

# Location, Location, Location

By Gretchen Yoder

Are you the tradeshow planner or coordinator for your company? Are you a part of your company's tradeshow team? What do you look for in a tradeshow floor location that will be perfect for your company's goals? There are many things to consider when you are seeking just the right booth placement for your event. In addition, when you are the tradeshow planner, there are several roles you play: customer service, marketing, sales, accounting, and sometimes "police" or "babysitter," but, perhaps, one of your most important roles is "real estate agent."

While some might say that where you are located on a tradeshow floor makes all the difference in the success of a tradeshow, others will say your display/booth is the draw, and it won't really matter where you are located. Tradeshow organizers charge a premium for end-caps or highly trafficked areas. That must mean that those are the best spots to be located, right? Not necessarily.

There are five key questions to consider when you are acting as "tradeshow realtor:"

**1. What is the flow?** There will likely be a lot of traffic at trade show entrances and exits; however, much of this traffic can also simply become congestion as attendees decide which booths to visit. A better choice would be somewhere that there is high-potential traffic, without the crowding, like around restrooms and food venues.

**2. Do you already have an exhibit, or do you know how you will plan the booth for this space?** What are you going to fill that space with, now that you've agreed to have the space? Working in conjunction with tradeshow experts, like your booth designer, booth provider, exhibit house, etc., you will work to see your ideas come to life and fit in the space. Be certain to understand any restrictions or design challenges your new space may create. The architecture of the venue may have ceiling height differences or columns that you will need to plan around. Also, consider the flow within your space as well. You want your space to be a perfect fit to have attendees fill it, but not feel cavernous when there is no one in your booth (yet).

**3. Where is the competition?** Many tradeshow organizers let you choose your space electronically. You can note where the competitors are located, but, if possible, stay away from them. (Sometimes, this is not an option.) Some say tradeshows are one of the best ways to scope the competition. However, when you have limited time and/or resources to make a major impact on those face-time minutes, ensure that while your customers are waiting for you they are not swayed by the competition (particularly if your rivals have larger or more dynamic booths). Your ultimate goal is to make your booth (including your product/service) stand out from your competition.

**4. How are you scheduling your booth staff?** Do you have that one employee who is fantastic at wining and dining clients, but he is just not a morning person? Do you have another employee who can't seem to smile or invite people into the booth? Consider who you are putting in your booth, where they are "posted," and at what times. Also, make sure you are giving your booth staff time to refresh. Especially if you are short-staffed for a tradeshow, be sure to plan accordingly. Avoid booking rooms for your staff in hotels where the event is not, just to save money. You may keep a few pennies, but you may also lose sales because your staff spent extra time running between "home" and the booth; this leads to increased stress and fatigue. Remember, eight hours on the tradeshow floor is not the same as eight hours in the office.

**5. How are you going to pre-promote your presence?** Invite attendees to come to your booth before the event even happens. There are several different ways you can do this, but the more special you can make each attendee feel, the better. Add your booth number to these invites, and know that creativity will help you stand out from others. I once saw a gorilla handing out bananas, each of which had a specific time and the booth number impressed upon the banana skin. Many people attended the booth "party" at the appointed time. Don't forget to use your website, too. Be certain that your tradeshow events are current and listed well in advance of the show. Include your booth number there, too.

Success at a tradeshow varies greatly, and it is never the singular piece of the location, the great booth look, the wonderful product/service, or even the staff. Rather, it is the concert of all those pieces. Frequently, booth location is one of those pieces that is easily overlooked.

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