

## **What's In Your Plan B?**

### **By Barry Siskind**

When Murphy's Law decides to ply its magic to your trade show strategy, you need a contingency. It's called your Plan B.

Having a back-up in place is always a good idea; so much so that in 2006 movie actor Brad Pitt named his production company Plan B Productions. More recently, the infamous "morning after" birth control pill has been dubbed, "Plan B."

The challenge that exhibitors face is one of timing; everything hinges on a perfect presentation when the show opens. One hour too late and the cost to your company in lost opportunities can be significant. So, savvy exhibit managers include in their show strategy a "Plan B" to lessen the effects of consequences when last minute problems crop up.

The following is a list of nine of the most common items to include in your Plan B.

#### **1. Emergency contacts**

Ask all of your suppliers for contact information for the people, local to the show, who can handle last minute problems. Make sure you can access these resources outside of normal business hours. The official show contractors will have on-site personnel but your Plan B list should include some of your own suppliers such as the display builder, audio visual technicians or entertainment providers.

#### **2. Shipping documentation**

Bring copies of all shipping documents to the show. If your display and/or products don't arrive on time, having the documentation expedites your last-minute tracing of these items.

#### **3. Tool kit**

Every exhibit manager should have a miscellaneous tool kit of supplies which include things you might need to make last-minute repairs and adjustments. The kit includes such things as a screw driver, scissors, duct tape, a cell phone charger, Band-Aids and a bottle of Advil. Purchasing supplies from the show contractor can be costly. Do a bit of research ahead of time to find local stores where you can buy additional last-minute items that were not included in your original tool kit.

#### **4. Travel documentation**

The success of your trade show participation depends on your people being on-site and ready to work. You need to know where they are at all times. Compile an updated list of flight information and hotel reservations for all your staff attending the show.

## **5. Provide all personnel with your contact information**

Should anything go wrong with your personnel or a contractor, being in contact with you is crucial. Let everyone know how you can be reached and check your messages regularly.

## **6. Medical information**

Check with your show facility and hotel and find the emergency numbers for medical assistance. Pass these numbers along to your on-site staff.

## **7. Emergency procedures**

Every facility and hotel has developed an emergency plan which includes contingencies for fire, storm and police matters. Knowing that it's posted on the back of the hotel door is not enough. Ask ahead of time for information on evacuation procedures and other emergencies and pass it along to your staff in advance.

## **8. Hospitality, local transportation, and accommodation alternatives**

Double booking, power failures, faulty plumbing, strikes, the list of what could go wrong in the hotels and restaurants you have booked is endless. What you need is a list of alternatives. A Google search will find many alternatives. Most large cities also have a tourism office that can be helpful when you are developing your list of alternatives.

## **9. Important documents**

Loss of important document for you and your staff can cause major problems. Have each of your personnel send you photo copies of the inside page of: passports, Visa's if necessary, and major credit cards. Keeping these copies in your control puts you in a better position to deal with last minute problems caused by theft or loss.

Ask any seasoned exhibit manager about the importance of a Plan B, and you will convince yourself that taking precautions is a safe bet.

Barry Siskind, President and Founder of [ITMC](#), is a trade show consultant, trainer, speaker, and an internationally recognized expert in trade and consumer shows. Each year, he addresses numerous conferences and association meetings around the globe. Over the past twenty-five years, Barry has traveled throughout the world working with thousands of public and private sector clients in virtually all industry groups. He creates, facilitates and delivers a wide range of services to companies involved in exhibit marketing. Barry is also a best-selling author of trade show business books: *The Successful Exhibitor*, *The Power of Exhibit Marketing*, *Making Contact*, *Bumblebees Can't Fly*, *Eagles Must Soar*, and his latest book *Powerful Exhibit Marketing*.