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Hands On Trade Show Exhibits Lure Attendees

By Dick Wheeler

When trade show exhibit goers walk the vast exhibit hall floors and come upon highly creative, interactive trade show displays, they get to stop and join in some fun. The trade show attendee becomes part of the exhibit. By using experiential activity, the trade show exhibitor not only entertains but also educates their key customer prospects with entertaining "hands on" experiences.

Why are such participatory activities important at trade shows? Quite simply: they boost traffic to the trade show exhibit site, leading to product interest and often substantial sales from experiencing first hand a dynamic new product.

When Event Marketer covered the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas in early January 2006, they found exceptional trade show exhibits that offered interactive experiences. Here are a few exhibitors whose "hands on" trade show displays showcased new product trials on the trade show floor:

Canon -- Canon's goal was to get attendees' hands on its products. They had three hands-on display islands staffed by representatives. One of the islands featured PowerShot and EOS cameras and camcorders, another showcased printers, and the third island featured smaller digital cameras and camcorders. Canon also had a theater that mimicked a working film set with camera booms and professional stage lighting. Visitors demonstrated Canon's new products and took photos and videos of a working model-train village choo-chooing away in their center island.

Dolby -- A TrueHD Theater was Dolby's centerpiece to run demos of its high-definition audio technology. Separate semi-enclosed zones showed off Dolby's audio technology for HDTV home theaters, surround-sound video gaming, and PC home audio. The gaming zone offered visitors a chance to try Burnout, the new Xbox 360 racing game. The Xbox's Dolby Digital sound technology seduced game enthusiasts to come try their new products.

Garmin -- Several interactive demonstration stations helped Garmin get its portable navigation systems into people's hands. Two circular islands each featured eight handheld navigation units for visitors to try, while plasma screens atop the stations ran videos about the products.

Nokia - The company divided sections of the trade show exhibit—which featured everything from its mobile office products to its latest Bluetooth-capable phones—to create individual environments for products and presentations. Visitors checked out the products on tables on the main floor. Nokia created interactivity with touch-screen computer kiosk booths, where trade show attendees could learn more about key product features.

Remember that people want to try before they buy. At trade shows, they want to see for themselves and be part of the action. That is why the use of interactivity works especially well at trade show displays that introduce new products and services.

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

www.proexhibits.com

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Dick Wheeler is President of Professional Exhibits & Graphics headquartered in Sunnyvale, with a showroom in Sacramento, California. His firm is a full-service premiere trade show exhibit, graphics and management services company. Go to

<http://www.proexhibits.com>

Create a Trade Show Booth That Generates Buzz

By Dick Wheeler

The Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas in early January 2006 was a blow-out four-day trade show attracting some 150,000 guests and 2,500 exhibitors. The trade show floor was 28 football field's worth of space and exhibits spanned 1.6 billion square feet of convention space. This dynamic trade show gave us a peek into the future of a plug and play lifestyle where we can work, play, and keep in touch when we want, where we want.

"The incredible momentum around these new products and services shows that the digital lifestyle has truly gone mainstream this year," Microsoft chairman Bill Gates said in his opening keynote address. "Now it's time to bring together the devices, software, and services in people's lives and take all these experiences to the next level."

To introduce the latest technologies, the most effective trade show displays combined drama, creativity and design to broadcast their message and pound home their brand awareness. On the other hand,

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there were trade show exhibits that lacked creativity and pizzazz and went virtually unnoticed by the milling show floor throng.

Clients who want their trade show appearance to make a dramatic impact often ask about the traits of a trade show booth that hits it big on all cylinders. They want to know what the innovative trade show leaders do differently and how they can also stand out against the competition.

Event Marketer covered the CES show and ranked the trade show booths as to their appeal. Just a few of their favorites were AOL, Dolby and Daewoo. Here are a few pointers that resulted from why they picked these trade show exhibits:

1. Have your trade show booth provide a valuable service to attendees

AOL scored big when they offered their high speed Internet service free to all weary trade show goers. Attendees found a comfortable place to relax, check their email, and surf the web. While this was going on, AOL got to showcase their company's services such as music on demand, Mobile, AIM, and City Guide. This was a win-win situation that helped trade show attendees check in with their offices in real time while appreciating AOL as their host.

2. Find a location that stands apart from the crowd

AOL was inside the concierge tent and therefore got lots of exposure and foot traffic. They commanded a corner in the concierge tent which was located in the parking lot outside the main hall. Their entry had a 20-screen TV wall showing brand logos and concert videos. There were 20 laptops for guests to use and six were mounted on mechanical arms, which could be reached by attendees relaxing in comfortable chairs.

3. Find creative ways to be "in the moment". AOL corporate executives off site were able to view the inside of their trade show booth as a web camera filmed the action inside their booth at the show in real time. They could critique booth activity in real time and coach exhibit personnel on traffic flow, visitor reactions and fresh ideas for engaging prospects.

4. Use eye-catching designs, shapes and tension fabrics. Daewoo used a large wall constructed of

17 LCD screens with 36 fabric screens with rear-projected graphics as its focal point. Huge fin-shaped tension fabric structures with custom lighting lined TV display stands at the sides of the exhibit. They used a logo laden two-sided tower perched on top of the info desk at the entrance with 10 LCD screens built into the pillar. Visitors were fascinated by the compelling visual drama.

5. Create a space for attendees to try out your products. Dolby had a gaming zone that allowed guests to try out their new Xbox 360 racing game, Burnout. The Xbox's Dolby Digital sound was like a beckon that cast a spell on visitors alluring them to the trade show booth.

Remember that by incorporating movement, color, lights and action in your trade show booth you get to showcase new technology while entertaining and mesmerizing your guests. Techniques such as these can make for an unforgettable trade show experience.

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