

Maximize ROI On Your Exhibit

Detailed input from you provides designers with a better starting point. A better starting point results in more effective exhibit design. The following questions are designed to encourage a deeper understanding of the role of trade shows in your marketing strategy and will aid in the design of a functional, attractive, flexible, attention-getting exhibit.

YOUR MARKETING REQUIREMENTS

- What is the primary marketing challenge for your company as a whole (not just this exhibit)?
- What is your overall corporate marketing strategy?
- What role will this exhibit play in that strategy (are you trying to further customers along the sales cycle, do you want to sign orders on site, etc.)
- What do you need to get from customers at a trade show? Especially, what do you need to get from them that you can't get anywhere else (stress the personal contact)?

DESIGN IS A STRATEGIC TOOL USED TO CHANGE PEOPLE'S MINDS—KEEP YOUR OBJECTIVES CUSTOMER-ORIENTED

- Why do customers buy your product/service? What are its greatest attributes?
- What needs, knowledge, or beliefs must your customers have before they will (A) stop at your exhibit? (B) set up appointments with your sales reps? (C) buy your product/service?
- What is your product's/service's sales cycle?
- What state of mind do you want your customers to be in when they leave your booth?
- What needs to happen in the exhibit for the customer to believe the interaction was time well spent?
- When all is said and done, what do you want to have achieved at this trade show?

YOUR EXHIBIT MUST FIT INTO EXISTING STRUCTURE

- Describe your company's image, culture, and management style. Is it conservative, moderate, or progressive?
- What available images, messages, existing booth properties, etc. will need to be incorporated in the exhibit?
- How will you measure the success of this specific trade show performance?

FUNCTIONALITY: PRODUCT

- If products will be displayed, how many? How big are they? What color? What angle/aspect/qualities do you want to feature?
- Is there a priority order to products or information?

FUNCTIONALITY: PEOPLE

- How long will people be staying in the exhibit? What will you be doing with them? Where will they stand/sit (reserve chairs for big spenders; don't let the tire-kickers use your valuable floor space for a few minutes)?
- Where do you want attendees to go first in your exhibit? Why? What happens in this first priority zone?
- Where do you want them to go next? What happens there?
- What type of accommodations (chairs, conversation areas) will you need? Do you need private conference rooms? Does the overall exhibit need to be a “closed” structure, or do you want an “open” atmosphere? Why?

FUNCTIONALITY: ATTRACTING ATTENDEES

- What activities do you hold in your exhibit (presentations, group demonstrations, giveaways, etc.)?
- What special presentation equipment or technologies will you be using (projection or sound systems, special lighting, etc.)?

FUNCTIONALITY: EXHIBIT

- What other functional needs do you have? Electrical wire management? Storage? Crating solutions?
- What do you want to accomplish with this exhibit to improve it over your last one? (examples include: cut drayage costs, be more configurable, require less refurbishment, etc.)

THE FUTURE... WILL YOU BE READY FOR IT?

- How many years do you expect to use this exhibit?
- What are the maximum and minimum configurations (booth dimensions) you will need during that time?
- At how many and in which shows will you use these properties each year? Which shows might you add in the future?
- How rapidly will your exhibit's messages, displays, and products change?
- How will the number of products and type of displays change over time? The size/configuration of your exhibit? Your corporate image?

RESOURCES

- What is your budget range for this exhibit?
- How much time do you have? What is your timeline?

We hope this has helped you evaluate your existing trade show marketing plan and has shed light on new concerns that you may have been unaware of before. Providing your answers to your designer will enhance the quality of your exhibit, and may help you sell the value of trade shows to management.

Be sure to also see other topics in our free "How-To Be A Successful Exhibitor" series, available exclusively at <http://www.northlandcustom.com/library/>

- *Budget & Cost Control*
- *Show Selection Guidelines*
- *Space Selection Guidelines*
- *Boothmanship 101*
- *Post Show Evaluation*

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Northland Custom Woodworking has built award winning trade show exhibits for leading design firms since 1986. Our carpenters have constructed displays for Wrigley, Abbott Labs, Maybelline, TDK, Swiss Army, Gatorade, Focal Communications, Zurich Insurance, Peerless, Brother, and hundreds more. For more information and to see our latest portfolio, please visit www.northlandcustom.com
1844 Circuit Drive
Round Lake Beach, Illinois 60073 USA
info@northlandcustom.com

phone: (847) 546-5786
fax: (847) 546-5788
www.northlandcustom.com