

What business owners need to know about **TRADE SHOW GRAPHICS**



During tight economic times many companies back away from the time and expense of exhibition marketing; tending to favor less costly ways to reach their customers and clients, such as webinar presentations, social media and email. But it doesn't take

long for these same companies to realize that, however effective these methods may be for servicing an existing customer base, they are only marginally effective at bringing in new business. When it comes to generating leads from people who have never done business with you, the face-to-face marketing that occurs during trade shows and exhibitions stands out as one of the most effective sources of new customers.

Businesses that want a higher profile in their industry and need to meet new clients, make new partnerships, and get up to speed on trends should consider exhibiting on a regular basis. There is no shortage of opportunities to market your business in this venue. With more than 13,000 trade shows and exhibitions held in North America each year, according to the Center for Exhibition Industry Research in Chicago, you can easily find all the exhibiting opportunities you need.

Trade show trends

Trade show and exhibit marketing is steadily growing, and so is the size of their exhibits. Research has shown that a 200 sq. ft. booth will average 280 percent more responses than a 100 sq. ft. booth. A 300 sq. ft. exhibit will average 360 percent more responses than a 100 sq. ft. exhibit. That's why many exhibitors are choosing to go beyond the standard 10' x 10' booth into 10' x 20' or larger sizes. Modularity is also becoming popular because it can allow you to easily adjust your exhibition footprint from large exhibition hall booths to small portable displays suitable for the corporate boardroom.

LED displays and back wall lighting, video monitors and interactive elements are also appearing in more exhibits. But that's not the only technology finding its way into the halls. We're increasingly seeing exhibit staffers using tablets and iPads to demonstrate new products, one-on-one with attendees. Combined with digital displays, these devices allow exhibitors to display more products without actually having to lug them to the show. These devices also make it easy to incorporate a CRM and integrate your social media marketing from the initial contact with a lead.

Green marketing is also turning up in exhibit halls. Businesses are building customer interest by pointing out the steps they've taken to protect our environment. One excellent step is to feature exhibit graphics and components that are produced with little or no pollution using products that can be recycled. Offering eco-friendly promotional gifts will also enhance a company's "green" image.

Design considerations

The design is among the most important determinants of whether your trade show graphics help or hinder your quest for new business. The graphics must not only capture the attention of potential customers within two to three seconds, they must also reflect your company's overall positioning image and marketing direction. Even if you have talented designers on staff, it's important to work with a supplier whose designers will collaborate with your team to ensure that your exhibition graphics will look great and perform properly throughout their intended service life.

Other important design criteria includes the selection of exhibiting equipment and components that travel well and make it easier for your team to efficiently setup and break down exhibits. After a long hard day or two of exhibiting, you want the minimum fuss in packing everything up. (*cont'd*)

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Material and equipment considerations

Exhibition graphics are subject to a lot of abuse during their life cycle. While they're designed to handle it, the process of setting up and breaking down the exhibit takes a toll on them over a relatively few cycles. Graphics should be considered as consumables to be replaced and freshened with a new look relatively often. Worn, shabby and dated graphics will not project the image you want.

When it comes to exhibition equipment, experienced exhibitors make a habit of inspecting gear carefully during each break-down, and make notes about replacing any worn components before they become a problem. It's important to use hardware that will perform reliably during its intended service life. This is why Signs Now has partnered with the world's leading manufacturer of exhibition booth and equipment to provide the full range of components.

Choose the right company

Carefully choose the company that will supply your trade show graphics and exhibiting equipment. Ideally you want to work with a company that takes a collaborative approach to providing the solutions you need. This is the most certain way to assure you will enjoy the benefits of a successful project. To determine whether the company can handle a project of your scope, look at their previous designs and projects. Can they provide you with a portfolio of successful trade show projects they have completed? What about references from among their clients?

After establishing that the company is qualified, it's time to start asking questions about the design considerations we've touched upon here. Can they supply eco-friendly graphics and display components? Do they offer sufficient range of display components to handle the scope of your project?

Ask many questions, and expect many questions in return. A collaborative provider of trade show graphics will be interested in learning a wide range of details about your company and its marketing plans in order to most efficiently provide the results you seek. Keeping the communications channels open throughout the project will help assure your project is completed on time, in budget and up to your expectations.

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