

HOW TO DEVELOP AN OUTSTANDING EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING TRADE SHOW PROGRAM

NATIONWIDE **360**



INTRODUCTION

Welcome! You're here because it's your job to manage your organization's trade show exhibit program. Whether you're an accomplished event manager, a rookie coordinator, or if exhibit management is an added responsibility on top of many others you've been assigned, you know only too well that exhibiting is a big job that comes with numerous challenges. The good news is that it also comes with some great opportunities to grow your organization, as well as advance your career. Trade shows, after all, are unique experiential forums that can fortify your company's brand messaging, reinforce connections with existing clients and forge bonds with new prospects.

To make your job a little easier, we've put together this guidebook to give you an overview of all the key elements that should be covered in a successfully run trade show exhibit program. It includes helpful hints from a support team with over 100 years of combined experience in the industry. If you're new to trade show exhibition, the guide will help you get started and ensure that you cover all the bases. If you're a seasoned veteran, you'll pick up some valuable tips to add to your knowledge base.

SET HIGH, YET ACHIEVABLE GOALS

Understanding what happens at the trade shows at which you're planning to exhibit will help you set high, yet achievable goals that are also realistic. If you plan on taking actual orders at the show, you should keep in mind not all shows permit order taking. If you are only trying to publicize your brand, find out how well-attended by the public the show is (some shows are strictly "industry only"). Then, ask yourself: Is the primary focus to generate leads? Or is it to nurture existing relationships? Are you looking to make a splash with a new product line? Reach out to colleagues who have exhibited at the show in the past for their insights about their experiences.

ACCORDING TO THE CENTER FOR EXHIBITION INDUSTRY RESEARCH, ABOUT 46% OF TRADE SHOW ATTENDEES ARE IN EXECUTIVE OR UPPER MANAGEMENT POSITIONS, AND MORE THAN 80% HAVE BUYING AUTHORITY, SO DON'T BE SHY ABOUT SETTING YOUR SIGHTS HIGH!

Every show is different, and each has its unique strengths in terms of marketing. Researching every show you're planning to attend in advance is key in forming clear and reasonable expectations.



2

BUDGET FOR EVERYTHING!

It's important to know all the costs that go into your exhibit program from beginning to end. You should factor the costs of:

- **Booth space rental**
- **Exhibit build or exhibit rental**
- **Electrical requirements and show services fees, including furniture or carpet rental if not included in the booth build**
- **Shipping to and from the show**
- **Drayage**
- **Installation and dismantling of the booth**
- **Storage of the booth**
- **Post-show booth maintenance and refurbishment**



DID YOU KNOW THE AVERAGE COST OF A CUSTOM EXHIBIT IS \$150-250 PER SQUARE FOOT?

A good exhibit partner will provide an overview of all these costs up front so there aren't any surprises down the road. Unforeseen costs will almost certainly blow your budget.



WHAT ABOUT CUSTOM EXHIBITS?

As mentioned, the average cost of a custom exhibit can range between \$150 - \$250 per square foot. That is a wide range. For example, a typical 20' x 20' space (400 square feet) may cost anywhere between \$60,000 - \$100,000.

Understanding the Cost Range of a Custom Exhibit

So why such a broad range? Simply put, you get what you pay for. That might sound brusque, but your functional and aesthetic requirements will drive the cost. It may seem obvious, but the more you add into your booth space, the more the exhibit will cost. An exhibit with a double deck used for private meeting rooms, for example, is going to have a huge impact on the bottom line. Another determining factor is the type of booth space.

Some of the other exhibit components to take into consideration when budgeting: custom cabinetry, flooring, graphics, lighting, wall panels, hanging signs, audio visual equipment, and storage rooms.

What About Behind-the-Scenes Costs?

Additionally, you'll have to factor into your budget all the "behind the-scenes" costs associated with your custom exhibit. A good exhibit partner will present these costs up front so there aren't any unpleasant surprises after the initial agreement has been made. These costs typically include show services costs, shipping and handling, and the creation of comprehensive installation documents, which will ultimately save you money by reducing installation time on the show floor.

PICK THE PERFECT LOCATION

Location, location, location! We've all heard how important location is in real estate, and this very much applies to trade show booth space selection as well. However, as important as it is to choose the right booth space at each show, this is too often an afterthought.

Know Deadlines: Read show guidelines carefully so you know when to choose a booth space—you'll get the best choice of spaces, and save money, if you commit early.

Learn as Much as You Can: Study the layouts and sizes of the booths that will surround yours and, if possible, how they will be positioned. A giant booth can overshadow a smaller booth, especially if it is enclosed with high walls. Also, try to determine where your biggest competitors will be located. Decide if it's advantageous for you to be located directly next to a major competitor or at a distance from them.

In general, being near the entrance to the show is thought to be a good spot if it's available. The reasoning is that all attendees will see your booth as they come and go; however, if you are too close to the doorway, they may just pass you by as they are coming and going. The trick is to find a good location near the entrance, considering the factors mentioned above, while not being right at the entrance.

Be sure to choose a booth size and configuration that will work best for your exhibit structure—*island*, *peninsula* or *inline*. Otherwise, costly retrofitting might be necessary in order to get your exhibit to work effectively.



ACCORDING TO EXHIBITOR MAGAZINE, THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO DO WHEN PICKING A BOOTH LOCATION IS TO PICK A SPOT BASED ON RELEVANCE RATHER THAN POPULARITY. THAT WAY YOUR TARGETED AUDIENCE IS SURE TO FIND YOU!

PICK THE PERFECT LOCATION

*= Must set up after 1pm on Saturday
 X= Building columns are 5'x5'
 No Freight Aisle= No freight can be in this aisle during move-in & move-out





DESIGN A GREAT EXHIBIT

Work with your designer to bring your brand to life. A custom exhibit should tell your story in an impactful way that's in absolute harmony with your company's culture, values, and brand messaging. It should do this while achieving the functional requirements of your representatives and while staying within the set budget.

A good designer will understand your brand messaging intimately, receive your aesthetic and functional guidance attentively, and generate design concepts that ultimately deliver a "wow" factor on the show floor, transforming your brand into an aesthetic experience in a real-world space. Be wary of designers who want to impose their personal vision onto your brand. A good designer is a collaborator, not a dictator.

If you're not quite ready to commit to a custom-designed exhibit, a rental exhibit can work well. Your rental partner should work with you to configure modular units, so the exhibit conforms to your needs. A good rental partner will also create impactful graphic components that reflect your brand, adding a custom flair to your rental. Since these graphics are created specifically for your exhibit, they can often be kept to reuse in the future after the rental unit is returned.

DON'T FORGET THE PAPERWORK

Know the deadlines for submitting your paperwork to show management, then submit it in a timely manner in order to make advanced discounted deadlines if possible.

All shows are different, and each has different advance discount deadlines for submission. A good exhibit partner will guide you through the process and notify you of when submissions are due.

A good exhibit partner will know your exhibit's specific needs, such as special electrical or rigging requirements, and help you submit paperwork or, as Nationwide Displays offers, do the leg work for you and submit the paperwork on your behalf.





6

GET TO THE SHOW ON TIME, IN ONE PIECE!

Know the specifics of where your exhibit needs to be and when it needs to be there. Timely delivery of your exhibit will prevent incurring late drayage fees.

A good exhibit partner will know how much your exhibit weighs and will work to ensure that you don't get overcharged by show management.

A good exhibit partner will also immediately assess any damage that may have occurred during shipping and will contact the appropriate parties on your behalf for compensation when applicable. For shipping, you'll want to use a carrier who's familiar with the particulars of delivering exhibits to trade show sites.

**SHIPPING CRATES PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN
PROTECTING YOUR EXHIBIT INVESTMENT. THESE
JIGGED CRATES HELP TO PROTECT THE EXHIBIT
FROM SHIFTING AND DAMAGE DURING SHIPPING.**

THE SHOW MUST GO ON... BUT WHAT IS SHOW SUPERVISION?

Not all convention centers and pavilions are the same when it comes to installing your exhibit. Good show site supervision will have experience working with the show labor in the specific city where your show is taking place and will therefore be familiar with the respective city's labor laws and regulations.



DID YOU KNOW THAT HALF OF THE LARGEST TRADE SHOWS IN THE COUNTRY TAKE PLACE IN JUST THREE CITIES? THAT'S RIGHT - THEY ARE LAS VEGAS, CHICAGO, AND ORLANDO.

A superior exhibit company will offer dedicated supervisory services and will support you throughout the show. They'll visit your booth regularly and ensure that it is clean and show-ready every morning. Good installation and dismantling services by a supervisor familiar with the idiosyncrasies of your exhibit can drastically reduce the time it takes for installation, which can result in cost savings to you.

How much time should it take? There's a fairly wide variance in exhibit set-up times. A custom 20x20 might set up in 24-36 man hours (that is three men in 8 - 12 hours).





8

PRE-PLAN WHERE TO SEND THE EXHIBIT AFTER THE SHOW

The great Yogi Berra once said “if you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll end up some place else.” This yogi-ism applies to your exhibit properties as well. Having a good game plan is key to success, and a little forethought goes a long way in ensuring your exhibit gets to where you need it to be next.

Have a plan in place for handling the shipping process well in advance. Decide whether your exhibit will need to be shipped to a storage warehouse or trans-shipped to the next show. Exhibits often need post-show maintenance, and your exhibit partner should advise you of any issues to be addressed in a timely manner.

ABOUT FOUR OUT OF FIVE TRADE SHOW EXHIBITORS SAY THE QUALITY OF ATTENDEES IS THE MOST IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION WHEN SELECTING A SHOW FOR EXHIBITION.

A good exhibit partner will ensure an accurate crate manifest travels with the booth so nothing gets overlooked when dismantling and packing the booth away.

They’ll also fill out your shipping labels and bill of lading forms thoroughly, with all crucial information, and get the required documents into the hands of the right contacts on show site.



MAKING IT WORK!

Although this is just a brief overview of what goes into trade show preparations, we hope you've found this guidebook helpful. If you're new to managing your organization's trade show program, we'd be happy to help you with any questions you may have concerning the steps covered in this guidebook.

If you're a trade show veteran but are unhappy with your current exhibit partner, or you are ready to elevate your trade show program to the next level, we'd love to speak to you.

In business since 1956, Nationwide Displays is a one-stop shop that offers full-service trade show exhibit solutions including exhibit design, fabrication and strategy, and trade show services and management.

For custom exhibits, we will work closely with your team from concept to implementation to bring your brand to life in an exhibit that accurately reflects your organization's culture, values, and brand.

We also offer a complete line of rental packages and rental units with modular components customizable to fit your requirements, brand and messaging.

Contact us today.

The background of the image is a red-tinted, semi-transparent seal of the National Society of Professional Engineers. The seal features a central figure of a man in a white coat, holding a scroll, standing on a pedestal. Above the figure is a banner with the word "FESTO". The entire seal is enclosed in a circular border with a decorative, leaf-like pattern.

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