

EXHIBIT & GRAPHIC DESIGN

Make Your First Impression Your Best

What dictates the first impression attendees will make about your company at a trade show? Your exhibit! It is a large, three-dimensional representation of your company for all to see. The importance of looking your best should never be underestimated. *After all, you never get a second chance to make a first impression.*

The structural and graphic design of your exhibit should be based on your company's objectives, culture, identity, position in the marketplace, and should reflect a professional image at all times.

IMAGE:

While there are no absolutes in exhibit design, there are guidelines to help you in creating a visual representation of your company. First, you need to determine the overall look of your display. Which image is best for your needs.

- flashy, trendy or contemporary
- traditional and classic
- high-tech or leading edge
- strong and conservative
- lighthearted and cheery

You never get a second chance to make a first impression.

COLOR:

Color is the most immediately noticed aspect of your display. Colors can affect moods and provide attendees with different feelings about your company. Don't necessarily choose the safe route and pick your corporate colors -- you may please management, but, more important, how will it affect your customers? The following list gives some of the positive, and negative, connotations of your color choice:

- black is classic, elegant, strong, powerful and sexy, yet can be depressing or sinister
- gray is cool, corporate and practical, yet often boring or ghostly
- white is clean, pure and bright, yet sometimes viewed as sterile
- red is exciting, passionate, happy, intense; also can indicate anger
- yellow is bright and cheery; bad shades look like jaundice
- dark green is earthy honest, rich, yet olive green is military and drab
- orange is playful and warm; can be loud and cheap
- deep purple is expensive, regal, artistic, but can be sad
- silver and gold are rich, fancy, prestigious; overused can be gaudy
- browns are woodsy and dependable, yet may look dirty if misused

COPY:

We must next consider our choice of copy. Unlike flat collateral such as a brochure, a display is a three-dimensional reflection of your company. It will not be read like a brochure, so don't include a lot of copy. Too much verbiage turns off a prospect who simply will not take the time to read your display like a newspaper! Keep your copy to a minimum, using a few key words or phrases that are benefit oriented. Use active, not passive, words; and make sure your copy acts like a "hot button" for your customer -- calling them into your booth, requesting more information.

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GRAPHICS:

The most common mistake we often see is that companies expect the display to do the selling at a trade show. Salespeople sell, the display attracts! It is the job of your booth staffers, not the exhibit, to inform and persuade your prospects. The display should have two important functions -- attract attention, and paint your firm in a positive, professional light.

We compare exhibit design to the billboard effect -- you only have a few seconds when driving down the highway at 65 m.p.h. to view a billboard, understand its meaning and the company advertising, and understand any call to action. The same holds true for a trade show display - the attendee will decide in just a few seconds as they're strolling quickly down the aisle whether or not they will visit your display. Quite a challenge, isn't it?!

Salespeople sell, the display attracts! It is the job of your booth staffers, not the exhibit, to inform and persuade your prospects.

One way to ensure that you will get noticed is to use large, colorful graphics in your booth. These "super-graphics" grab the attendees attention and immediately direct their eyes towards your display. They say a picture is worth a thousand words and this is never more true than at a trade show.

Other factors to consider in your exhibit design are lighting, flooring, plants and accessories, movement, and special effects. Just remember to keep all items within your overall design objective, and keep in mind that your display is a direct reflection of your company!

SPECIAL NOTE ON SMALL BOOTH SPACE DESIGN:

We can talk for hours about the look and image of your display, color theory, choice of copy, type of graphics, etc., BUT - when designing smaller booth spaces, we feel it all boils down to this: What's the ONE thing you can say across the top of your display that would make a prospect of your company want to come into your booth space and seek more information?

In other words, if I'm a prospect for your business, what is it that you will say to me or show me that I can quickly register as I'm walking the show floor, that will actually entice me to walk into your booth space?

Is it your name or logo across the top of your display? Is it 20 bullet points telling me everything there is to know about your company? Is it a dozen photos of your product? Probably not!

Does your name or logo really entice someone to walk into your booth space. Maybe. If you've got great brand recognition or you've done such a great job of pre-show promotion that people are seeking you out. Most likely, however, you're looking for NEW business and you want to give people a reason to come up to you; people that don't already know all about you. And people want to know what's in it for them. They want a benefit. WHY should I walk into your booth space?

Again, the most common mistake we see in terms of exhibit design is when companies expect the display to do the selling at a trade show. But please remember this -- people sell, the display attracts! It is the job of your booth staffers, not the exhibit, to inform and persuade your prospects.

