

# **Ten Tips for a Successful Installation and Dismantle**

**By Mel White**

The trade show floor can be like operating in a foreign country. However, if you follow a few basic tips, you can successfully and economically navigate the Installation and Dismantle waters of your next show.

## **1. Choose a Quality Labor Partner**

- Consider national coverage so you have consistency.
- What is their reputation for integrity and performance? Ask around.
- Price – While cost per hour is important, keep in mind that comparing the rate of an independent contractor to a general contractor (GC) is not comparing apples to apples. Independent contractor labor is typically far more efficient, thereby resulting in few hours billed.

## **2. Complete the Exhibitor Appointed Contractor Letter (EAC Letter)**

- Check your exhibitor services manual for the due date. This is typically 30 days prior to the show – but can be as much as 90 days.
- Complete the form, send it to the show contractor and send a copy to your labor contractor.
- If it is past the due date, call your labor contractor. They may be able to work it out with the show.

## **3. Choose the Right Shipper**

- Choose an experienced trade show shipping partner.
- Price – Do not compare the price of shipping with a van line (point to point transportation) to that of a common show carrier (consolidates loads, breaks down skids, rough ride). They are not equal.
- Label each item on a skid separately. Skids sometimes get broken down

## **4. Pre-Plan**

- Complete all service orders well in advance (electrical, carpet, hanging signs, material handling, etc.) to get best rates.
- Electrical – Be sure to include a dimensioned layout of where the electrical should go, along with an orientation for your booth (include surrounding booth numbers)
- Send copies of all service orders to your labor partner.

## **5. Have Set Up Instructions and Booth Renderings**

- Be sure to have detailed and accurate set up instructions.
- Send a copy of the instructions to your labor partner in advance.

- Bring a copy of the instructions with you.
- Have back up copies of your booth drawings at your office.

## 6. Schedule Labor – Factors to consider when choosing start times

- Scheduled the move-in time for your booth # – Find this on the targeted move in plan or in your exhibitor services manual.
- Some cities and venues take longer to get the freight from the dock to the booth than others – ask your labor partner.
- Direct shipment or advanced shipment – You can generally begin set up at or close to your targeted move in time only if you send your booth to the Advanced Warehouse.
- Leave time for the electrical and carpet to be laid if you rent from the general contractor. Idle crew hours are the responsibility of the exhibitor if mis-scheduled. Independent contractors are happy to help you eliminate idle time by consulting with you in advance.

## 7. Union Jurisdictions -- Every City is Different

- Read the rules in your Exhibitor Services Manual.
- In some cities you can set your own booth up – in others you can do almost nothing.
- For detailed information on a city by city basis, email [kmiller@momentummgmt.com](mailto:kmiller@momentummgmt.com) and request our union jurisdiction guidelines.

## 8. Security Concerns

- Theft is common in convention centers.
- If it is valuable, keep it locked up. Many people have access to the show floor. Your labor partner can not be responsible for your valuables.

## 9. Have an Inventory List

- Have a complete list of crates and inventory for inbound and outbound.
- If the outbound shipment is split, have a detailed inventory of which items ship to each destination.
- Provide this list to your labor partner.

## 10. Supervision

- A supervisor who knows the details of your exhibit and also how the unions in that city operate will save you time, money, and frustration.
- The supervisor must remain at the booth throughout the entire installation and dismantle.

Mel White has been the *Vice President of Marketing and Business Development* at **Classic Exhibits Inc.** since 2005. To catch more of Mel's thoughts, and over a hundred articles, check out his [blog archive at the Classic Exhibits website.](#)