

TRADE SHOW TIPS FROM THE MARKETING DIVISION

TRADE SHOW BOOTH DESIGN:

A PopUp Display is essentially a backdrop used to give your floor space definition and focus. Because it normally covers the entire back "wall" of your space, a properly designed PopUp Display provides you the opportunity to make a bold statement about your company and your most important product or service. This is where Trade Show booth design is important.

When designing more extensive trade show booths — ones that occupy larger amounts of space — you must give considerably more attention to such things as position on the floor, relationship to other exhibitors, orientation relative to other major exhibitors, traffic flow, etc. For larger booths, trade show booth design is almost a different ballgame. A larger booth must be planned in at least three dimensions, and viewed from all sides. It must provide general display values when viewed as a whole, at the same time as creating as many functional display-areas-within-a-display, as space and budget allow. Ideally it will be strikingly creative, as well as beautifully functional. It will attract visitors by proclaiming your presence and your essential message, while giving you the space and tools to interact with them one-on-one.

A PopUp's mission in life is much less grand, but many of the functional characteristics mentioned above should also be kept in mind. Of course it is possible just to throw the popup up against the back wall, stick a table in front of it, spread out your brochures, and away you go. But you can do better than that.

First, since you want to maximize the dramatic graphic impact of your PopUp, you probably won't want to clutter the area directly in front of it. Yes, you have limited space to work with. But rather than putting a table directly in front of your most valuable asset (the PopUp), it is usually better to create two separate areas to either side. If you will be working the booth alone, then have a "distribution area" on the "incoming" side (the side most of the traffic comes from), and a "sales area" on the other side of your space. This will help both you and your visitors. They will be able to pick up brochures, samples, etc. from the distribution area without intruding on your one-on-one conversations taking place in the other area. And you will be able to have at least a semblance of "privacy" — as if this were possible at a trade show — when you pitch your more important prospects.

If there are two of you working the booth, then you should have two self-contained sales stations — one on either side. In other words, make use of your space intelligently. Don't clutter up the middle, if you can help it.

Which brings us to the design of the PopUp...

I've suggested that your PopUp should do double-duty as both a backdrop, and your most important vehicle for promoting your company's presence and your "Primary Product Message". Stand back from your display for a second and look at it from the perspective of the casual passerby. What is he or she most interested in?

First, since she has come some distance to see a number of specific exhibits, chances are she is looking for a familiar name or logo. Don't disappoint. Display your logo prominently near the top of the display. That way it will be as visible as possible above the heads of the people standing in front.

The same goes for your "primary product message". Try to boil your product or service down into one or two words that you can focus on. This could be a product logo, especially if it is well known and easily identifiable. But it could also be a two or three word phrase — much like the "keywords" used in web pages. If you can't think of anything creative, then just take your primary product and stick an adjective in front of it (or a short phrase behind it) that gives it some "zing"...like this...

Hair Cuts with Class
Superior Training Services
Hand-Crafted Gifts
PopUp Displays with Impact

The objective is to keep it near the top of your display, on one, or at most, two lines, where it will get maximum exposure.

So that takes care of the top 1/3 or so of your display. The rest should be devoted to enhancing or illustrating the "primary product message". Forget about using lots of copy to actually tell people about your product. If the show is successful, you will spend most of your time blocking the view of your display, and prospects won't be able to see it anyway.

That means you should find one or two large striking images and integrate them into a colorful background. The best designs often use just one large image.

The important thing to remember is that people are not going to walk up to your display and start reading the information on it. That is why a "graphic" approach is much more realistic than an informational approach. If you are considering sticking a bunch of information-intensive graphics on your display because you think that will give you more communication bang for your buck, forget it. It won't. The situation, the environment, and the motivation are just not right for this to happen. Your PopUp is a very specific kind of "billboard", and it should be treated that way.

TRADE SHOW PROMOTION TIPS

* Get the word out to your current customers. They may be eager to come see your newest products or to ask questions. And don't forget to include all of your previous years' prospects who haven't yet purchased from you.

* Include a call to action in whatever medium you use to connect with your target market. Entice them to attend the show, and then tell them exactly what you'd like them to do.

* Plan to spend around 10 percent of your overall trade show budget on promotion before the event. And make the best use of your pre-show promotion dollars - think creatively and consider ways to execute your ideas inexpensively.

* Consider letting customers and prospects know that they'll receive a reward for visiting your booth. Make it something that pertains to your product line and is interesting and useful to customers.

* You may want to send your customers and prospects a "show special" coupon or postcard, entitling them to a special discount on orders placed at the show only. That encourages them not only to come to the expo, but also to be prepared to place an order when they get there.

* Your online or offline newsletter is another great place for pre-trade show promotion. Be sure to mention it terms of the benefits to your customers of visiting you.

- Be sure to include your trade show booth number everywhere you promote your trade show presence. In a huge expo hall with hundreds of exhibitors, you want your visitors to be able to find you easily instead of spending time at your competitors' booths!

TRADE SHOW BANNER DISPLAYS

Trade show banner displays can be very versatile and reasonably priced. Once you determine your needs for this part of your exhibit, explore the variety of available styles and compare prices to come up with a great design for your budget.

Consider portability and ease of setting up your banner. A lightweight setup is likely to be less expensive to purchase and ship than a heavier one. One that doesn't require tools to set it up is also a more economical and practical choice.

Also consider a trade show banner display with an adjustable angle, so you can tilt it in the most readable and advantageous direction for your approaching customers to see.

A banner stand that accommodates different sizes of banners is a good investment since you'll be able to use it for a long time, even when you change up your booth design and signs. Also consider stands that can be connected to create different sizes and configurations for your banners.

And you may want to consider a trade show banner display that can accommodate lighting for maximum visibility of your exhibit.

Double-sided banner displays are also a good choice if your booth will be visible from more than one angle. Naturally a double-sided exhibit needs more than one banner graphic, but the added impact can justify that expense.

RETRACTABLE BANNER SYSTEMS

A retractable banner display is the ultimate in easy transport, storage, and set up. The graphic resides inside a case that opens. You simply unroll the graphic and your banner is completely set up in less than a minute.

In addition to trade shows, a retractable display can be used at point of purchase and other locations.

NON-RETRACTABLE BANNER SYSTEMS (PANELS)

A panel banner display system is a basic element of trade show exhibits. It's versatile, comes in a variety of sizes, and can be configured in many different ways.

The panels and accessories can be changed and reassembled for new display designs, and taken apart for storage and transport.

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Panel displays should be designed to set up and take down quickly, and be sturdy enough to withstand repeated reassembly. Again, a design that doesn't require tools to set up is more efficient.

HANGING BANNERS

Hanging trade show banners catch attention immediately, even from a distance. They can be any size from small to enormous, and should come apart easily for transportation and storage.

Double-sided hanging banners are a good choice for catching traffic that's coming and going.

Make sure ahead of time that your booth will have access to an area for your hanging trade show banner, and that if you must pay someone to hang it the fee is reasonable.

OUTDOOR BANNERS

Outdoor banner systems should be sturdy and weather-proof. They need to withstand wind, rain, and sun without looking shabby.

For safety, look for an outdoor display with a solid stand, such as a water-filled base that can be drained for storage. If tension poles and cables are necessary for the outdoor banner display, be sure they don't pose a hazard to passersby.

The graphic for an outdoor banner needs to be designed to withstand UV rays and moisture. It should also be easy to wipe clean.

WHAT KIND OF TRADE SHOW BANNER DISPLAYS DO YOU NEED?

Look for a banner display system that will serve the most uses for you. Consider all your possible needs for trade show banner displays, your requirements for portability and storage, and the graphics you want to use with them.

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