

THE KEY FOR SUCCESSFUL EXHIBIT GRAPHICS

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

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For a sign or graphic to successfully communicate its message, its purpose needs to be determined. Most graphics and signs will accomplish one of three possible functions:

1. *Attract*
2. *Inform*
3. *Direct*

Signs or graphics designed to *attract* are generally placed high on an exhibit for maximum visibility. These signs are often a bit more “glitzy” on large exhibits to catch the viewer’s attention. To *inform*, signs and graphics need to clarify what it is that you are offering, and each show may require a different message. Be specific to the needs of each show’s audience.

Any sign or graphic used to *direct* needs to assist the viewer to move to the “next step” or location. If there is any confusion as to where to go next, the sign or graphic should be considered unsuccessful.

There is a fourth function that signs or graphics can serve and that is to *entertain*, but most conventional signage or graphics do not offer this function. However, there are types of displays and signs that do entertain and those include (but are not limited to):

1. Fiberoptics
2. Plasma, LCD, and LED Displays
3. Lenticulars
4. Video

Fiberoptics

Fiber optic displays and signs can be used to serve all four functions. Fiberoptics include both motion and lighting and these two elements are the two most effective elements to *attract*. Fiberoptics can be used to *inform* by presenting a tag line or short message in addition to presenting your logo.

An interpretive fiber optic display or sign is defined as one that illustrates a “process” or a motion that *informs* by helping the viewer understand your product or service. The use of artwork incorporated with fiberoptics is common in interpretive displays.

The ability of fiberoptics to show motion can help *direct* the viewer and fiber optic displays are unsurpassed in their ability to *entertain*. When someone is entertained they will watch your message repeatedly, and that will enhance the viewer’s memory retention of your message.

Plasma, LCD, and LED Displays

Plasma, LCD and LED displays offer many of the same qualities as fiberoptics, but they are much more expensive and require a computer or other electronic device to operate. These displays have become very popular and commonplace within exhibits, therefore they no longer provide the same *attraction* value they once did. However, they are excellent for *informing* the viewer. These types of displays are generally not used to *direct* but can be very effective to *entertain*.

Lenticulars

Lenticular signs present multiple images or graphics by using a series of lenses and can be effective to *attract*. Although they are somewhat unique they do not provide the clarity or detail that is often desired in an exhibit to *inform*. They can *entertain* but they generally do not hold a viewer's attention as long as fiberoptics or the other sign and display types.

Video

A wide range of information can be presented with video and the past few years have seen video being used more extensively within exhibits. Flat screens and high resolution projectors, which are often used for rear-lit projections, have made video applications dynamic so all you need is informative video content to capture your targeted audience. Video is becoming quite commonplace.

A word of warning though when using video in your exhibit: do not interrupt a visitor who is intently watching your video! Be ready to answer their questions *when they are ready*, but don't interrupt them. Too often a booth staff member will interrupt the visitor to begin the qualifying process and this will annoy many of your visitors.

If your video content is good and thoroughly presents your message or information, let it play, and when your visitor is finished watching it, then your booth staff can answer their questions and ask the necessary qualifying questions.

The key for any successful sign or graphic used in an exhibit is to accomplish its function and to make it easy for the viewer to qualify themselves within three to eight seconds that what you are offering is something that they need, want or will be of benefit to them. If the graphic or sign is successful then the viewer will most likely address your booth staff for additional information. ■