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How to Get the Best Out of Trade Show Services

By Dick Wheeler

You've heard the expression, "the devil's in the details". This is especially applicable to trade show exhibiting where success hinges on all the big and little things that constitute a trade show appearance.

The process starts with the obvious: selecting the right trade shows to attend; designing a high quality exhibit booth to properly portray your company; and arranging to get the trade show display to the exhibit floor on time.

Your trade show exhibit builder has the expertise to help you make your event a success. But it can often be any one of the following pesky details relating to trade show services, which, if overlooked, can undermine an otherwise well-planned trade show experience.

Here are ten key recommendations from "Tips & Techniques for Exhibiting Success" by Nomadic Display:

1. Study the exhibitor service manual. The manual is the key to what you need to know about each trade show. As every show has its own set of rules, regulations and deadlines, carefully examine the manual's information. Read the fine print in exhibitor instructions, delivery information and trade show services contracts. Complete the required registration and services order forms accurately and retain copies for future reference.
2. Make a list of all the trade show services you need. If you plan for your display requirements and order well in advance, you will avoid those costly last minute services that can play havoc with your trade show budget. Make decisions about the extra utilities you need, as well as carpeting, furniture, cleaning and security.
3. Understand the trade show floor plan. Analyze the exhibit hall floor plan and your booth location in respect to traffic flow and proximity to food courts, service entrances and sound system equipment. Examine plan specifications, however small, indicating ceiling heights, pillar locations, even heating and air conditioning ducting.

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4. Identify utility sources. Contact the exhibit builder to determine how much electrical power you will need for your display. Always make provisions for backup utilities to guarantee that your power-driven components will function dependably. Check the trade show floor plan to find out where the utility ports are located with relation to your space.

5. Understand drayage. Drayage involves delivering your display materials from the loading dock to their assigned space, removing empty crates, returning the crates at the end of the show and transporting the re-crated materials back to the dock. Save money by consolidating all equipment and containers as part of one single shipment.

6. Arrange for adequate carpeting. Install your utilities first before laying the carpet to reduce the number of carpet cuts for electrical outlets. Remember to order enough carpet to cover the bare concrete strip between the display and the aisle. Order a decent quality carpet and underlayment.

Your trade show booth staff's feet will appreciate it at the end of the day.

7. Allow extra time for customs if your company is shipping an exhibit overseas. You need the correct documentation for your container contents, which may be opened and inspected at a port of entry. Use a reliable custom house broker or freight forwarder to coordinate arrangements and keep you posted as to the progress of your shipment.

8. Get to know your trade show services representatives. These are the folks employed by the exhibition organization who are paid to be helpful contacts for exhibitors. They can be of great value to you by fielding your questions and finding ready solutions to any problems you encounter at the trade show.

9. Know how best to work with union labor. As union rules differ in each city, be sure to read the showplace manual to learn what union rules, regulations and charges apply. If you have questions, contact the trade show management or the service contractor. Consider engaging your trade show exhibit display house to provide installation supervision in order to arrange for a problem-free setup.

10. Bring all important trade show related files, contracts and paperwork to the trade show. This includes copies of trade show floor plans, exhibit installation service orders, tracking documents for all shipments, contact names, phone, fax and email numbers.

Remember that attention to the myriad details of trade show planning and execution can make or break your trade show appearance. It is important that you are familiar with the trade show rules. Call upon the expertise of your exhibit builder and show services representatives to help you have a successful and seamless trade show experience.

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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Nine Tips on How to Set Goals for Your Trade Show Exhibit

By Dick Wheeler

It is often said that if you don't know where you are going, you may miss it when you get there. And, as Malcolm Forbes also points out, "If you don't know what you want to do, it's harder to do it." This is good advice especially in the trade show exhibit arena. It is crucial to establish goals and set objectives before you plan to exhibit at a trade show. As with any important marketing effort, you measure success by how well the activity performs against your stated goals. For example, ask how many hot leads do I need in order to justify the cost of our exhibit? What is my projected close rate needed to warrant my trade show booth budget? You get the idea.

Start by being clear when you consult with your top management and marketing teams as to the reasons why your company wants to exhibit in a particular trade show. Ask the tough question -do you plan to have a trade show display because your competition is exhibiting or is it because you want a set return on your trade show investment? Analyze in advance what you want to achieve from your trade show display, convey this to your exhibit team, and put it down on paper.

Here are nine key goal setting recommendations from "Tips & Techniques For Exhibiting Success" by Nomadic Display:

1. Trade show display objectives should reinforce your corporate marketing goals. Clear, concise trade show exhibit objectives need to be in sync with your overall marketing plan, not function independently of it.
2. Is increasing your brand identity at the trade show a key reason to attend? How will you brand your trade show exhibit? Will your logo be part of the branding? Will you incorporate your brand on all your handouts?
3. Do you expect to increase sales on the trade show floor? If so, by how much? Be realistic and set attainable sales figures.
4. Outline your expected trade show results. The more specific, the better. Are you planning to introduce new products or services at the trade show? If so, what are they and how will you showcase these new products/services?

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5. Is an important emphasis of your trade show display to educate your target audience? If it is, will you have on-site speakers, website presentations, handouts at your trade show booth display?
6. Do you expect to gather industry information and customer preferences at the trade show? Do you have a formal survey and will you offer incentives for people to fill out your survey?
7. Is one of your goals to attract new business? If so, how many new orders do you feel are realistic?
8. Is recruiting new dealers or distributors a priority? If so, how many new dealers or distributors will be at the trade show?
9. Do you expect to educate customers? How do you plan to do this? Free literature Handouts? Internet presentations? In-person talks by your top management?

By putting your goals in writing, you have a list that you can manage and measure. Your specific goals need to be realistic and timed. Make deadlines and meet them.

You already know that trade show displays can enhance your marketing plans with measurable results. You now need to focus first on your goals and objectives so that your measurement and return on trade show investment are indeed meaningful.

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