreases as the pitch decreases because there are many more lights, and ruggedness is highly desirable in the trade show rental world. At the time of this writing, most video tiles implemented in the trade show industry, balance cost and reliability with a pitch of 2.9 mm (about 1/8").

- A good rule of thumb for viewing distance is 1 m (3.3') viewing distance per 1 mm pitch, so  $2.9 * 3.3' = 9.5'$  A video wall built out of 2.9 mm pitch video tiles will look good from a distance of 9.5' or greater.
- Rule of thumb: 1 m (3.3') viewing distance per 1 mm pitch, so  $2.9 * 3.3' = 9.5'$
- Close viewing or smaller screen sizes is often better served by one or more televisions.

Large moving images on video walls create dramatic and dynamic spaces, and are great for 3 purposes:

1. An immersive experience (becoming part of the NYC marathon)
2. Viewing the message from a long distance away (overhead signage)
3. Creating ambiance (jungle theme of Skyline's recent EXHIBITORLIVE exhibit)

They are ideal for companies with large budgets and require absorbing additional costs to mitigate risks.

Additional expenses that should be budgeted include:

1. Large digital graphics need to be mapped to the specific pixel count of the video tile wall, and at a refresh rate of at least 30Hz (much faster than a normal video).
2. Video tile walls require a subject matter expert during installation and set up.
3. Any failure of a large video array will detract from the entire exhibit experience. For this reason, Skyline always recommends on-site support throughout the show and 24-hour power (do not shut off the video wall until show is over).

## CONCLUSION

There are many digital display options to deliver your message at trade shows. Rather than selecting the technology and fitting the content and message to the digital display, best practice dictates starting with the message (or story), which drives the content, which drives the medium (digital display technology).

As the digital display increases in size and becomes a more critical design feature to connect with your customer, plans must be created and resources (time, money, and people) must be budgeted to mitigate risks.

# USING TECH TO BRING YOUR PRODUCTS TO LIFE

— *Sofia Troutman*

We all know demos are a wonderful way to get attention at a trade show and showcase your products. However, sometimes it is not practical to bring your products to the show or maybe they are not easy to demo. Or, perhaps, you just can't bring everything you would like to showcase. What do you do then? Here are some ideas on how you can use technology to give your products or services the stopping power they deserve.

## PRE-RECORDED VIDEOS

Videos are a fantastic way to showcase your products at the show when it is not practical to bring them. You can tape a demonstration set-up, or a mini testimonial and then show it as appropriate to qualified trade show visitors.

Videos are a fantastic way to showcase your products at the show when it is not practical to bring them.

The video can be educational, informative, and even a little fun depending on your industry. You can have the videos professionally created, re-purpose an existing video by making it shorter, or use it as is, or even filming something yourself. I have seen great videos created with an iPhone and a tripod (you can use an iPhone plug as an impromptu tripod in a pinch).

## VR EXPERIENCE

Do you sell an experience or are you hoping to transport your visitors to an explicit location? Virtual Reality (VR) headsets, phone add-ons like Samsung VR glasses, or Google Glass may be just the way for you to transport your visitors there. You can rent VR headsets from multiple vendors, but the most important thing is to determine where you will get the content. There are vendors



that specialize in creating custom VR content for you that could add on to existing video content or create it all from scratch.

Imagine your users walking into a virtual factory or clinic environment and being able to “turn on” a piece of machinery and see how it works in that virtual environment. One thing to consider is showing the content on a separate monitor so people walking by or standing in line can view what one of the participants is currently experiencing.

## GREEN SCREEN GAMES

Allow visitors to get in front of a green screen and have their image married into pre-selected virtual environments shown on a screen to attract attendees to your booth. Often these games are themed to be unique products, locations, or even allow some gaming interaction. An added advantage to traditional VR is that it

doesn't require special goggles or glasses. There are several providers that will bring all equipment and even a facilitator to your event.

## There are several providers that will bring all equipment and even a facilitator...

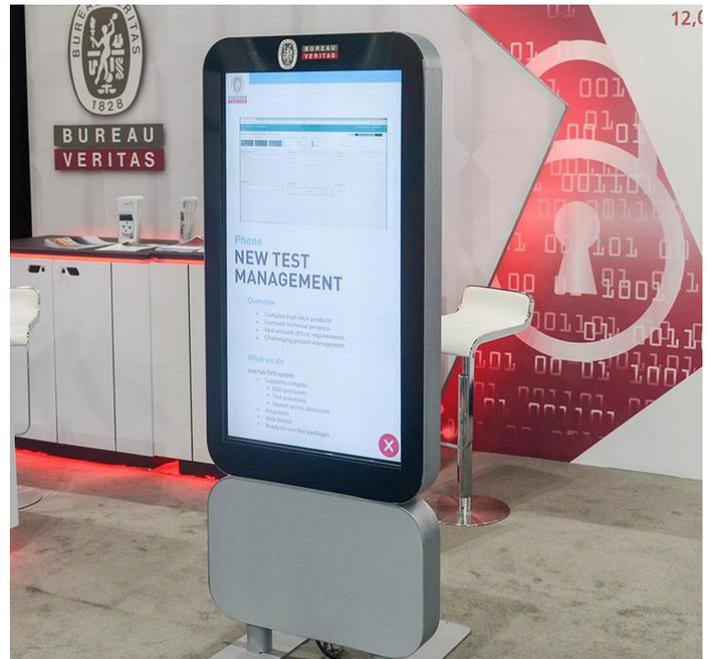
You could work with them to create content that would allow your prospects to virtually interact with your product in a fun way. This would clearly be more engaging if you are promoting a famous rock band than if you are selling printer paper, but in that case, maybe you can just leverage a fun theme that relates in some way to your product or brand.

### AUGMENTED REALITY (AR)

Remember Pokémon Go? While they were not the first to use AR, they brought the understanding to the masses. While you may not be able to create a game that incorporates your brand elements or educates prospects to your services, you may be able to incorporate AR into your booth. You could have graphics or miniature figurines in your booth that when detected by a tablet or phone app, they play pre-selected videos or take the user to parts of your microsite dedicated to your products. This will be much more effective if you have an engaging booth staffer to walk your visitors through the experience, and only offer it when it is relevant to the visitor.

### LIVE STREAMING

Do you want to extend the value of your meeting or trade show presence? If so, you can stream parts of the event to stakeholders who will not be able to attend. Some good examples of content to share are product or service demonstrations, a tour of your booth or the event venue where you share what products you will



be showing, an interview with someone involved in product development or training, or even a client testimonial. You could share the information using many options including Facebook Live, YouTube's live streaming feature, or the tried and true Instagram Live.

### TOUCHSCREENS & DIGITAL KIOSKS

Another option to consider if you are unable to bring or demo your products at your event is to feature a large touchscreen or kiosk where visitors can access their own content. Of course, you will want to also have a staffer at the ready to take the lead, qualify them, and guide them into the content.

However, you can have several mini videos, questionnaires or games they can access by using the touchscreen so they can explore at their own pace. If you are on a budget, even iPads on stands can work for this purpose.

# SHOW PHOTOGRAPHY: PHOTO TIPS FOR SMARTPHONES & DEDICATED CAMERAS

— *Charlita Lisondra*

Great trade show photography can make all the difference on your social media feed, blog, or website, or within your printed collateral. Yet few event professionals have the skills of a professional photographer, and many prefer relying on their smartphones rather than lugging around a bulky, traditional camera with interchangeable lenses.

But knowing a few camera tricks can go a long way in helping your photos stand out. Consider these insights and tips when deciding how to shoot your next event.

## BENEFITS OF TRADITIONAL/DEDICATED CAMERAS

- **Better low-light performance.** Low-light is a common challenge in trade show photography, and so being able to shoot at higher ISO settings is often desirable. Smartphones let you adjust ISO, but their smaller sensors mean there is much more graininess to the images than in captures taken using the same ISO settings on a dedicated camera.
- **Interchangeable lenses.** Smartphone cameras have fixed lenses, so they are best used for photographing subjects at a medium range. With trade show presentations and convention lectures, it's rarely possible to get close enough to a speaker with a smartphone, so the dedicated camera with a telephoto lens is extremely valuable. Telephotos also let you capture your subjects from a distance, resulting in more natural candid photos.
- **Remote or adjustable flash capabilities.** Bouncing a flash off a ceiling—or setting a remote flash up to light a scene from a different angle—are common techniques for evening-out awkward indoor lighting.



...many prefer relying on their smartphones rather than lugging around a bulky, traditional camera...

Here again, the dedicated camera's many external flash options make it way more versatile than the smartphone's built-in flash.

## BENEFITS OF SMARTPHONE CAMERAS

- **Convenience.** We all have smartphones, and the fact that we use them frequently means we're typically more familiar with their camera settings and exposure tricks than we are with those bulky dedicated cameras that sit on a shelf unused for much of the trade show year. There's an old saying: "The best camera is the one you have with you." Since we take our smartphones

everywhere, their familiarity and accessibility may alone make them the best camera choice for busy trade show reps.

- **Continual and rapid innovation.** The consumer money that gets poured into smartphones means manufacturers will continue to make rapid advances in smartphone camera technologies. Recent, tremendous gains in smartphone focus control, optical zooms, and intelligent exposure are forcing traditional camera manufacturers to step up their game in order to remain relevant and competitive. If there is something your smartphone can't do today, it will likely be fixed when the next version is released.

## TRADE SHOW PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS

Regardless of what type of camera you bring, the following tips will be helpful when photographing your next event:

- **Bring plenty of batteries** and memory cards, as well as two card readers.
- **Experiment with white balance settings**, as artificial indoor lighting can create an off-hue to many photos. If you shoot with a digital SLR camera in "RAW" mode you'll have a lot more adjustments you can make prior to editing any given photo.
- **Don't crowd your subject.** Candid portraits look so much more interesting, and it's easier to get a natural expression from a trade show attendee when you are not right in his/her face with the camera.
- **Be aware of your background.** Signage or other

booth elements can easily look as though they are coming out of your subject's head. Adjust your perspective for a clean background.

- **Experiment with depth of field.** A large aperture (or portrait mode on a smartphone) can help you isolate a subject from a busy trade show floor. But for shots involving many people, you may likely want that smaller aperture and more depth of field.
- **Adjust exposure** compensation downward when shooting a projector screen. The screens are typically brighter than the surrounding room, so you may need to use flash to even out the scene's lighting.
- **Take lots of shots.** When you are dealing with a group of people, one person is almost always blinking or looking away in any given photo. The more you shoot, the more likely you are to get that one capture where everyone's facial expression is perfect.
- **Shoot a range of shots.** Close-ups, macros, low-angle shots, and overhead shots will add diversity to your captures. Too many people take only medium close-ups with the camera at eye level.
- **Frame your subject with the camera.** If your subject is taller than it is wide, shoot it with the camera tipped on its side. If they subject is wider than it is tall, then holding your camera horizontally will let you make the most use of the frame.
- **Take group portraits outdoors**, if possible. Uneven indoor lighting can make posed photos of large groups very difficult to shoot. Bring the group outside onto the event center steps to get a nice, tiered photo.

# PREVENT AV PANIC: 18 EVENT TECH TIPS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

— *Sofia Troutman*

So, your event is tomorrow, and your images are not showing up on the monitor. It's late, you traveled all day, and the AV tech is nowhere to be found. There are some simple things that can make or break your next event that we should all know. From who to call in the event your hardware is not working, to why the same thing you successfully tested at the office is now not viewable at the show. However, no one wants to ask what may appear to be an obvious question.

We recently attended an AV training session with some of our technicians where they shared key tips on how to ensure your AV functions in your booth. Below are some of the tips I gleaned from this session.

## 1. HAVE YOUR CONTENT READY WELL BEFORE THE EVENT

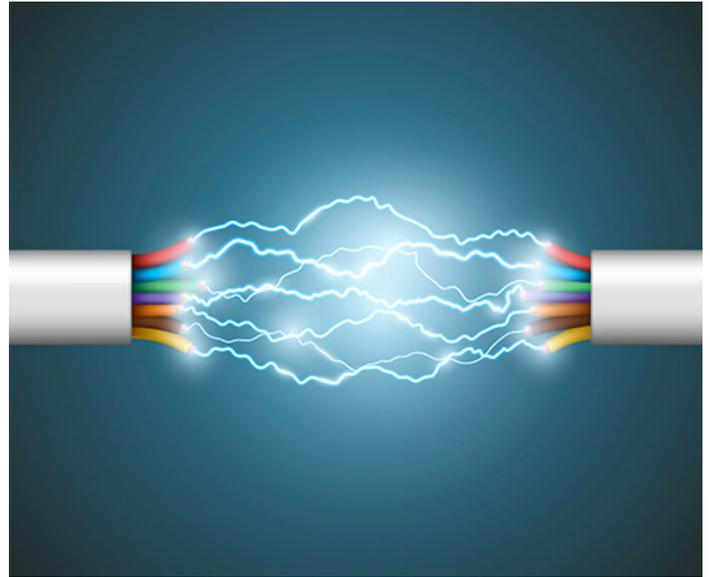
At a minimum, make sure to test it on the same model of computer or TV that will be used at the show. If your exhibit provider will be staging your booth in advance, send them the content ahead of time so they can incorporate the AV into the staging and play your content at that time to ensure there are no issues with incompatible file types. Bring all the same cords you used to test the AV during staging to the show.

## 2. KNOW YOUR FILE TYPES

Find out what file type(s) you have and what file types your devices can play in advance, then communicate with the exhibit provider, AV rental or installation technicians so they know what kind of hardware you will need. Basic file types include MOV, AVI, MPG (MPEG), WMV and MP4.

## 3. KNOW THE SIZE AND RATIO OF YOUR TV

Determine whether or not the overall outer width & height of the TV will obstruct any graphics on your exhibit and if



the size is compatible with the content you will be playing. 4:3 was the standard height/width ratio used in old CRT monitors and early flat screens, but today the standard for both TVs and monitors is 16:9.

## 4. PLAN YOUR INTERNET CONNECTION WELL AHEAD OF TIME

Whether you choose WiFi, Ethernet wired access or install a hot-spot in your booth you should have a backup. Also remember to evaluate costs depending on your needs and have some standalone content or another way to access or download data if the internet connection fails. Cost varies widely from show to show and a wired connection is often more expensive than Wi-Fi, but may be worth it due to the issues that can arise with other options, especially in a large show venue.

## 5. DO YOU NEED A COMPUTER, FLASH DRIVE OR ANOTHER DEVICE?

Content may be playable simply by inserting a flash drive into the TV, but not all TVs have built-in flash drive readers

and not all content can be played this way. Find out in advance if your TV and/or media will require a computer or internet access. Mini computers can often be rented or purchased at a reasonable cost if you plan in advance.

Find out in advance if your TV and/or media will require a computer or Internet access.

#### 6. TO LOOP A VIDEO OR SERIES OF PHOTOS, CHECK THE TV SPECIFICATIONS

Make sure the monitor you are using is capable of doing so and bring instructions on how to do that if needed. Some TVs have a built-in capability to loop a slideshow of images. Ensure yours does before leaving for the show. In order to loop content, the monitor must be in the appropriate setting. Some models must be in “Demo” mode while others must be in “Home Use” mode.

#### 7. MAKE SURE THAT YOUR EXHIBIT PROVIDER IS AWARE OF WHO YOU ARE HIRING FOR AV

Many exhibit providers already have AV rental or will arrange the setup with a preferred vendor if they can't do it themselves. Either way, you will want to ensure the AV provider has all the appropriate tools and any necessary mounting hardware.

#### 8. BRING AN EXTRA CONVERTER TO HOOK UP YOUR LAPTOP TO YOUR MONITOR

Extra cords don't cost a lot, don't take up a lot of room and won't add a lot of weight to your bag, but they can be life savers! When in doubt, throw in an extra HDMI cable, USB cable and duct tape for wire management. While you are at it bring extra flash drives with all your content and upload that content to the cloud, too.



#### 9. KNOW YOUR CORDS

Yes, I know, the sight of a jumble of cords makes me nauseous too. But here are some invaluable cord facts:

- **HDMI** – High Definition Multimedia Interface cords are the standard for connecting high-definition equipment. It transmits video, audio, and data. According to HDMI.org, virtually every TV sold today has at least one HDMI connection. At long runs (over 25') an “active” HDMI cord, a repeater or an amplifier will be needed.
- **USB** – Universal Serial Bus is a cable that provides charging and data connection to devices. Depending on the device you use you may need a different type of connector. There are 4 different types: Micro, Mini, Type A and Type B. The most common ones for AV are the Mini or Type A or Type A Flash drive. Make sure you double check what type of plug is needed on your device.
- **DVI** – Digital Visual Interface. Used for passing digital video signals from a computer to a monitor.

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- Ethernet Cable – Used to connect to the high-speed wired internet.
- Mini Display IEEE 1394 Ports (also known as Firewire® or Thunderbolt™) – Used for Apple products. Note that sizes vary depending on the machine you are using.
- Display Port – Used with computers and HD displays. Can also be used in multi-display splitting. It can be converted to HDMI using an external adapter, if needed.
- RGB component cords or RCA connectors – On older projectors, DVD players or older TVs, multi-channel connectors are still used, so having a number of adapters is always your best bet.

**10. CONSIDER WIRE MANAGEMENT**

You don't want clients tripping over the connection between your laptop and the power source or the TV, so make sure nothing is obstructing traffic. Make sure cords are hidden and bring duct tape and zip ties just in case.

You don't want clients tripping over the connection between your laptop...

**11. MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ADEQUATE CASES TO PROTECT ELECTRONICS FROM DAMAGE OR THEFT**

If you are bringing your own TVs, your exhibit house should be able to rent or sell you crates if you need them. At the very least, plan to have nondescript boxes with good quality foam to protect your investment.

**12. IF NOT ATTENDING THE SHOW, DISCUSS YOUR CONTENT WITH STAFFERS IN ADVANCE**

Share not only what content you will be playing on any monitors or portable devices, but also provide them with written instructions on how to connect and play everything, just in case there are issues during the show. AV talent varies.

**13. IF YOU ARE RENTING A MONITOR, TRY TO SPECIFY THE MODEL OR FIND OUT WHICH MODEL YOU WILL GET**

We find that Samsung Smart TVs work well for our needs. Note that when you rent, the profile and weight of monitors varies greatly depending on the type and model of monitor you get. Be especially careful when incorporating touchscreens as they can be extremely heavy. Inform your exhibit house ahead of time if you are planning to use them. If at all possible, use the same hardware and software you plan to have at the show to test your content. Sometimes the same TV model number can have a different menu or interface depending on the year it was produced or the same type of computer may not have the same software that was used for testing if it is not the same machine.

**14. HAVING ISSUES WITH YOUR TOUCHSCREEN? TRY UNPLUGGING YOUR USB FIRST**

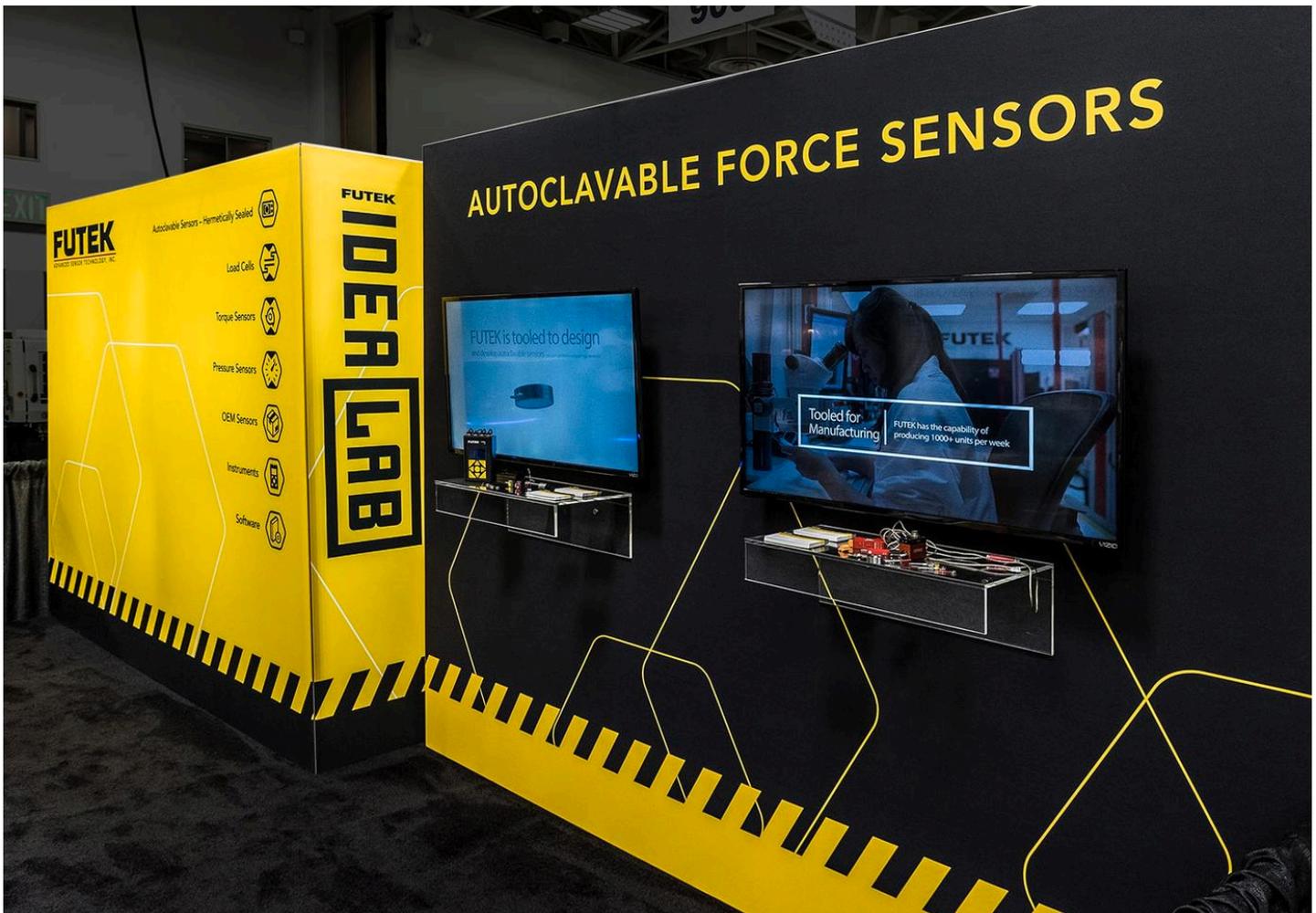
Unplug both the USB and the power cords then plug them back in. Surprisingly, this often resolves the issue.

**15. HAVE AN AV SPECIALIST ON SITE**

If you are not a technical person, ensure that either someone on your team is, or have someone on stand-by who can access your laptop remotely during installation. Better yet, hire a supplier who will have experts on site. Ask for a copy of the written instructions provided to your AV tech team if your supplier does not already provide them to you as part of their service.

**16. CONSIDER PURCHASING OR RENTING A PORTABLE MEDIA PLAYER.**

This is especially important if you are not sure what type of TV you will have at the show. Some of our offices swear by Micca Speck HD Portable Digital Media Player. It is a small (3" x 2.5") box that provides the ability to play photos, music and video formats on a TV and includes



a remote. This device will accept USBs and many content formats. It will also connect to your TV using an HDMI cable. There are other similar media players in the market such as ZEN BOX, Western Digital, etc.

#### 17. USING POWERPOINT?

If your PowerPoint is not playing on your TV, try to export it as a video file (either MP4 or MOV file) so it can be played on the TV without a computer.

#### 18. IF YOU ARE USING POWERPOINT, KEEP THE CONTENT ON EACH SLIDE TO A MINIMUM

Focus on communicating through visuals. Check out the

funny video by Don McMillan, Life After Death by PowerPoint. You may want to consider having a video produced by a professional instead. If you are concerned about the cost, consider other ways video could be used throughout your organization. You can partner with other groups or departments to help pay for the production cost.

Also, consider the lifespan of content. Single-use, exhibit-specific content can be seen as too expensive for the immediate ROI. However, if your content can be used on your website and on social media then it will have a much greater impact and return over time.

# THREE TRADE SHOW TECHNOLOGY TRENDS

— *Jeff McGrath*

Constant changes in technology can sometimes make trade show managers reluctant to chase the latest trend. Yet, early adopters of past innovations, such as badge scanners or marketing automation software, clearly found themselves ahead of our industry's productivity curve. If you're wondering which of today's advancements have the staying power to influence tomorrow's trade show experience, pay special attention to the following three areas in the years ahead.

## FACIAL RECOGNITION SOFTWARE

Facial recognition software promises to revolutionize the check-in experience at future trade shows. Not only can it eliminate the need for ticket scanners, kiosks, wearables, etc., it can dramatically speed the check-in process, and provide organizers with a way to immediately deliver custom event itineraries. Facial recognition at large events also provides a certain degree of demographic data (age, gender, etc.), can aid with event security, and will ultimately allow data collectors to match facial captures with social media profiles.

Consumers have already become accustomed to using the biometric tool, from logging into their smartphones to monitoring photos of themselves on social media. Look for this technology to expand to the convention floor in the years ahead. This type of technology is already at work in some airports around the country. In fact, at my home airport, Dulles in Washington, D.C., a person using a fake passport was caught when the facial recognition software there showed his face did not match his passport photo.

## LED LIGHTING

LED lighting originally emerged as a somewhat low-tech, efficient and durable way to light your booth. Today, entire exhibits are being built around LED technology. Projection mapping uses LEDs to create three-dimensional

displays by projecting an image onto a surface. Similar to the way LCD panels allowed for more efficient changes to ad displays, projection mapping can allow you to change your booth from one year to the next, or even between shows. And kinetic lighting displays combine LEDs with motors and truss systems to create elaborate moving light sculptures. Look for costs on these systems to drop as they become increasingly commonplace.

...projection mapping can allow you to change your booth from one year to the next, or even between shows.

## MACHINE LEARNING

Machine learning is a buzzword you'll be hearing a lot of in the year ahead. Unlike programmed technology designed to compute a predetermined task, machine learning analyzes dynamic, real-world data inputs to become increasingly "smarter" and make predictive assessments. It's a subset of artificial intelligence, and it is revolutionizing industries where business success has long been tied to indeterminate future outcomes, from enhancing precision agriculture to improving patient health to speeding pharmaceutical trials. The technology has special relevance to trade show marketers, as it can analyze audience information from multiple sources, such as internet data from third party data providers, engagement from your website analytics, and sentiment from social media platforms to help you stratify your prospects and better target your content marketing.

As technology converges, it's likely that no single trend or application will define our industry in the years ahead. But by understanding emergent tech's applications, you can better select the tools and services to continually improve and enhance your exhibition goals.

# PROTECTING YOUR TECHNOLOGY

— *Jennifer Kilbride*

Using technology in your exhibit can be a great way to increase traffic in your booth space. It can also help you get more detailed information from your leads as they have an opportunity to interact with your software, products, and services.

According to Dr. Lynell Burmark, an educational consultant who specializes in visual literacy, people retain 10-20% of written and spoken information, whereas 65% of people retain visual info. The more information they have available to them to see, feel and touch, the better they will remember your product or service.

So now that you know what a great idea it is to incorporate technology into your exhibit, you need to know how to protect those investments.

## #1) TRANSPORTING EQUIPMENT TO THE SHOW

Many exhibitors make the mistake of using the packing box in which the computer equipment is purchased in. The problem with that is it is a NEON SIGN that says: "I'M VALUABLE – TAKE ME!"

Secondly, these aren't always the best way to protect these items. If they do bump around in a crate with other exhibit items, they could easily be damaged.

Also, never label a box "fragile." For some reason, these are not taken seriously and often become the ones that are thrown around on a truck.

One of the best investments you can make is to purchase a custom-molded AV crate that is built with molded foam designed specifically with the MODEL# and accessory items of your particular product. The crate is on wheels and is a very durable way to transport these electronics.

The packing foam is constructed with separate sections to allow for all the additional components of the monitor which include adapters, stands, and other accessories. This keeps everything protected and makes it easier for repacking and unpacking the items.

## #2) SECURITY REMINDERS – AFTER SHOW HOURS

Some companies hire security if they have valuable products or a number of electrical equipment that warrants the need to hire security. This is typically an option at many shows. You can check with your specific show organizer about hired security.

**Some companies hire security if they have valuable products or a number of electrical equipment...**

There is a more economical option besides hiring your own security, you can remove the items and lock them up at night or take them with you to your hotel room. Never leave these items in plain sight, you don't know who is eyeing your tech.

## #3) INSURE ALL OF YOUR EXHIBIT ELEMENTS

Most importantly – be sure you have insurance on all your items. This includes all of your trade show elements. You never know what can happen on the trade show floor. Be prepared! Having a resource, or an on-demand expert that's included with the rental cost of your technology, will take you much further with your technology than not.

Now that you know technology is important to have in your booth, don't forget about the content you show on that tech!

