Track 3: Show Preparation

Now that you have selected your show and planned for the pre-show activities, it's time to prepare for the show. This section covers packing, shipping, and booth design and setup.

Packing

Packing properly can mean the difference between a successful and disasterous show.

How to pack

The following are tips for properly packing for your trade show.

Packaging

Proper packaging is important. Do not ship your materials without adequate protection. Damage is often the result of improper packaging, which can eliminate or reduce your carrier's liability.

Some packaging guidelines:

- Do not ship hazardous materials.
- Use a sturdy box or container to protect the contents.
- If you reuse a box or container, remove or mark out any old shipping labels.
- Protect the item you are shipping with newspaper, foam padding, shipping "peanuts," bubble wrap or shredded paper. (Tip: bubble wrap is much easier to deal with at the show; peanuts and shredded paper leave your booth carpet a mess!)
- When shipping multiple items, pack cushioning between each item.
- Seal the box or container securely, using tape designed for shipping.
- Make sure crates or pallets are in good condition before shipping.
- If necessary, mark the container with "UP only" arrows.

http://www.exhibitoradvantage.com/ft_handbook.asp

Alternative packaging idea: D Containers

If wooden crates are out of your price range, consider purchasing large, reusable boxes you can assemble on pallets, called D containers. Picture an oversized cardboard box on a large pallet. It takes five pieces to assemble each container: a rectangular wooden pallet, a box bottom, a three-sided panel, a separate side panel for easy loading, and a lid. D containers vary in size from 48-by-39-by-40 inches to 58-by-41-by-45 inches and break down to about 12 inches tall, with the pallet and cardboard panels folded up inside. I can generally use the containers three to four times before I need to cannibalize the undamaged parts and toss out the broken panels. D containers can be purchased from companies selling packaging materials and boxes and cost about $50 to $75 each, depending on the quantity you buy.

If you're going to use D containers, purchase a portable strapping kit so you can secure the containers to pallets. These three-part kits include buckles, half-inch polypropylene strapping, and a knife. Strapping kits with metal banding are also available, but are heavier and harder to cut. A portable strapping kit costs less than $50, and is worth every penny since you can pay more than that on show site just to have one pallet banded by your installation-and-dismantle contractor. Kits weigh less than 15 pounds for 3,000 feet of strapping and 300 buckles, making them easy to ship.

Labeling

Proper labeling identifies your shipments and ensures safe and timely movement. Labels should be placed on both the long and short sides of each carton or box.

Labels should contain the following information:

1. **Name of show**
2. **Name of exhibitor or company name**
3. **Booth number**
4. **c/o (Exhibitor Services Contractor, e.g.** Freeman)
5. **address for delivery (either warehouse or show site)**

GES
Direct Shipment
D
To: MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Natural Products Expo West / Engredea
Booth: 5557,
From: MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
PO BOX 200505
HELENA, MT 59601
United States of America
C/O: GES
1850 S. West St
Anaheim, CA 92802
United States of America
Job Number: 022004726

Shipping labels should be placed on each piece of your shipment. The shipping information must match the bill of lading exactly, and your labels must be legible and complete. Often, the Exhibitor Manual will provide blank shipping label templates for you to use to ensure proper labeling.

For security purposes, when packing your materials, never list the contents on the outside of the crate/box/carton. It is recommended that you number each box and keep a separate list of the contents for each box. Be sure to have these lists with you when you arrive at the Show.

- TIP: Remember to remove any old labels, in order to reduce confusion!

http://www.exhibitoradvantage.com/ft_handbook.asp

Expert tip: Bright Paper and Spray Mount

If you want your black-wrapped pallets to stand out, create your own shipping labels on neon-colored paper. Called "Bright" or "Astrobright," this type of paper is generally available in various reams of 8.5-by-11-inch sheets containing five colors, and is both laser and ink-jet compatible. Use these brightly colored labels to avoid mix-ups on the show floor. For example, if you fail to remove inbound shipping labels from your crates once they arrive at the show, there's a good chance they'll be shipped back to that address instead of the outbound destination. So use one color for inbound labels, and another color for outbound labels. To adhere labels to boxes and crates, use 3M Co.'s Artists' Spray Mount. Both paper and Spray Mount are available at office-supply stores.

Pallets

If a forklift is needed for material handling, make sure your shipment is on a pallet. When possible, heavy, bulky items should be placed on pallets for improved handling. To maximize carton strength, stack cartons on the pallet vertically. You can secure cartons to a pallet with banding, shrink-wrap, stretch-wrap or breakaway adhesive.

Cartons should be stacked squarely on the skid, with no overhang. Box flaps and corrugations should face up. Make the top surface as flat as possible. Your bill of lading should reflect the total number of pieces on the pallet, not just one pallet.

http://www.exhibitoradvantage.com/ft_handbook.asp

Plan ahead to store your pallet within your booth but out of sight. Then, after the show, you won't have to wait for the show labor to bring you a pallet so you can pack up your booth and prepare it for shipping home.

Shrink-wrap

Shrink-wrap is a common and effective method of keeping all pieces of a shipment together. When using shrink-wrap, start at the bottom of the pallet, including the pallet when wrapping, and continue wrapping upward around the load. This will prevent the shipment from shifting off the pallet and damaging the freight.

http://www.exhibitoradvantage.com/ft_handbook.asp

What to pack

The following outlines what you should pack to ship or bring to the show. Remember that everything you bring or ship to the show must fit within your booth, and some of it must be kept out of sight, so pack wisely.

Bring vs. Pack

The venues for most national shows require Union labor for transporting items to and on the show floor. This means that if you want to hand-carry any items onto the show floor, you may move materials that can be carried by hand, by one person, in one trip, without the use of dollies, hand trucks, or other mechanical equipment – limiting what you can bring onto the show floor yourself.

Product

There are three types of product you'll need to ship to the show:

1. **Product for display.** Pack at least two of each of the products you want to display at the show. The packaging should be flawless and the best representation of your product possible. Clearly, but professionally, label them as "display only" in order to prevent a buyer (or looter) from taking home or sampling from your display. If you plan to display product on a table in the front of your booth, consider securing them to your table or within your display, otherwise the product will likely "walk away" from your booth.
   - Note: if you have additional display space outside the show floor (e.g. a New Products Showcase, etc.), be sure to pack enough product for that display, too.
2. **Product for sampling.** Take enough product to provide samples to your goal number of buyers, while also allowing some leeway just in case you have more buyers than planned and also for other booth visitors. There is no magic formula for calculating this amount; however, be mindful that the more you pack, the more you pay in shipping and drayage fees.

3. **Product for buyers to take home.** Most shows have a strict sample policy, allowing buyers only to take home one or two bags of samples, and those samples can only be a few ounces. It can be appropriate for you to send buyers home with product samples, but be careful to qualify the buyer before giving away your product; some show attendees are merely there for looting. Make sure that the sample you send with them follows show regulations and properly promotes your company and product. The take home sample should at least display a label with your company's name and contact information, as well as the product's common name and ingredients. You can also qualify the buyer and offer to ship them a sample after the show, as part of your follow-up.

Display & signs

Below are the display items you'll need to ship to the show. More information on display and signage design is provided in the Booth Design & Setup section.

- Booth signs
- Tabletop signs
- Table drape
- Signs for outside the show floor display space (if applicable)
- Literature holders for each size of literature you plan to bring (e.g. brochure, 5x7, 8x10, etc.) – replace those that are broken or scratched

Literature & Giveaways

Below lists the literature that you need to ship to the show. More information on literature and giveaways is provided in the At the Show section.

- Promotional materials: brochures, fliers, business cards, etc.
- Order forms (Note: at most shows, it's not common to take orders during the show. Most buyers want to make their decisions after the show. However, it doesn't hurt to be prepared!)
- Wholesale pricing sheets
- Giveaways: pens, water bottles, etc.

Supplies

It's better to have it on the show floor and not need it than to need it and not have it, and it's no fun paying too much for supplies sold on the show floor. Below is an arsenal of packing materials, tools, cleaners, and miscellaneous items useful for every show. Before you pack them, however, consider the cost of shipping them vs. buying them in the show's city instead.

Sampling supplies

- Napkins
- Sampling utensils (spoons, toothpicks, forks, etc.)
- Serving dishes and utensils
- Hand sanitizer
- Garbage can and extra bags

Cleaning Supplies

- Instant Carpet Spot Remover
- Glass cleaner
- Paper towels
- Visqueen heavy plastic sheeting: for covering your carpet during load-in and setup
- WD-40: In addition to fixing squeaking hinges, this lubricant can also be used to dissolve the sticky stuff that gets left on exhibit surfaces

Packing Materials and Adhesives

- Bubble Wrap: for packing fragile items
- Stretch Wrap: for securing the boxes on your pallet
- Tear-by-Hand Tape
- Hook and Loop (e.g. Velcro)
- Gaffer Tape: for bundling wires in your booth and taping down cords to carpet
- Double-Sided Adhesive Tape
- transparent adhesive tape (e.g. Scotch tape)

Office Supplies

- Scissors
- Box cutters
- Highlighters
- Pens
- Stapler and staples
- Thumb tacks and push pins
- Binder clips: binds paper but is also handing for hanging signs on table skirts Extension cords
- Power strips
- Spare light bulbs (if your exhibit has light fixtures)

Miscellaneous Supplies

- Display repair kit: screwdriver, hammer, wrench
- First aid kit: pain relievers and antacids
- Breath mints

http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=835&catID=91#.UdM3OthinA0

http://www.trade-show-advisor.com/trade-show-supply.html

Add your own supplies here:

Shipping

Shipping your items to the show requires a detailed process for which you must be organized and know the basics, in order to make sure it's done right.

Get Price Quotes

Start by requesting a price quote from several carriers, including the show's recommended carrier (see the show's Exhibitor Manual for contact). Complete the basic form on the next page and send it to your carrier to get a cost estimate for your freight

http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=1311&catID=93

Know the Basics

When shipping your freight to a trade show, discern answers to the following questions and avoid the costly consequences.

1. **What are you shipping?** Provide your transportation carrier with an accurate piece count of the items being shipped, including dimensions and type of freight (e.g., crates, cases, pallets, cartons). This info allows the carrier to allot the appropriate amount of space in the trailer or plane before it needs to be loaded, and also provides a fairly accurate cost estimate. Also inform the carrier of any special instructions regarding your shipment, like if your crates have to be shipped standing up, if they can't be stacked, or if the crates are on rollers and have to be locked and strapped to the truck walls to keep them from rolling around.
2. **What else do you need?** Confirm any optional special-equipment requirements for loading and unloading your freight. Although these items may be considered "standard equipment" by many specialized trade show exhibit carriers, they may not be available on your truck unless you specifically request them (and are willing to pay additional fees for them). Specialty items include: pallet jacks for moving pallets or crates from the dock into the truck, dollies for moving large or heavy boxes and equipment, stacker bars for stacking and securing freight, ratchet and tie-down straps to prevent freight from moving while in transit, and moving pads for cushioning freight that is not crated or palletized.
3. **What is the value of your shipment?** Notify your carrier if you will purchase additional valuation coverage (generally purchased in increments of $1,000 to supplement the minimal insurance coverage automatically placed by the carrier) in case of loss or damage to your freight while in transit. Valuation is the worth of your shipment to the moving company, and the

valuation charge is the compensation to the carrier for assuming more liability for your items than what is provided in the base transportation charges.

4. **When is your freight being picked up by your driver?** The budgetary quote from your carrier will be based on specific pick-up and delivery dates and times that take into consideration the number of miles to be covered. If your freight isn't ready to hit the road on that pick-up date, you might incur an "aborted pick-up fee," and your freight might need to be expedited. You'll likely have to add another driver or change the mode of shipping from ground to airfreight, both of which are pricier options.

5. **Where is your freight being picked up by your driver?** Does the carrier have the complete addresses and contact information for all the locations where pick up(s) are scheduled (e.g., your exhibit house, corporate office, marketing-collateral fulfillment house, promotions vendor, etc.)? Your transportation carrier can handle multiple locations, but I've seen shipments delayed due to exhibitors not providing the specific hours that freight can be loaded, or failing to include accurate contact information for each individual site. Obviously, delayed pick-ups can mean delayed deliveries.

6. **Where is your freight going?** The quickest way to not get your shipment to a show is to provide inaccurate or incomplete shipping information. But there's more to getting your freight from Point A to Point B than filling out a shipping label and affixing it to a box. Specifically, you need to tell your transportation carrier whether the shipment needs to go to the trade show's advance warehouse, or direct to the show site. If you don't make the distinction, you might be sitting in your booth space waiting for your freight to arrive from the advance warehouse, while it's still en route direct to the show and set to arrive the following day. Not only will you not have your freight, but your setup costs will escalate as the installation laborers twiddle their thumbs until it arrives. What's more, the additional day it takes the freight to travel direct to show site can result in late-delivery penalties if you miss your on-site targeted delivery deadline.

7. **What is the delivery window?** Provide the earliest and latest dates for when freight is accepted at the advance warehouse or at the show, especially if the show's general services contractor (GSC) has designated a targeted date and time. You can find dates for both advance warehouse and direct-to-site deliveries in the material-handling section of your exhibitor services manual. Also include the times at which the driver can check in at the marshaling yard with your freight. Failing to provide this info to your transportation carrier is like playing Russian roulette with your setup schedule - there's no telling when you'll get your goods.

8. **What is the full name of the trade show venue?** There can be confusion, especially in major cities, if a specific street address or hall designation isn't provided. I've witnessed freight delivered to the wrong convention center in cities with multiple exhibition facilities, and to the wrong Marriott or Hilton since there can be multiple chain hotels in metropolitan areas. Unless you want your carrier to guess which venue is the correct destination, provide the full venue name and street address.

9. **What is your full exhibitor name and booth number?** Ensure your bill of lading and shipping labels match the way your name appears in the show's exhibitor list and directory. The ability of the labor crew on the docks to deliver freight to the correct place on the show floor is in direct relation to its ability to compare what's on the labels to what's listed in the directory and on the floor plan. Include the full name of the show as opposed to its acronym. There are so many shows, and several have similar acronyms. Don't tempt fate - spell out the show name, just to be sure, on all of your shipping paperwork and labels.

10. **Which GSC is running the docks?** Since the show's GSC manages the advance warehouse, marshaling yard, and shipping docks, it's a good idea to acknowledge it on the inbound bill of lading and address labels. I like to include a "care of" indicator on my labels, followed by the name of the GSC, such as Freeman, Global Experience Specialists Inc., etc. Some convention centers are so large that they can house multiple shows at the same time. By adding the name of the GSC to your shipping documents, a driver who inadvertently shows up at the wrong dock can more easily be identified - and redirected - to the correct area.

11. **Where is the marshaling yard?** To help your driver locate the show's marshaling yard, include a map and/or address of the site (this information is typically included in your exhibitor kit). Marshaling yards are generally in the same empty lots near the convention center regardless of the trade show, but depending on the experience of the driver and the accurateness of the GSC's signage, they can be hard to find. In fact, I've had drivers miss their targeted check-in times when there wasn't a physical address for them to punch into their GPS - and that was an expensive mistake as they drove around in circles trying to locate their check-in point.

12. **What is the final destination of your freight?** Is your shipment on a one-way trip? Or have you scheduled a round-trip shipment to the show and back to the freight's origin? I'm amazed at how many exhibitors don't book their freight round-trip with the same transportation carrier. A ridiculous amount of freight gets forced back to the GSC at the end of every show because exhibitors don't arrange for a carrier to come pick it up. So plan ahead and make sure your freight gets home as quickly, safely, and inexpensively as possible by simply ensuring you book a round-trip shipment.

http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=847&catID=91#.UdM0ydhinA1

REQUEST FOR SHIPPING QUOTE

Requestor Name:	Show Name:
Email:	Show Date:
Phone: FAX:	Show Times:
Exhibit House:	Exhibit House Contact:
Exhibit House Phone:	I & D Contact:
Service Level: Overnight Air - Next Day Air - 2nd Day - 3-5 Day Economy - Van Line - Van Line w/Liftgate - Common Carrier	

ORIGIN INFORMATION	Pick-Up Date:
Contact:	Pick-Up Time:
Phone #:	Contact Email:
Exhibitor:	
Address:	
City, State, Zip:	
Booth #:	

DESTINATION INFORMATION	Arrival Time at Marshaling Yard:
Contact:	Targeted Inbound Date/Time At Hall:
Phone #:	Contact Email:
Exhibitor:	
Address:	
City, State, Zip:	
Booth #:	

SHIPMENT DESCRIPTION

QUANTITY	ITEM DESCRIPTION	PACKAGING	SERIAL #	L" W" H"	WEIGHT
Total					

REMARKS

* Need Certified Weight Slip at Marshaling Yard
* Request EXPERIENCED trade show driver
* Do NOT break down pallets
* Please note targeted inbound
* Please note multiple pick-ups/deliveries
* Please note special equipment required: lift gate truck, stacking bars, moving pads, J-bar, pallet jack, etc.

ESTIMATED COSTS

Miles ____x # LBS ____= Full Tariff $ ____- Discount ____+ Fuel Surcharge ____+ Ins. Surcharge $_____= Est. Cost: $_____
Additional Transit Insurance (Valuation) required: Yes/No (circle one) Amount Required: $_____ Cost: $_____

Form Courtesy of David E. Lewis, Trade Show Transportation, 760.599.4404, FAX 760.599.0141
www.TradeShowTransportation.com Representing Tantara Transportation Group, Nations Express and Airways Freight

Term	Acronym	Definition
Assessorial (or Accessorial) Charge		Services in addition to the transportation of goods, such as stopping in transit to complete loading or to partially unload or storage.
Bill-To Dispute		Shipment is being challenged by whoever is noted on the Bill of Lading as being the one who is to pay the freight charges.
Bill of Lading	BOL	A commercial shipping document which serves as an itemized list of goods contained in the shipment, a receipt from the carrier, and the contract for carriage and document of title.
Carrier		A person engaged in the transportation of passengers or property by land or water, as a common, contract, or private carrier, or civil aircraft.
Collect		An indication on a Bill Of Lading to instruct the carrier to bill the consignee for shipping charges. Charges collected at designation are called destination or collect freight bills.
Consignee		The person or organization to whom freight is shipped.
Freight Bill	FB	Document of common carrier shipment. Gives description of the freight, amount of charges, taxes and whether prepaid or collect. Also known as a 'waybill'.
Freight Broker		A non-asset based company which sells and manages freight transportation services on behalf of their clients.
Freight Forwarder		An independent business which handles shipments on a fee basis paid by the exporter. The freight forwarder makes the actual arrangements, expedites the shipment, takes care of all documentation, cargo insurance, makes the necessary communications, and advises the shipper on all requirements of marking and labeling.

Term	Acronym	Definition
Hundred Weight	CWT	A statement of weight meaning 100 pounds.
Less-than-Truckload	LTL	A quantity of freight less than that required to fill a truck. When used in conjunction with freight, less than the quantity necessary for the application of truckload rate.
Line Haul Charges		The primary charges assessed by a Carrier for the movement of freight. Generally does not include accessorial charges.
Loss or Damage Claim	L&D	A claim submitted for either loss or damage.
Nat'l. Motor Freight Classification	NMFC	A publication for motor carriers containing rules, descriptions, and ratings on all commodities moving in commerce.
Per Hundred Weight	CWT	Per each unit of weight measurement equal to exactly 100 pounds.
PRO (Progressive Rotating Order)		A number issued to each shipment of freight by the carrier and used for computer tracking of the shipment to its destination.
Proof of Delivery	POD	The copy of the freight bill signed by receiver at time of delivery.
Shipper		Company or individual who initiates the transport of goods.
Tariff		A published volume of rate schedules and general terms and conditions under which product or service will be supplied.
Truckload	TL	Quantity of freight required to fill a truck. When used in conjunction with freight, necessary to qualify shipment for a truckload rate.
Weight and Research Certificate	W&R	A document issued by the carrier to certify the weight of a shipment to reflect the actual weight, versus the weight indicated on the Bill of Lading.

http://goo.gl/GMvgNT

Bill of Lading

All shipments must have a bill of lading or delivery slip indicating the number of pieces, type of merchandise and weight. This must arrive prior to the deadline listed in the Shipping section of the Exhibitor Services Manual. If you are unable to meet that deadline, you may ship directly to the show site; your freight can still be received after the deadline date, but you will incur additional charges. A template is available here:

http://www.shippersdocs.com/bill_of_lading/lading.htm.

Smith Farm, LLC
2471 Farmville Rd Prosperity, KY 00021
875-462-1234 office
875-222-1234 cell phone, Ralph
875-222-1233 cell phone, Sam

Bill of Lading # 703

Buyer: (Name) John Brown
Address XYZ co. Louisville
Phone 502-222-1234
Shipping Date 8-1-09
Delivery Time before 10 A.M.
Delivery Date 8-2-09
Ship to (Name): XYZ Store #6
Address 72 Home Court
Louisville, KY 40241
Phone 1-606-777-1234
P.O. # 7726

Item / ID #	Unit	Price per Unit	Total per Item
½ bu. Squash	150 bu		
Slicer Cucumber	50 bu		
Green Bell Pepper	100 bu		
		Total	

Trucking Co. Rapid Trucking co.
Trailer Tag # KY 1787
Produce temperature 38°F
Temperature to be maintained at 38°F
Drivers Signature J. Miller
Timeout: 4 PM

Receiver (Company)
Signature
Time & Date

Certified Weight Tickets

It is in your best interest to ensure that your shipments have certified weight tickets, which are usually procured from your freight company. That way, you know exactly how much your material-handling fees should be without having to rely on the contractor. Certified weight tickets must accompany all shipments.

Learn Shipping Carrier Options

There are several shipping carrier options to consider. Pick your carrier based on its fit with your needs.

Common Carriers

As its name suggests, a common carrier is typically a ground-transportation provider that moves goods for the general public as opposed to a contract carrier that moves goods under contract for a specific customer. Since the service is used by the general public, the term implies that your shipment is mixed with other general-public shipments.

Many common carriers have trade show divisions that specialize in exhibit transportation.

Benefits

- A common carrier is one of the least expensive ground-transport options available.
- This method is well suited for less-than-truckload (LTL) shipments of a few crates, pallets, and/or boxes.

Concerns

- Given the multiple consolidation points en route to a destination, common carriers are more likely to run into delays than van lines, which make fewer (if any) stops en route. Plus, shipping times are often longer than other methods, so common carriers are not well suited to any kind of rush delivery.
- Frequent loading and unloading - not to mention the fact that most shipments are floor loaded and not attached to trailer walls - increases the risk of damage.

Suggestions

- Many common-carrier trucks are equipped with powered lift gates for loading and unloading shipments. However, if your shipment requires a lift gate, always put the request in writing prior to shipment, and know that some carriers may charge extra for it.
- Decrease the risk of damage by using durable crates and/or well-secured pallets that can be easily moved via forklifts and pallet jacks.

Van Lines

Historically used to move household furnishings, van lines generally pick up a full truckload (FTL) shipment at one location and deliver it directly to its destination. In some circumstances, however, a van line will put more than one shipment into the same trailer headed to a single show destination. Some carriers require that any partial shipment must take up at least 12 feet of the trailer, but others will allow you to ship as little as one pallet.

Shipping costs are based on the linear feet used in the trailer, the miles traveled, and the fuel used. Weight isn't typically a factor in pricing unless your shipment is remarkably heavy.

Aside from small-package carriers such as FedEx and UPS, van lines offer the fastest service. Add-on fees typically include blanket-wrapping charges, extra-driver fees, wait time, etc. You'll also pay extra for fragile freight and blanket-wrapped or mixed shipments (a mix of blanket-wrapped items and crates/pallets).

Benefits

- Given the straps, pads, bars, blankets, and air-ride suspensions, and the fact that the same trailer is used to move goods from the shipping dock to the receiving dock (rather than the carrier loading and unloading your shipment several times en route), risk of damage is extremely low compared to other shipping methods.
- Since the truck usually moves directly from the shipping dock to its final destination, there are fewer chances of delays along the way. While accidents and inclement weather happen, shorter transit times and less loading and unloading make for fast, safe shipping.

Concerns

- The decreased risk of damage, expediency, and point-to-point transport comes at a price. Van lines are often the most expensive shipping method, aside from expedited airfreight.
- Van lines are best suited for FTL shippers, and can be quite costly for LTL shipments. For example, if you have a fragile LTL shipment that can't withstand common-carrier handling, you'll likely pay for space you don't even use inside the trailer just to obtain fragile-handling benefits.

Suggestions

- Trade show transportation is highly competitive in the van-line industry. So shop around, compare prices, and negotiate discounts whenever possible.

Airfreight

If you need speed and careful handling but you don't have a full truckload of goods, you'll probably want to consider airfreight for your shipment. Airfreight works much the same way as passenger air travel, as goods are typically moved on a plane along with other shipments directly from one city to another. Often, these goods are transported to and from the airport via ground carrier, but the majority of the distance your shipment travels is usually via plane.

Costs are usually calculated using actual or dimensional weight, and generally, the faster you want your shipment delivered, the more you'll pay. Most forwarders offer same day, next day, second day, third day, and three-to-five-day deferred services. You can also specify morning service or a time-specific service with these options.

Benefits

- Shipping via airfreight offers speedy delivery.
- Compared to a road trip on a common carrier, an airfreight shipment doesn't suffer as much jostling en route.

Concerns

- When shipping via air, however, Transportation Security Administration rules do apply. Check with your provider to ensure your commodity is something that can fly on a passenger aircraft.
- Since airfreight costs are based on weight (either actual or dimensional weight, whichever is greater), always run the numbers to determine if airfreight is right for you. Depending on the actual versus dimensional weight, large but lightweight packages can actually cost considerably more than smaller, heavier ones.

Suggestions

- Despite the fact that airfreight shipments experience less loading and unloading than common carriers - which means there's less risk of damage while en route - baggage handling and airfreight handling are frighteningly similar. Items are sometimes thrown around like sacks of potatoes. So make sure your shipment is carefully packed to minimize damage.

- Look for airfreight providers, common carriers, and van lines that provide free storage options. Lynden Expo Air, for example, provides 30 days of free storage at both inbound and outbound cities, Kolb says. Such a service can lower storage fees at your exhibit house, and in the case of consecutive same-city shows, it may completely eliminate one trip back to your exhibit house.

Small-Package Carriers

Almost everyone on the planet is fairly knowledgeable about small-package carriers such as FedEx, UPS, and DHL. And for the most part, these companies are the perfect solution for small shipments (those less than 150 pounds) that require speedy delivery. However, these small-package carriers are far from ideal for many exhibit shipments, particularly for those headed to the trade show floor.

Small-package carriers accept myriad packing options as long as the shipment is reasonably protected. Pricing is based on the distance traveled, dimensions, and weight, and delivery times include: priority overnight (next business morning), standard overnight (next business afternoon), first overnight (earliest next business morning), second business day, and third business day.

Benefits

- Small-package carriers are reliable, and exhibit managers can easily track shipments using a simple tracking number.
- Plus, this method is commonplace, so there's little or no learning curve to use the service, and transportation brokers or forwarders need not be involved.

Concerns

- Drayage costs associated with multiple small-package deliveries can quickly and easily bust your budget. It can also take hours for your packages to reach your exhibit, and separate pieces will likely arrive at different times.
- Your small package can easily get lost on the show dock.

Suggestions

- Rather than shipping small packages to the convention center, ship them to your hotel. While you'll likely incur a fee for package delivery from the hotel, it'll be far less than the drayage fees you might incur by shipping them directly to the show floor.

http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=716&catID=34#.UdNMP9hinA0

Decide: Advance or Direct?

You have the choice to ship your exhibit materials (booth, etc.) in advance to the show warehouse or directly to the show. The right choice depends on your needs.

Shipping in Advance to the Show Warehouse

Pros

- You can ship up to 30 days in advance of the show, in order to make sure it arrives on time.
- You can verify receipt of your materials well in advance of the exhibition, without worrying about lost or misdirected shipments.
- You won't have to deal with stand-by charges from your motor freight carrier while your direct shipment waits in line to be unloaded at the Convention Center.
- You can be assured that your materials will be in your booth space when you arrive to begin the installation process.

Cons

- You will be charged warehouse storage fees, as well as additional handling fees.
- You can't make any last-minute changes to your booth or materials.

Shipping Directly to the Show

Pros

- Saves you the fees that the show charges for warehouse storage as well as the additional handling fees.
- Your shipment can arrive later. This is important if you are shipping exhibits from show to show with no warehousing in between.
- Less handling, so the risk of damage in reduced.

Cons

- If your freight is lost or damaged, you won't have any time to find it or replace anything.
- Your carrier must meet target delivery times.
- There could be waiting time for trucks. Some trucking companies charge for waiting time. What is most important to you, waiting time or set up time?

Get Insurance

Have you ever stopped to consider what might happen to your business if the unthinkable occurred? For example, what if the truck carrying your exhibit was in an accident on the way to the show? Or the trailer containing all of your monitors and computer equipment was hijacked in a truck-stop parking lot and never recovered? And what would you do if a gust of wind came in the freight doors of the convention center and blew over your exhibit, knocking it to smithereens?

What follows is an overview of the basic types of coverage, followed by tips on how to evaluate your options and choose the appropriate plan for your situation.

Transportation Coverage

If you insure your exhibit property through your transportation carrier, the coverage is not technically insurance, as such companies are not licensed to sell insurance. It only covers your exhibit properties and equipment during transit to and from the show, not while your exhibit is on the show floor.

There are two types of coverage for your exhibit during transit:

1. **Released value or limited liability.** Limited-liability coverage is included in your basic transportation charge and covers your shipment at a minimal amount, about $0.30 to $0.60 per pound, per article. It covers the shipment only while in transit. If you go this route, ask your transportation carrier how much it would reimburse you if there were to be a claim on your shipment.
2. **Additional valuation or trip transit coverage.** This type of coverage is sold by the carrier in increments of $1,000 and covers the freight only while in transit.

Door-to-Door Coverage

Sometimes called all-risk insurance, door-to-door coverage is often sold as a rider on your corporate insurance policy, as an add-on by your carrier through an insurance company, or through an insurance broker that specializes in exhibit and trade show coverage. All-risk insurance covers the shipment from the time it is loaded on the truck before the show until it is unloaded after the show, including all the time on the show floor.

You might be asking, "Why doesn't everyone take out an all-risk insurance policy?" Well, it can be difficult to obtain. A few years ago, a client of mine signed up for all-risk insurance through the show's GSC, but as we got closer to the time of the show, the GSC informed us it was no longer available. In another case, my client's risk-management department told me it was unable to insure thousands of dollars worth of computers on the show floor because of the GSC's disclaimer that it is not responsible for loss, damage, or theft beyond the minimal payments quoted in the exhibitor kit.

While difficult to obtain, it isn't impossible to purchase an all-risk policy. Talk to your company's risk manager, who can ask your corporate insurance broker for a list of agencies that offer such policies in your state.

Insurance Evaluation

After you've determined what kind of coverage you need, evaluate whether or not that amount of coverage is enough. How much would you have to pay if your exhibit components were damaged or lost? Consider the replacement cost of your exhibit, not its depreciated value. Could you replace it for what it originally cost to produce? If you rent exhibit properties, does your exhibit house require insurance coverage?

In addition to your exhibit property, make sure the equipment and products you ship are covered. What if some of your equipment is on loan from business partners, but is under your care and control when it's damaged?

Check for exceptions to coverage and investigate factors that affect it. Coverage may change based on the value of your exhibit property, where the loss occurred (in storage, in transit, or while at the show), who owns the property being claimed, if you have the paperwork to back up the replacement or depreciated value of the property, and if the loss was caused by a number of uncontrollable factors (aka "force majeure"), such as a natural disaster. Finally, determine how difficult it will be to file a claim. Does filing a claim require a police report, or will the report from show security be sufficient?

Regardless of the type of coverage you acquire, most policies will have a deductible. The $10,000 question is who would pay that deductible? Does your company have an internal fund for this, or will meeting the deductible come out of your exhibit budget? If it has to come out of your budget, you may want to purchase a separate policy to cover the deductible.

http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=862&catID=91#.UdL8D9hinA0

Understand Material Handling

Material handling, also called drayage, can be confusing. Material handling includes unloading your exhibit materials (freight) from your designated carrier or company truck, storage at the show contractor's warehouse(for up to 30 days before the show), delivery to your booth, moving empty containers to and from storage and removing material from your booth for reloading onto your designated carrier after the event. Material handling does not include the cost of transporting your exhibit material to and from the show.

For a tutorial on material handling and cost-reduction strategies:

http://www.freemanco.com/MatHand/

Estimating Material Handling Charges

Your charges are based on the weight of your shipments, not on the distance between your booth and the dock. Since each shipment received is considered separately, you need your shipment's weight before you can calculate the charges. The shipment rate will be rounded to the next 100 pounds. Each 100 pounds is considered one "cwt" (100-weight). For an interactive estimation tool, visit

http://www.shopforexhibits.com/content/trade-show-material-handling-calculator

To calculate your charges manually, go to the material-handling order form in your Exhibitor Services Manual and specify whether the shipment will arrive at the warehouse or be sent directly to the show site. Rates are usually different for each. The calculation should be figured as follows:

Description	Weight CWT	Price per CWT	Estimated Total Cost
	÷ 100 =		
Surcharges	÷ 100 =		
		8.1% Tax	N/A
		Total	

Next, select the category that best describes your shipment. There are three categories of freight:

1. **CRATED: material that is on a skid or is in any type of shipping container that can be unloaded at the dock with a forklift.** In this case, no additional handling is required. Whenever possible, choose to ship crated freight, as it is the least expensive rate.
2. **UNCRATED, PAD-WRAPPED OR LOOSE SHIPMENTS: material that is shipped loose or pad-wrapped and/or unskidded; single-unit shipments (e.g.,** machinery that cannot be moved with a forklift as it does not have proper lifting bars or hooks). This type of shipment requires special handling.
3. **SPECIAL HANDLING: material delivered by the carrier in such a manner that it requires additional handling.** This can include ground unloading (vehicles that are not dock height, preventing the use of loading docks, such as U-Hauls, flat bed trailers, double drop trailers, company vehicles with trailers that are not dock level, etc.), stacked units of freight, unloading in a constricted space, designated-piece unloading (i.e., individual cartons or loads mixed with pad-wrapped material), loads failing to maintain shipping integrity, carpet- and/or pad-only shipments and shipments that require additional time, equipment or labor to unload. Federal Express and UPS are included in the special-handling category due to their delivery procedures.

If material is delivered to your booth during the overtime period stated in your shows Exhibitor Manual, you will need to factor in the overtime charges. This includes both warehouse and show-site shipments. If the shipment is accepted at the warehouse or at show site after the deadline, you will need to calculate a late-delivery fee.

http://www.exhibitoradvantage.com/ft_handbook.asp

Hand-Carrying Materials

Can I carry my exhibit materials into the convention center to my booth? Yes. An exhibitor may "hand carry" material through the door, provided they do not use material handling equipment to assist them. When exhibitors choose to "hand carry" material, they may not be permitted access to the loading dock / freight door areas. If your materials are large enough to require a hand truck or "dolly", you must follow the shipping instructions outlined for private vehicles.

http://sc12manual.heiexhibitors.com/content/first-time-exhibitors-faqs-1

Empty Containers

Labeled, empty containers will be picked up from the booth periodically and stored in a non-accessible storage area during the show. You can pick up "Empty" labels at the Exhibitor Service Center to put on your containers. At the close of the show, labeled, empty containers will be returned to booths in random order. Depending on the size of the show, this process may take several hours – therefore, try to plan your booth layout such that empty containers can be used in the booth or kept under tables (i.e. out of sight and not inhibiting the look or flow of your booth).

http://www.exhibitoradvantage.com/ft_handbook.asp

Shipping Back Home

Before you get to the show, have a plan in place for shipping your exhibit materials home. You can choose to use the General Services Contractor of the show for shipping home, or you can work with a private company to get it home. Be sure that your choice is indicated on the Bill of Lading.

Material Handling Agreement

Each shipment must have a completed Material Handling Agreement in order for materials to be removed from the booth and loaded onto your designated carrier or company truck after the close of the show. All pieces must be labeled individually. To receive the shipping form and labels, you may complete the Outbound Shipping Form or submit the online request in advance, or you may contact the Exhibitor Service Center at on-site for your shipping documents. The Material Handling Agreement and shipping labels will be processed and available prior to show closing.

FREEMAN
13101 Almeda Rd.
Houston, Texas 77045
Ph: 713-433-2400 • Fax: 713-433-9441
FreemanHouston45@freemanco.com

OUTBOUND MATERIAL HANDLING AND SHIPPING LABELS

NAME OF SHOW: _____
COMPANY NAME: _____ BOOTH #: _____
CONTACT NAME: _____ PHONE #: _____
E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____
For Assistance, please call 713-433-2400 to speak with one of our experts.

For fast, easy ordering, go to www.myfreemanonline.com

EVERY OUTBOUND SHIPMENT WILL REQUIRE A MATERIAL HANDLING AGREEMENT AND LABELS. WE WOULD BE HAPPY TO PREPARE THESE FOR YOU IN ADVANCE AND WILL DELIVER THEM TO YOUR BOOTH AT SHOW SITE TO REVIEW AND SIGN. TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS SERVICE, PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS FORM.

SHIPPING INFORMATION

FROM: SHIPPER/EXHIBITOR NAME: _____
BILLING ADDRESS: _____
CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____
SHIP TO: COMPANY NAME: _____
DELIVERY ADDRESS: _____
CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____
PHONE#: _____ ATTN: _____
SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS: _____

METHOD OF SHIPMENT

PLEASE CHECK DESIRED METHOD OF SHIPMENT BELOW

FREEMAN EXHIBIT TRANSPORTATION
☐ 1 Day: Delivery next business day
☐ 2 Day: Delivery by 5:00 P.M. second business day
☐ Expedited
☐ Deferred: Delivery within 3-4 business days
☐ Standard Ground
☐ Specialized: Pad wrapped, uncrated, or truckload

☐ OTHER COMMON CARRIER _____
☐ OTHER VAN LINE _____
☐ OTHER AIR FREIGHT _____
☐ Next Day ☐ Second Day ☐ Deferred
CARRIER PHONE # _____

Once your shipment is packed and ready to be picked up, please return the Material Handling Agreement to the Exhibitor Services Center.

Verify the piece count, weight and that a signature is on the Material Handling Agreement prior to shipping out.

SHIPMENTS WITHOUT PAPERWORK TURNED IN WILL BE RETURNED TO OUR WAREHOUSE AT EXHIBITOR'S EXPENSE.

Freeman will make arrangements for all Freeman Exhibit Transportation shipments. Arrangements for pick-up by other carriers is the responsibility of the exhibitor. During exhibitor move-out, when time permits, Freeman will attempt a courtesy phone call to your carrier to confirm the scheduled pick-up.

DESIRED NUMBER OF LABELS: _____

FREEMAN outbound shipping

After materials are packed, labeled and ready to be shipped, the completed Material Handling Agreement must be turned in at the Exhibitor Service Center and you need to contact your designated carrier or company driver with pickup information. If your Material Handling Agreement is not turned in, your carrier is not allowed to pick up your freight. Please note you can use your own designated carrier or company driver or for your convenience, recommended carriers will be on-site to handle outbound transportation.

http://www.exhibitoradvantage.com/ft_handbook.asp

Forced Freight

The GSC can force your freight if your transportation carrier shows up late for pickup at the end of the show, or if the person dismantling your booth does not turn in a completed material-handling form. This means that your freight will be held in a warehouse or sent back to you via the GSC's preferred carrier - at non-discounted rates.

If this happens to you:

1. **Call the GSC as soon as you find out your freight has been forced.** Do not settle for talking with the exhibitor-support-center reps at the GSC's toll-free number. Ask to talk to the freight supervisor, explain your dilemma, and ask for immediate resolution.
2. **Get a written statement from your carrier's driver(s) who were turned away, with as much detail as possible regarding what he or she was told about your shipment's availability for pickup.** Contest any charges from your GSC that seem unfair, especially after getting your carrier's statements. http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=373&catID=91#.UdM05thinA0

Booth Design & Setup

This section is designed to help first time trade show exhibitors to navigate the complicated world of booth design.

Buy vs. rent?

Whatever the reason, exhibit furniture is often a necessity, and it likely needs to exist in some form at your next trade show. But before you purchase custom pieces, bone up on the types of rentals available and the benefits associated with each. You might find that renting your in-booth furnishings makes a lot more fiscal and logistical sense in the long run.

Buying is a smart move if you find that you need very specific designs, or various colors. It also is great if you are looking to use these materials several times in future exhibits and expos, but you have to be aware of breaking down at the end of the show and storage.

Renting can be a more affordable move if you are looking for a one-time use, something less expensive that you don't want to invest in, or a design you might not follow through with in your next trade show experience. You also do not need to think about storage of your trade show exhibit when renting.

If you exhibit fewer than three times a year, consider renting a custom exhibit instead of buying one. Renting from the official show contractor will save you the trouble of planning, budgeting and providing booth shipping, drayage, carpet, installation and dismantling labor, storage and refurbishment. There's no way to avoid all fees, but you can save up to 33% of your budget by renting.

Types of exhibits

Whether you decide to have a custom exhibit produced, or adapt a used or rental unit, the type of trade show display you need will be based on the nature of shows you attend and what you want to accomplish at each one.

Here are some standard types of exhibition booths and displays.

- Exhibit Systems: Most large shows offer for rent some exhibit system options, in which they provide the walls, backdrop, shelving, tables, lighting, and carpet. These can be simple and relatively inexpensive, or elaborate and very expensive. For first timers, this is a quick, easy solution for your exhibit. However, it does tend to look generic, so plan for bringing customized graphics for the backwall and provide interesting product displays.

- Pop-up Displays: Feature a light-weight folding frame covered with magnetic-backed fabric, vinyl, or plastic panels. Pop-up displays create curved or angled walls for your exhibit area.

- Panel Displays: Consist of fabric-covered rectangular sections that are connected to make a wall. They can be readily adapted to different booth sizes and configurations.

- Table-Top Displays: Offer a less-expensive exhibiting option for smaller events and feature a lightweight display that sits on top of a table. These displays usually have three panels with velcro-attached graphics and headlines that can be easily changed and updated.

- Pull-up Stands or retractable banner stands: Provides a lightweight, easy method to accent your booth. These banner stands function like a window shade in reverse and can be placed together or in different booth locations based on your design needs.

http://www.trade-show-advisor.com/trade-show-exhibit-display.html

Video: Retractable Banner Stand

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsg2JjzsHBo

Lightweight, exhibit-friendly materials

The following are seven lightweight materials that can be used to decrease the heft of your exhibit. Surely, not every one is a perfect match for your brand or booth objectives. But by trading traditional heavyweights for these featherweight options, you can lighten your load and plump up your budget. Note: some of these ideas are "out there," especially for first time exhibitors. However, these examples are meant to get you thinking about alternatives, before you blow your budget on more traditional, expensive, and heavy booth systems.

1. **Tensioned Fabric.** Given the popularity of fabric exhibit structures, they border on "traditional" exhibitry these days. But the versatility and capabilities of fabric make it an ideal solution. In addition to being lightweight and easy to pack, ship, and install, tensioned-fabric structures (such as those from Moss Inc., Fabric Images Inc., Transformit Inc., TenFab Design LLC, and many others) provide the perfect canvas for bold graphics and lighting. The flexibility in design options also means you can create sculptural, attention-getting exhibits that stand out on the show floor at a reasonable cost. If a more traditional look is desired, you can use a frame and fabric system that gives the appearance of a hard wall. The resulting designs often have the look and feel of traditional exhibit systems but weigh far less and have the added benefit of being adaptable to many configurations.

2. **Interlocking Cardboard.** Mention the term "cardboard architecture," and many people conjure images of Skid Row. But architects and designers have been developing cardboard- and paper-based architectural structures for years. In fact, Charles and Ray Eames created a paper-based construction system with their interlocking cards. The exhibit industry has its own Eames-esque systems comprising interlocking cardboard or substrate structures that can be customized with your graphics and organized into everything from back walls to inventive artwork. The Nomad Screen System from Mio Co. LLC is a prime example. Comprising recycled, double-wall cardboard, this modular system can form freestanding partitions, or even table bases and other structural components. Shipped flat, the customizable sheets require no tools for assembly. Along these same lines, design firm Kuhlmann Leavitt Inc. offers a product called Stax Modular (http://www.staxmodular.com/). Using the same interlocking, card-stacking concept, the lightweight system features panels made of a variety of sustainable substrates, so you can pick and choose what works best for your application.

3. **Traditional Cardboard.** You can implement "raw" cardboard into your exhibit without purchasing one of the aforementioned interlocking systems. Granted, you'll need to get creative, but building an entire booth or even a few components out of cardboard is definitely doable (see image). In fact, if you just Google "corrugated cardboard structure images," you'll find everything from chairs and partitions to reception desks and conference tables made entirely out of cardboard. Again, your designers will need a bit of engineering knowledge to turn a piece of cardboard into an exhibit element. But cardboard can often be covered with plastic laminates, printed vinyl, or even painted.

4. **Honeycomb and Corrugated Core.** One step up from traditional cardboard are honeycomb panels and products employing a corrugated core. Honeycomb panels (picture a piece of cardboard with honeycomb-shaped cutouts that's sandwiched between two pieces of cardboard) are widespread in the packing industry. But since these panels are easy to cut to form on a computer numerical control (CNC) machine, and they're light compared to wood or aluminum-frame structures, they're a viable substitute for traditional exhibit materials. They, too, can be covered with various materials to give them a more finished feel. Myriad honeycomb products are available, but two options to get your wheels turning are Sing Core from Sing Square Log Homes and Tripanel from Tricel Corp. PlyCorr, which is sold through PlyVeneer Products, uses the same sandwiching technique as honeycomb products, but it has a corrugated core that can be drilled or cut with conventional woodworking tools.

5. **High-Density Foam.** Various suppliers offer foam-based materials that can be used to create exhibit components, but one example is PlyVeneer Products, which sells PlyFoam (http://www.plyveneer.com/plyfoam.html). This strong, lightweight panel comprises expanded Polystyrene foam sandwiched between two paper or cardboard sheets. However, at least one exhibit-industry company is testing foam's capabilities as well: Freeman. It's using high-density 2-pound foam as the core for wall panels, which are sandwiched between plastic laminate or other surfacing materials.

6. **Inflatable Structures.** Inflatables are another lightweight option for structures and furniture. And with the designs available today, your exhibit doesn't have to look like a bounce house gone bad. Cort Event Furnishings offers the Blofield Air Design line of inflatable chairs and couches. Meanwhile, Ibebi Design offers a wide range of inflatables, ranging from conference-room structures and reception desks to dramatic freestanding arches.

Keep in mind each of the aforementioned materials needs to meet city, state, and venue standards for fire safety, which means you may need to add fire-retardant or flame-proof treatments to make them trade show ready. Nevertheless, each option can help you decrease your overall exhibit weight, and thus your exhibiting costs. What's more, these atypical materials can often set your exhibit apart from the competition, turning a cost-cutting ploy into an attention-getting lure.

http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=1268&catID=71#.UdMrW9hinA0

Elements of a Trade Show Booth

Your booth execution is so important for a number of reasons. There will be a lot of people that have never heard of you before that will be wandering by. If your booth is nice and inviting, you have a greater chance of getting more of those passersby to walk into your booth and experience your product for the first time. You need the booth to be an expression of your brand so that people can get an idea of you and your product just by glancing at it. You also want to present yourself as a viable, serious company that another company wants to work with. You need to convey that you are serious about your company and its growth and that you can deliver.

Even the most willing buyers won't step foot inside your space unless: a) they can see enough to determine what you're offering and that it's of value to them, and/or b) your exhibit contains a hint of something exciting inside that they simply can't resist. So before you fiddle with your overall exhibit design, make sure your exhibit communicates who your company is and what it's offering.

Tone & Colors

When you are thinking about your booth before you even start designing, you need to consider the tone you will be setting. This mostly depends on your product and its tone. A booth for a company that sells lifejackets should be very different than the booth for a company that sells gummy bears. You need to know the tone of your product and company and figure out a way to have your booth reflect that image.

Have you selected colors that are attractive to the eye? Choose colors that are pleasing and memorable, and limit your color selection to 3 or less.

Black is powerful and sophisticated, but can be stubborn. Grey sparks creativity, particularly when paired with a cool blue, green or purple. Browns are informal and usually reserved for the blue-collar industry. White is pure, honest and traditional. Use reds with caution; although they are energizing, reds can also increase blood flow and anxiety in passersby. Orange is eye-catching, but if too bright can look cheap (think fast food). Use blue sparingly, as it can be calm but boring if used in abundance. Yellows can capture attention, but too much can be irritating for visitors and limit their ability to focus. Green is good, since it traditionally symbolizes nature, money, tranquility and freshness.

http://www.smarttradeshows.com/articles/design_checklist.htm

Walls

Find out from the Exhibitor Services Manual what are the walls of the booth; common walls are pipe and drape, 8' back wall, and 4' sidewall. Will this work for your exhibit? Are there restrictions on back and sidewall height? Will the walls of your booth be the pipe and drape (not recommended; looks amateur), or will you have your own backdrop? Will the backdrop fit on the pipe and drape, or will it be a stand-alone display?

Floor

Trade show flooring is as important for your show area as any other part of your trade show design. You might think that people won't pay attention to what they are stepping on, but remove flooring and you can see how your booth is aesthetically lacking. Additionally, most shows require some type of flooring; if you don't provide it, the show will place carpet at the expensive show rate.

Basic Options

- Trade Show Carpet. One of the most popular choices you will come across when considering your flooring is carpeting. Carpeting can set the tone for your entire exhibit, especially if you are looking to give off a warm, comforting, and somewhat luxurious impression. Typically, you rent carpet from the show's general service contractors. For first-timers, we suggest renting the standard carpet (not custom-cut), no padding, and vacuum it yourself (i.e. don't pay for vacuum service; it's expensive).

- Roll-able flooring. Bamboo is a popular choice as it is easy to turn into a rolled material (just think of how there are easily rolled bamboo placemats for dining tables) – easy for shipping, too. Floor graphics can also be made to roll out, so it might behoove you to get your logo printed to roll out, as you can use it repeatedly in your trade show design.
- Hardwood and tiles. These require a bit more work to lay down than carpet or roll outs. They will stand up to a lot of traffic though, fairly better than carpet, and will be easier to clean at the end of the day. It could be the look you need for your exhibit, for a more natural impression.

Tables & Chairs

When you're considering tables and chairs for your booth, think first about how they will be used: product display, literature display, demonstration, product sampling, place for buyer to sit down and make an order, etc. You can use a mix of all types of tables to meet your exhibiting needs.

Common Table Options

Common table options include:

- Skirted table (regular height, pick complimentary colors to your booth and carpet)

- Unskirted table (only get this if you have a graphic table cloth)

- Skirted counter (counter height, offers extra storage underneath)

- Specialty tables (not typical for first-timers)

Common Chair Options

There are several chair options to consider for your booth. First, however, consider – are you going to use chairs? What is their purpose? Be wary of chairs; they can lead to fiddling with your phone or generally looking unapproachable.

If the buyer won't see your chair, go with the cheapest option, making sure your chair matches the height of your table (i.e. stool for counter height tables, etc.). Some opt for chairs and a café table in the booth, in order to encourage buyers to come in and sit down. For first timers, however, it's not as likely that you'll write orders at the show, so it's probably best to go with a chair for resting your feet in between customers.

Video: People Won't Read Your Booth

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_qODK8lGaU

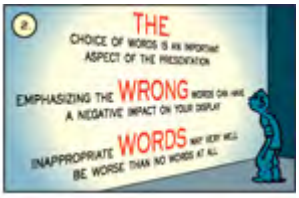
Signage

The signs in your booth are your silent communicators to the buyers: why they should stop, why they should listen, why they should buy. Here are some tips for effective booth signage.

Eye-Level Signage

1. **Use a maximum of six to 10 words.** "If your text takes more than three seconds to read, you've got too much text," says Chuck Michel, manager of business development at St. Louis graphics firm Group 360 Communications. That means your graphics can feature maximum of roughly six to 10 words and maybe an eye-catching company name or logo. Paired with an interesting image that also communicates your message or offerings, the text should complement the accompanying image to create a powerful, cohesive, can't-miss message that stops people in their tracks and draws them into a conversation with booth staff.

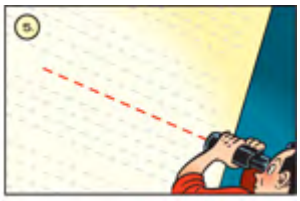
2. **If you talk benefits, attendees will listen.** With only a handful of words in your arsenal, message selection is critical - and benefit statements are key. "Attendees only want to know what's in it for them," says Susan Shuttleworth, marketing manager at Hummelstown, PA-based TransCore. "For example, tell attendees your product 'Cuts transportation costs by 20 percent!' or that it can 'Double your ROI.' But don't waste your word allotment to tell them how cool your company is or to list product numbers and specs. Attendees just don't care."



3. **Use light over dark or dark over light text combinations.** "When it comes to color selection, text color must provide a sharp contrast with the background in order to have full effect," says Gwen Parsons, senior vice president of Nomadic Display, a portable- and modular-exhibit provider in Springfield, VA. "One must place text on a case-by-case basis, simplify the overall amount of text, and avoid using busy backgrounds." Effective color combinations typically include dark colors (e.g. black, navy, forest green) on light backgrounds.

4. **Use serif or sans-serif styles and no more than two fonts per graphic.** "Graphics text should be clear and easy to read, not artsy," Michel says. "Your images, not your text, are your art, which means artsy fonts are unnecessary." Artsy fonts are difficult to read, as they fight for the readers' attention by competing with the image and distracting the reader by pulling the eye back and forth. Out of the three primary font styles - serif, sans serif, and decorative - serif and sans serif styles are the easiest to distinguish and read.

5. **Text must be a minimum of 4-inches tall.** Type should be a minimum of 1-inch tall for every 3 feet you step away from it, Michel says. Since most attendees are at least 12 feet from your exhibit as they pass it in the aisle, text should be at least 4-inches tall, i.e. roughly the size of a standard envelope. If you want attendees to read your text from 20 feet away, for example, it should be a minimum of approximately 6.5-inches tall.



6. **Position text in the 2-foot zone.** The 2-foot zone across the top of the exhibit is the ideal location for text, says Adam Brodsley, principal of San Francisco exhibit-design firm Volume Inc. "It's really the only unobstructed area on your exhibit's back wall that people can see clearly in an aisle full of people." If you absolutely can't position all of your text within the 2-foot zone across the top of the back wall of your exhibit, make sure it doesn't go lower than eye level, which is roughly 5 feet up from the floor.

7. **Use one large, well-cropped image.** Less is more. Rather than a smattering of small images, use one large main image to fill the majority of your graphic display, says Randy Harju, principal at exhibit house 3DL Design Inc. in Munde suggests cropping the ima effectiveness. "For exampl use a shot of a person sitti in an office," she says. "All c in the image - the window files on the corner of the desk, the wastebasket overflowing at the bottom right - distract from the person at the desk. However, if you crop the image so you only see the person's face bathed in the glow of the computer monitor, you dramatically increase the impact of the message - and you create an eye-catching image attendees can't help but notice."

8. **Use high-resolution images, and consult your graphics designer.** "Garbage in, garbage out," Michel says. "Never use a low-quality image, such as one with a resolution too low for your final graphic's size, to try to make a high-quality impression. Make sure you and/or your graphics designers have a good understanding of the resolution of the image and its enlargement limitations before you purchase it." Not all images can be "rez'd up," or enlarged, and still retain their quality or appearance. Often, low-res images can become blurry or grainy when enlarged. Pay special attention to low-cost stock photography and company logos, which often have image-enlargement issues. Since situations, photos, and uses vary, consult your graphics designer before making a purchase.

http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=612&catID=78#.UegPyKw-HHd

Table-top Signage

Here are the signs you should consider for your table top.

- Show specials – gives buyers an incentive to purchase immediately

- Seeking brokers or distributors – may catch the eye of prospectives
- Offer private label or co-packing – may be a benefit for some buyers

- Certifications – tells buyers what's important to you (e.g. organic, gluten free, etc.)

- Trade organization memberships – if they are pertinent to your industry or important to your customers (e.g. Organic Trade Association, etc.)

- Our Story – helps buyers to build a relationship

Storage

Have you set aside sufficient storage space to avoid a cluttered exhibit area? Consider well-hidden storage totes to hold your extras. Too much clutter means you will be perceived as disorganized, and you will lose prospects. Do you have adequate storage for literature, electronics, promotional incentives, briefcases, and portable shipping cases? Do you require secure storage for valuables during and throughout the show? Can you safely store your shipping materials (pallet, boxes, etc.) out of sight for a speedy pack up?

Product display

Plan for how you will display your product. You need to consider how your customer will interact with the product, how they want to see the product and what information they will want about the product. If you have a complicated product that needs explaining, you need to go above and beyond to explain both visually and verbally how it works. Never assume that people will understand just by looking at it. Customers will want to know or see how the product is packaged as well as being able to hold and feel it. Make sure that your display allows for both.

Finish

Is your exhibit worn or dated from one too many shows? Plan ahead before you purchase your next exhibit. Light colors show seams and damage more easily than dark colors or patterns. Glosses scratch easier than matte laminates.

Safety

Is your exhibit structurally stable when filled with attendees? One small disaster can ruin a well-planned and potentially successful show.

Booth Inspirations

For booth space inspirations geared towards first time exhibitors:

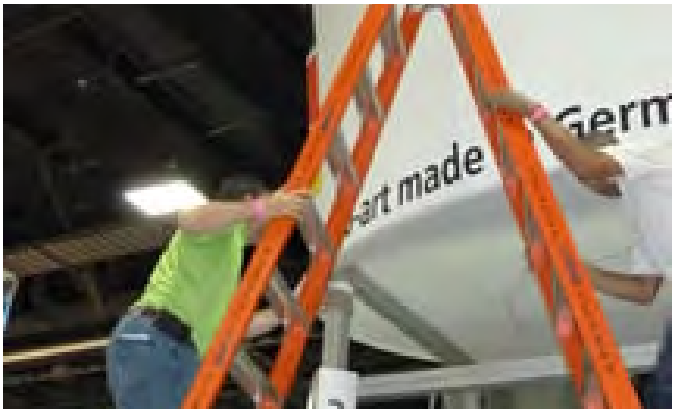
http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=832&catID=78#.UdR9lvnU8Zk.

Ordering Show Services

Setup and Dismantling Labor

Even if you plan to bring your own display, you may have to order union labor to set it up and dismantle it. Order your labor in advance, because if you order at the show, you will probably have to wait. Union regulations vary from state to state, so check your Exhibitor Service Manual for details. For planning purposes, view this list of Union labor rules and regulations by city:

http://goo.gl/wYYVKP



Building Services

Building services must be ordered from the convention center.

Utilities

Utilities (water, gas, electricity and compressed air) and telecommunication services (telephone and Internet) are ordered through the facility and/or general contractor. Order forms and additional information are in your Exhibitor Service Manual.

Electrical Service

While some booths might not need electricity, if you're rigging lights or cooking samples, you will need to order electrical service. For most large, national shows, you order electrical services from the Convention Center, not the General Services Contractor. The information should still be provided in your Exhibitor Services Manual, however.

You must know what you need for electrical service, but estimating your power requirements can be confusing. Here are some examples of power needs for various pieces of equipment:

Lead-retrieval reader . . . . 34 watts

Coffee pot or microwave .. . . . . .2,000 watts each

CPU/Motherboard and monitor . . . . . 1,000 watts

Refrigerator . . . . . 1/2hp 120v (24-hour power)

27" television 250watts

The more information you supply with your electrical order form, the smoother your installation will be. Be sure to include:

- Floor plans/Display Diagrams — indicate where your outlets should be by using neighboring booth numbers and references. **This is required for most shows.
- Approval to Proceed — inform the electrical department if you want your outlets installed before you arrive at the show.
- 24-Hour Power Order — order only for the outlets that require constant power. Regular show power for each day is usually turned on one hour before the show opens and turned off one hour after the show closes. In other words, if you are keeping product cold in a refrigerator, you'll need to order 24-hour power, or else your frig will be turned off all night.
- Distribution Labor — required for any booth with more than one outlet location per drop of power. An electrician may also be needed to plug in all lights and equipment. This can vary from city to city. Refer to your Exhibitor Service Manual for details.

http://www.exhibitoradvantage.com/ft_handbook.asp

Average Labor Rates

View the graphics on the next page to give you an idea of labor rates to expect at the show.

What Can Exhibitors Do Without Union Personnel?

Contrary to popular belief, in some cities exhibitors are allowed to do some work within the confines of their booths. Please reference your Exhibitor Service Manual for specific details. At many shows, exhibitors may install and dismantle their own exhibit and lay their own carpet in their own exhibit area as long as the booth size is 100 square feet (10 feet by 10 feet) or less and the following conditions are met:

1. **The setup can be reasonably accomplished in approximately one hour.**
2. **No tools are used in the assembly or dismantling.**
3. **Individuals performing the work must be full-time employees of the exhibiting company and carry identification to verify this.**

Exhibitors are allowed to unpack and repack their own products (if in cartons, not crates) and are allowed to do technical work on their equipment, such as balancing, programming and cleaning machines, etc.

Exhibitors may move a "pop-up" display (equal to or less than 10 feet in length) that can be carried by hand by one person. The individuals moving the items must be full-time employees of the exhibiting company and must carry identification to verify this.