

A FIVE-STEP PROCESS TO CREATE EXCELLENT EXHIBIT GRAPHICS

Excerpt from *The Exhibit User's Handbook: Fried Goose Eggs*

By Don Woodard



You are about to be introduced to a Five-Step Process that has been proven to be successful in developing exhibit signs and graphics that will help you meet or exceed your show goals.

Step #1: Define Your Reasons to Exhibit

It is well documented that people attend tradeshows and events to do business, learn about new products and services, and to solve business problems. Therefore, define what you can accomplish through tradeshows or events more effectively or efficiently than you can accomplish through other means of sales or marketing methods. These should be the reasons for you to exhibit at tradeshows and events!

For instance, an average qualified tradeshow lead closes in 1.6 follow-up calls versus 3.7 field calls, making tradeshows an effective sales tool. 81% of show attendees attend shows to see new technology and learn more about new products or services. 76% of attendees rate tradeshows as very important in product and vendor awareness, and 67% of attendees visit shows to compare products and vendors for a future purchase. 64% of show audiences attend for a “hands-on” experience.

Determine if there is any other way to provide the information that your existing and potential buyers are looking for that is more efficient or effective than tradeshows. If not, then you have defined the reason, or reasons, to exhibit.

Step #2: Define Your Exhibit Concept

There are three basic exhibit concepts. They are:

Product Position – this concept focuses on your product or service offerings. It is often used by new companies.

Company Identification – focuses on creating awareness and the branding of your company. If you are looking to enhance or change your company’s image this concept works well. There are other methods to accomplish this strategy that may be more cost effective than tradeshows and events, yet they will generally not provide the “face-to-face” value of tradeshows and events.

Company Position – focuses on your marketing position. For instance, is your company a leader within your industry? Or is your company “Trying Harder,” etc?

Identify which concept is most important for each show at which you plan to exhibit. Different shows may require a different exhibit concept to be most effective in meeting your goals.

Step #3: Define Your Target Audience

To get your qualified show attendees to visit your exhibit you need to understand the needs of your target audience. Following are the primary concerns or needs of a number of job functions:

Upper Management personnel	= net profits
Sales Management personnel	= increase sales
Production Management personnel	= better efficiency or increase productivity
Administrative personnel	= saving money or reducing costs
Distributors	= net profits
Your Target Audience	= ?

How can you present your offerings to meet the concerns or needs of your target audience? How will your offering affect their net profits, increase their sales, allow them to be more efficient or productive, help them save money, etc?

Note of interest: According to *Exhibitor Magazine*, your potential audience will range from 7% to 12% of a show's total net attendance. However, although 80% of your potential audience will see your exhibit, only 44% will actually stop and visit with your booth staff.

That means that 36% of your potential audience will walk past your exhibit. Don't allow this to happen to you! Address the needs of your potential audience and they will stop to have a discussion with your staff, after-all, they are spending their time and money to identify companies and products that can help solve their business problems or concerns.

Step #4: Define Your Objectives

Signs and graphics can serve up to four basic functions. They are:

1. Attract
2. Inform
3. Direct
4. Entertain

Which do you want your signs and graphics to accomplish? The two most common functions are to attract and to inform. Each function requires a different mindset to accomplish its mission.

The following methods have been proven to be the two most effective ways to attract at a tradeshow:

1. Motion
2. Backlighting

Ruth P. Stevens, author of a book titled, *Trade Show and Event Marketing* states, "Think of the booth as a three-dimensional ad. Not an awareness ad, but a direct response ad. You want people- the right people- to grasp your message and take action, namely, to come into your booth and engage in a discussion."

Step #5: Define Your Message

For your signs and graphics to be most effective they need to identify what you are offering in language that is clear to your existing and potential buyers. Few people will take the time to guess what it is that you are offering. Be specific!

Ruth P. Stevens states, "The words you choose to attract qualified prospects, and the skill with which you display these words, are the most powerful driver of success on the show floor."

"New" is a very powerful and persuasive word and was for many years the most important word used in exhibits. Due to the internet many show attendees are now aware of what's new before arriving at a show, but they now attend shows to get more information about what's new. It is still a very effective word and should be used within your exhibit. Don't forget that 81% of show attendees visit shows to see new technology or products. ■