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Eight Ways to Control Trade Show Display Costs

By Dick Wheeler

From time to time, clients ask how they can keep control of trade show exhibit costs without diluting their exhibit impact. Here are several suggestions to help keep trade show display expenditures in line:

1. Consider renting a trade show booth rather than buying one.

Renting a trade show exhibit applies only if you are planning a one time or occasional trade show appearance or if you have a simultaneous trade show in another part of the country that conflicts with your exhibit schedule. It does not make economic sense to rent a trade show display if you plan to exhibit more than three times in a given year. Be sure to rent a booth that will fit into the size of the exhibit space. Renting will save you not only on trade show booth construction costs but also the expense of warehousing your display after the trade show is over.

2. Upgrade your existing trade show booth.

If you choose not to rent, you can upgrade your older booth by changing its graphics, relaminating color panels, and redesigning structural elements. This is a much more cost-effective way than starting from scratch.

3. Invest in a pre-owned trade show display.

If you do not already have an existing trade show exhibit booth to upgrade, you can find pre-owned trade show exhibits that are greatly reduced from their original cost. Many trade show exhibit houses offer top quality pre-owned exhibits that are well maintained and easily adaptable to new signage, often affording reductions in exhibit design time and construction costs by more than half. You also have options on size, design, scope and price similar to trade show booth rentals with a variety of style and dimension options. Perhaps with little more than a customized graphics upgrade your trade show exhibit can be "out the door and on the floor" in a matter of weeks.

4. Consider a lightweight trade show exhibit.

A lightweight exhibit will reduce operating costs such as freight, drayage, and storage. Select a trade show display that packs easily and is uncomplicated to install and dismantle. A custom modular or custom portable trade show exhibit can have the look of a custom exhibit, while reducing operating

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costs by 50 to 90 percent.

5. Pack extra supplies.

When your installation and dismantle company installs your exhibit at your trade show, you'll find that emergency repairs and materials replacements often are costly. So keep a backup supply box filled with items that may need to be replenished at the trade show. Include power cords, tools, light bulbs, Velcro, scissors and duct tape.

6. Plan well in advance.

This will help you avoid unnecessary rush charges from not scheduling adequate lead time for the trade show display's graphic design and production requirements.

7. Set up the trade show display during pre-show week days.

Avoid costly weekend and overtime labor costs on the trade show floor. Early trade show booth

assembly also helps you to avoid last minute glitches that run up the tab.

8. Understand trade show services.

You will frequently require supplemental assistance from trade show services at the trade show exhibit hall. These are representatives and union laborers who provide such support services as installation and dismantling, carpeting, furniture, lighting, phones, drayage and security. If you are aware of the nuances of these charges for trade show services and plan in advance you can save money while avoiding numerous pitfalls.

Experience is the best teacher in keeping trade show exhibit costs under control. If your display team has limited know-how, tap into the wealth of knowledge available from the staff of a reputable trade show exhibit house. Also do your research on trade show exhibit company websites for industry insider tips.

Dick Wheeler is President of Professional Exhibits & Graphics, headquartered in Sunnyvale, California. The firm is a full-service premiere trade show exhibit, graphics and management services company. For additional information, go to

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Eight Success Tips for Your First Trade Show Booth

By Rena Klingenberg

Exhibiting in a trade show can involve a major investment of money and time. But the financial returns for your business can be excellent if you learn some of the secrets of trade show booth success before signing up for a show and investing in your displays.

If you're considering setting up at a trade show for the first time, here are eight tips for a successful trade show booth display:

- 1) Rent the smallest possible booth space for your first trade show. The first time you exhibit, you'll learn a lot about what works for you and your products and what doesn't, and what you'd like to change for your next show. Also, seeing other exhibitors' booths and ideas will inspire you to evolve various aspects of your own display. So it's a good idea to keep your trade show expenses lower as you learn, by renting a smaller space and starting with a simple display.
- 2) Create an open trade show exhibit. Make it a space people can enter comfortably without feeling trapped. If you set a table across the front of your booth and stand behind it, it's harder to draw customers in and involve them – so they tend to walk on by.
- 3) Keep your booth uncluttered so customers can focus on what's important – your product. When approaching your display, anyone should be able to discern immediately what your booth is promoting. No one is going to take the time to study it and guess, when there are hundreds of other booths to visit.
- 4) Before planning your trade show booth display, find out everything you can about your allotted space. Know its dimensions, where it will be located in the building, what companies or organizations will be in your neighboring booths, whether it's in a high or low traffic area, whether you have access to lighting and electricity, and anything else that will affect your exhibit display setup.
- 5) For your first trade show, consider renting booth display components. Rental displays can relieve you of the issues of transportation and storage, and allow you to be a little more daring in your exhibit design than you might be if you were purchasing them. Also, studies show that many first-time exhibitors never do a second trade show. If you only exhibit once or twice, purchasing your own exhibit components doesn't make economic sense.
- 6) Design your booth with an eye to keeping shipping costs low. Oversized or heavy displays can be very expensive to ship to the trade show, and may also require that you hire expo personnel to bring them into the exhibit hall and help you set them up. Opt for smaller, collapsible, lighter weight displays as much as possible.
- 7) Plan to secure your expensive items so that they can't be stolen at a trade show. If you use a laptop computer for a multimedia presentation at your booth, be sure to have it securely locked to your display, and take it with you at night if it's a multiple-day event. Display the samples of your more

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expensive products either well inside your booth where they can't "walk off" as attendees stroll by, or inside a locked display case.

8) For the most professional image, create a unified appearance for your displays. Choose no more than three colors for your display elements and table coverings – such as gray, white, and blue. Each exhibit component should be one of your three colors. Also, choose no more than three textures – such as brushed metal, matte vinyl, and clear acrylic; each display element should be one of these textures. This creates a professionally pulled-together booth that lets your products stand out in the display.

In summary, although it's tempting to go all out when designing your first trade show booth display, it makes more sense to keep your first booth small and simple, and focus your energy on marketing your products and networking at your first show. During the event, learn as much as possible about how you'd like to alter your exhibit for show next show, and write down all your ideas either during or immediately after the show.

Once you have your first trade show under your belt, you'll have a much sharper idea of what you do – and don't – need in a trade show display to make each successive show your most profitable one to date.

Rena Klingenberg is a jewelry artist and small business owner. Her website,

<http://www.trade-show-booth-display.com>

, is filled with new success tips and articles to help other

small businesses market their products. Subscribe to her free "Trade Show Success on a Small Budget" ezine at

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Tradeshows Success Tip: Build A Dramatic Display
Using Banner Stands To Increase Trade Show Traffic
Five Tips on How to Select a Trade Show Exhibit House

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