



## Designing your booth

A trade show is a bustling place where you have to stand out to get potential customers to notice you. Creative and unusual booth design will improve your chances of grabbing visitor's attention. Your booth has the potential to be the ultimate advertising channel for you because visitors get to interact directly with you. They get a first hand look at what you have to offer, they can touch and try products, and get answers to their questions right away.

### **BOOTH LAYOUT**

You only have a few seconds before the trade show visitor walk by your booth. In these seconds their eyes have to be drawn to your booth, understand what your company stands for, and what it offers.

Before you start working on your booth design think about what you want to use it for. Do you need an area to demonstrate products, tables for customers to gather around, a private area for writing contracts, interactive games or a place to show information or music videos. Consider the space that you have to your disposal. It is a common mistake to try to fit as much stuff in a booth as possible. More often than not the booth is smaller than you think. Your visitors have to be able to walk through the booth without worrying that they will knock something over.

You also have to keep in mind psychological impacts on visitors: a booth with a raised will be perceived as harder to enter than one with a floor that is level to the trade show floor. A booth with walls on three sides is felt to be harder to escape – this can make visitors hesitate in entering your booth. However the people that do enter are more likely to be interested in what you have to offer.

When creating your booth layout think outside the box. Use different shapes and forms on your display stands. Model stands from your logotype, a plant, a city skyline or get inspiration from your product. A tyre company used the round shape from the tyre and an s-shape to show speed. If you look around you will find shapes everywhere.

Bring in some unexpected eye-catchers – a bunch of cool lights hanging in the centre of your display, a patch of plants with bird song from hidden speakers to relax by, yarn set up as a spider web to symbolize a network, a pyramid of books or a half eaten apple to symbolize knowledge or anything else that you can connects in someway to your type of company.

Lead the visitors to your booth by hanging graphics from the ceiling. Use height when you are designing the booth, check height restrictions with the exhibition organisers, to tower over your competition.

## MESSAGE

Keep messages short and to the point. Your booth is not a product sheet or catalogue. No one at an exhibition takes time to read a lot of small print. The whole point of being part of a trade show is to speak to your customers and let them know how your products or services can benefit them. A handout after the visitor leaves your booth can be given as a reminder of your offer.

Place text in the upper half of your display. Text placed on the lower part of the display graphics will be almost invisible as there often are tables or other things in the way. Make sure you use a font that is legible.

## IMAGES

Both illustrations and photos work wonders when creating graphics. A very complicated technical product or a medical condition can easily be described with a good illustration, and to create trust or credibility, a photo can have great impact on your visitors. It is really a matter of knowing who your target audience is and how they relate to your products and services. Designing graphics that have graffiti printed on them for a real estate convention may not give you the same result as if you were using the same illustration at a fair for tattoo artists.

Remember to use high quality images, low resolution or bad images can ruin an otherwise great-looking booth.

## COLOURS

Choosing colours can be a complex job. Colour preference is part of your personality and culture. What is a wonderful colour to you might be seen as an awful colour to someone else.

At exhibitions a lot of companies use their corporate colours so that their customers will recognise and find them at the show.

Sometime, however, a company may feel the need to create a different colour scheme for a certain campaign. Exactly what colours you should use in a specific situation is really hard to say. It will depend on you target audience, your campaign and where your exhibition takes place. However, here are some general guidelines to think about.

- Pure colours with no black in them are happy colours. Use clear yellow, red, green and orange for a spontaneous, optimistic and lively feeling.
- For soothing, spontaneous and welcoming feel use warm colours. Warm colours are hues with red in them: red-orange, orange, and yellow-orange.
- A powerful attention-getter is a fully saturated red. Red is known to raise blood pressure and stimulating the nervous system. Be careful though, some people react very strongly to a clear and hot red colour.
- Cold colour that make your customers think of a cool winters day are light blue, white and blue-green. They remind us of snow and ice. Fully saturated blues can lower blood pressure and make you feel calm.
- To make visitors feel refreshed, calm and comfortable use cool colours such as turquoise and spring greens.
- Pale pastels give a sense of romance, femininity, loftiness and tranquillity.
- Dark muted colours are heavy, secure, masculine and serious. They also represent the end of autumn.
- Yellow and orange reminds us sunlight, blue and blue-green of the ocean, white is hygienic and simplicity, brown is wood and earth, green is trees, plants and harmony and purple is a majestic colour.

As you can see you can influence your visitors in different ways by choosing specific colour when designing your booth. If you would like to know more about the effect colour could have on humans download 'The effect of colour' on the Education Centre of Maxibit web site.

Do your own research by checking the Internet or buying books on the subject. You should also take the opportunity to ask visitors what feeling they got when entering your booth.

If you are an international company you should remember that colour has different meanings in different cultures. For more information regarding this download 'Cultural differences' from the Education Centre on the Maxibit web site.

## Sources

Interview sources:

Anki Lindgren & Lotta Fredriksson, 20081215, Maxibit Worldwide AB, Sweden

Literature sources:

- Whelan B.M, (1994) *Color Harmony 2 – a guide to creative color combinations*, Rockport Publishers Inc. Massachusetts
- Warrender C., (1997) *Carolyn Warrender's Book on Colour Scheming*, HarperCollins Publishers Ltd. New York

