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Trade Show Training

Exhibition stand & display guide

by

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Trade Show Training

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations on signing up to take part in a trade show – the most direct form of marketing available.

This ‘Exhibition stand and display guide’ will help you :

- be better prepared before briefing stand builders
- save money on stand building and display
- understand the implications and choices of choosing a stand builder
- arrange more economical and effective exhibition stands

Before you rush out and appoint a stand builder, there are 10 steps that you should consider, if you want an effective, economical stand that will help you achieve fabulous results:

STEP 1 – set multiple exhibition objectives, because if you don’t know where you are going, how will you get there? These objectives could include:

Sell products from the stand	Gather qualified leads
Introduce new products	Enter new markets
Conduct market research	Find dealers or agents
Build prospect data base	Gain export business
Gather competitive intelligence	Educate customers
Find new business opportunities	Customer promotions

Exhibitions are so sophisticated that there are literally 100 different exhibition objectives to choose from see <http://www.exhibitor.co.za/resources.htm>

STEP 2 – If you book a stand, then sit there hoping that the right people will visit your stand, then you are retailing!!! not marketing. Plan pre-show promotions that will help you achieve your exhibition objectives by driving qualified traffic to your stand.

STEP 3 – consider the dimensions of your exhibits: how big is it – length, height, width and weight, then consider:

- what does it need to operate, i.e. water supply, electricity, compressed air etc.
- does it need an operator or supplies
- does it need to stand on the floor, on a base or can it be wall-mounted

Exhibitions out-perform all other marketing mediums for one reason only – you can demonstrate the products. If you don't demonstrate your products (including services) then you really are retailing.!

STEP 4 – consider on-stand promotions, entertainment, storage and seating because the area they occupy, together with exhibits, should not exceed 70% of the space you booked – the remaining 30% is for visitors/buyers.

STEP 5 – most companies battle with determining the Return on the Exhibition Investment (ROI), which is important information in proving that the money spent on the exhibition was well spent.

The two sets of figures needed for determining the ROI is (1) an exhibition budget, detailing all expenditure, then (2) tracking all new business gained from the exhibition, up to 12 months after the show closes.

STEP 6 – the decision to hire or buy an exhibition stand is influenced by numerous factors not least of which is aesthetics and budget. If you only exhibit once a year, then hiring might make more sense, rather than pay for 11 months of storage. Here is a quick check list to help with the decision:

BUY	HIRE
Can be custom designed to your exact requirements	Might not exactly suit your requirements
Available whenever you need	Not immediately available
You store, insure & maintain or pay for these services	You don't have to store, insure and maintain the display
You transport to shows and erect or pay for these services	Delivered & erected at show for you
All, or part, can be used for other needs like foyer displays, reception desks	
Fixes price for next 3 – 5 years	
Larger initial investment required	Smaller initial investment required
Capital asset can be depreciated	Straight business expense

Can be amortised over several years Expense in one year's budget

Fixed appearance (although fresh graphics, different colours can change) Designed to suit products or show

Fixed size Designed to suit stands booked

It is entirely feasible to arrange a combination of hire/buy to suit your budget and this should be discussed with your appointed stand builder.

STEP 7 – Graphics are an expensive item but a picture truly 'is worth a thousand words'. Either consider using your existing graphics on the stand or ask your appointed stand builder to quote for these separately, then get competitive quotations

STEP 8 – The Organiser's supply every exhibitor with an information manual, containing everything you need for successful participation, including service order forms like:

Electrics Furniture

Flowers and plants Carpets

Stand cleaning A.V. hire

You can either order these items yourself or ask your stand builder to arrange. If you order these items yourself, please be aware that the stand cannot be erected until the main power supply and carpets have been installed.

If you wish your stand builder to supply these services, please do not hand them your exhibitor's manual as it contains rules, regulations and information, vital for your success. Read the manual, before briefing the stand builder, so that you are aware of all of the rules and regulations that would affect stand building.

STEP 9 – ensure that you fully understand what is being supplied by the Organisers as part of your stand rental. If you have booked a 'stand package' this could include carpets, spotlights, plug, name on the fascia board, furniture etc., make sure these items are not duplicated in stand building quotations.

STEP 10 – consider how often you exhibit as it would save you a fortune to buy/hire one stand that could be used for three or 4 exhibitions, with small adjustments. Stands are always constructed carefully but are not broken-down and stored with the same attention to detail but well cared for stands & displays will give you many years of service.

ONE LAST THING –to gain maximum benefit from exhibition participation, start planning 3 – 6 months out from the show.

BUDGET – most exhibitors are reluctant to reveal their budget to the stand builders. This often wastes time and can disappointment for both parties. Setting a budget will

also allow you to compare competitive quotations. If you are a new exhibitor and have no idea how much it would cost, then phone a few stand builders and ask for the minimum figure they could build a good quality stand of your dimensions, for.

There are 4 display options for designing and building your exhibition stand:

Custom design – which is the ‘a la carte’ of stand building as you can have anything that can be imagined. If you are looking for something outstanding, different and have a good budget, then custom design and construction could be your answer.

Before briefing a custom stand designer, it would be worth establishing if they charge a design fee, which would be payable in the event that you appointed a different stand builder.

Here is an interview with a professional custom stand builder who has some useful advice for exhibitors:

SET SQUARED – Client Service Director - [AnitaMathias](#)
EXSA custom stand designer and builder -offers full turnkey stand solution

There are several misconceptions about ‘Custom stand building’ that need to be corrected:

- that stands are only used once. If required by the client, stands can be designed so that they can be re-assembled several times, in different locations
- that stands have to be totally custom built. An economic option is to create architectural features in custom with the rest of the stand in systems/modular display.
- That custom stands are very expensive – however, if you stipulate a budget for a custom stand, it will be designed to meet that budget and if your expectation is unrealistic, this should be pointed out by your designer or builder up front
- that custom is for very large stands only. Anita advised that they build a great many stunning stands that are between 18 – 24 m² or smaller
- Custom build is frequently perceived as inflexible – yet there are endless possibilities

Anita’s recommendations to exhibitors considering/using custom build:

1. it takes longer to design and pre-build custom stands, so give yourself plenty of time before the show to get custom quotations.
2. pre-planning is vital when building custom stands, so time is required for client meetings where finishes, construction details and timing can be agreed. Graphics, lighting and A.V. should be considered first (not last) so that they can be built into the design and artwork/material can be supplied in good time. Flooring is an under-rated opportunity to pre-qualify visitors, ground the eye, set the tone of the stand. Pre-

planning should involve all of the customer's decision-makers so that there are no sudden surprises on site, as it is difficult to adjust custom construction.

3. trade show marketing is a vital ingredient in a successful exhibition stand, so objectives must be clearly understood and branding and messaging must be accurately portrayed. Exhibitors should be able to measure the return on the exhibition investment or objectives.

4. Exhibitions/trade shows are a competitive market place, so differentiating your company and product is important. Custom design creates really different, eye-catching stands but there are structural limitations as with all stand construction.

5. custom stand construction is a really specialised service so it is advisable that the contractor has their own fully-equipped workshop and are able to fully or partially pre-build the stand, in advance of the show, for the client's approval.

Systems/Modular displays – which is the 'set menu' of stand building. Display systems are versatile and can achieve numerous shapes and designs but are governed by fixed sized panels and steel/aluminium structure.

Here are interviews with two professional modular stand builders who's advice to exhibitors is:

SCAN DISPLAY SOLUTIONS – M.D. [Justin Hawes](#)

EXSA stand builder – specialising in system/modular stands – offers full service

The most important features that impact stand design are:

- stand height
- traffic flow to the stand
- lighting – modular stands have an advantage over custom and displays in that they have built-in light track that effectively conceals wiring. Backlit panels are particularly easy to accommodate in our modular system
- modular raised floors. Even if the stand is purchased, we would recommend that flooring be hired, as it does not wear well over time.

When exhibitors appoint a stand builder, they should consider:

* an established stand builder that can offer a great level of service, regional offices around the country and International affiliations that will allow stands to be designed locally and built around the world.

* that the modular system being used is portable

- * that if the stand is purchased, it is carefully dismantled at the end of the show and graphics packed properly to prevent damage
- * advising them of problems experienced at the last show, so that they be avoided
- * having one contact person available to them 24/7 from start to finish of the project

The 5 most common stand mistakes exhibitors make are:

1. not ordering an electrical distribution board (so no power available)
2. late delivery of graphics or artwork
3. making changes on-site that delays completion of the stand
4. not obtaining managements buy-in on stand design process
5. leaving the stand decisions and payment of deposits to the last minute'

SHOCRAFT EXHIBITIONS (PTY) LTD – C.E.O. [Shirelle Raubenheimer](#)

EXSA member Stand builders and supplier – specializing in modular/system stands and hire items

Points for exhibitors to consider during planning:

EXSA Stand builders and designers have an in depth knowledge of the exhibition medium and those “in the know” can assist exhibitors with added value services

Your budgets and objectives for exhibiting are a key factor in determining which type of stand would suit you best ie. Custom built versus System / Modular OR Purchase versus Rental.

Exhibitors should plan exhibiting budgets and objectives over a 12 – 24 month period, to incorporate all exhibiting opportunities available. These should be assessed carefully as choosing the RIGHT exhibitions, best suited to your objectives and products/services are essential for success. Your stand builder should be in a position to assist you with this.

Points for exhibitors to consider for briefing of stand builders:

Adequate allocation of and number of stand staff, sales points/ demonstration or conversation points are crucial for optimum interaction with visitors.

Storage space for promotional materials, personal possessions and stock is often forgotten. Keeping your stand “clutter free” promotes a good flow of traffic.

Knowing your stand position on the exhibition floor plan is important for configuration of the stand design to incorporate traffic flow, accent points and structural advantages/disadvantages for best results. Ensure you have a floor plan and exhibitor manual for the stand builder, as they will be your partner in success and these documents provide vital information for logistics and proper planning.

Provide as much information as possible to the stand builder during briefs to ensure the design you receive encapsulates all your requirements, as well as special areas or features you would like to incorporate according to your objectives.

Display systems – which are the ‘fast food’ of stand displays as they are sold everywhere and are reasonably cheap. These systems normally ‘pop-up’, ‘pull-out’ or are assembled with fixed size panels and connectors. Most stand builders have a range of display systems.

Which ever of these 3 options you choose, please ensure that the stand builder is a member of EXSA Exhibition & Events Association of Southern Africa. Check them out at www.exsa.co.za EXSA stand builders have a proven track record, are well-established companies abiding by a strict code of conduct. In the unlikely event of a dispute, then EXSA offers an arbitration service which helps clients settle matters with EXSA stand builders. Unfortunately, EXSA cannot arbitrate where the stand builder is not a member.

The last option is DIY (do-it-yourself) which is a popular choice for smaller stands. Here are a few considerations for exhibitors who DIY:

- read the exhibitor information manual carefully to ensure that you follow all of the rules and regulations, particularly the submission of electrical compliance certificates and the need for engineers certificates for structures over 2,5 high
- Successful DIY stands take careful planning
- never try to do the electrics yourself
- it normally takes twice as long as you think to DIY, so never leave it till the last minute to arrive at the venue. Ensure that you have enough staff to complete your stand in the time available.
- NEVER believe that you can get away with press-sticking a few brochures to the stand wall, then hire a table and 2 chairs. You get out of exhibitions, what you put into them!!

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY AGREEMENTS – the Organisers will probably ask you to sign such an agreement, which makes it quite clear that you are responsible for the security and safety of all staff involved in your stand. You in turn should have such an agreement with any stand builder or contractor you appoint, to assist with your stand. TIP copy the Organiser’s agreement and change it to suit your needs.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) – we recommend that you print the attached form onto your Company letterhead, then complete all sections, before copying and handing to the 3 stand builders who are quoting on your job. The use of this RFP will help you gather the necessary information, then will allow you to compare ‘apples with apples’ once all of the designs and quotations have been received.

(print on your Company letterhead)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL – SHOW STAND/DISPLAY

COMPANY

CONTACT NAME

PHONE E-MAIL

SHOW

DATES VENUE

STAND NO. (attach floor plan) m2

SPECIFY SPACE ONLY OR PACKAGE BOOKED

SHOW ORGANISERS

ORGS. CONTACT PHONE

Our objectives in exhibiting – in order of priority:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Demonstrations and promotions planned for our stand:

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Info on exhibits, their dimensions & services required to operate, like electrics, water, waste, heavy lifting, compressed air etc. (*supply brochures showing products*)

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STAND REQUIREMENTS: on hire – one use only

purchase (to be delivered to purchaser after the show)

purchase (re-usable, storage and re-erection required, quote separately)

quote separately for graphics, exhibition services etc. (specify)

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OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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BUDGET is from R to R Excluding VAT

PROPOSAL IS REQUIRED BY (date)

For more information, contact:

NAME POSITION

PHONE E-MAIL

EVALUATING QUOTATIONS – most people rush straight to the price and have a heart attack! A better way is to:

- check that each design and quotation has included all of the elements contained in the RFP
- look at the design and note your initial impression. Then imagine your competitors name on the stand (like having ‘Sprite’ graphics on a ‘Coca-Cola’ stand). If it just wouldn’t work, then the stand could be unique to your company.
- Now look at the price and consider your initial impression.
- Murphy’s law says that the stand you can afford, you like the least and the stand you like the best, is way out of your price range. Rather than take the stand you more-or-less like and can more-or-less afford, demand more of the stand builder who best understood your business and objectives in exhibiting.
- Ask the favoured stand builder for three satisfied clients that you can contact for references. Particularly ask if the stand builder finished the stand in good time and within the budget.
- Read the stand builders contact carefully to ensure that you understand all of the fine print and its implications, particularly terms of payment. It might be an idea for you to include a penalty clause for late completion.

WORKING WITH THE STAND BUILDER – right after you have appointed your stand builder:

make a list of what you must supply and when, which could be products, graphics etc. and where your goods must be delivered.

A timetable showing when the stand will be built in the workshop, delivered to site and be ready for dressing, inspection and hand-over

swop all-hour telephone numbers with the stand builder, so that you can stay in touch during the build-up, show and break-down

attend the exhibition’s briefing meeting with your stand builder

GOOD LUCK – we trust that these tips will help you have a fabulous stand and show

More free tips and advice can be found at: www.exhibitor.co.za