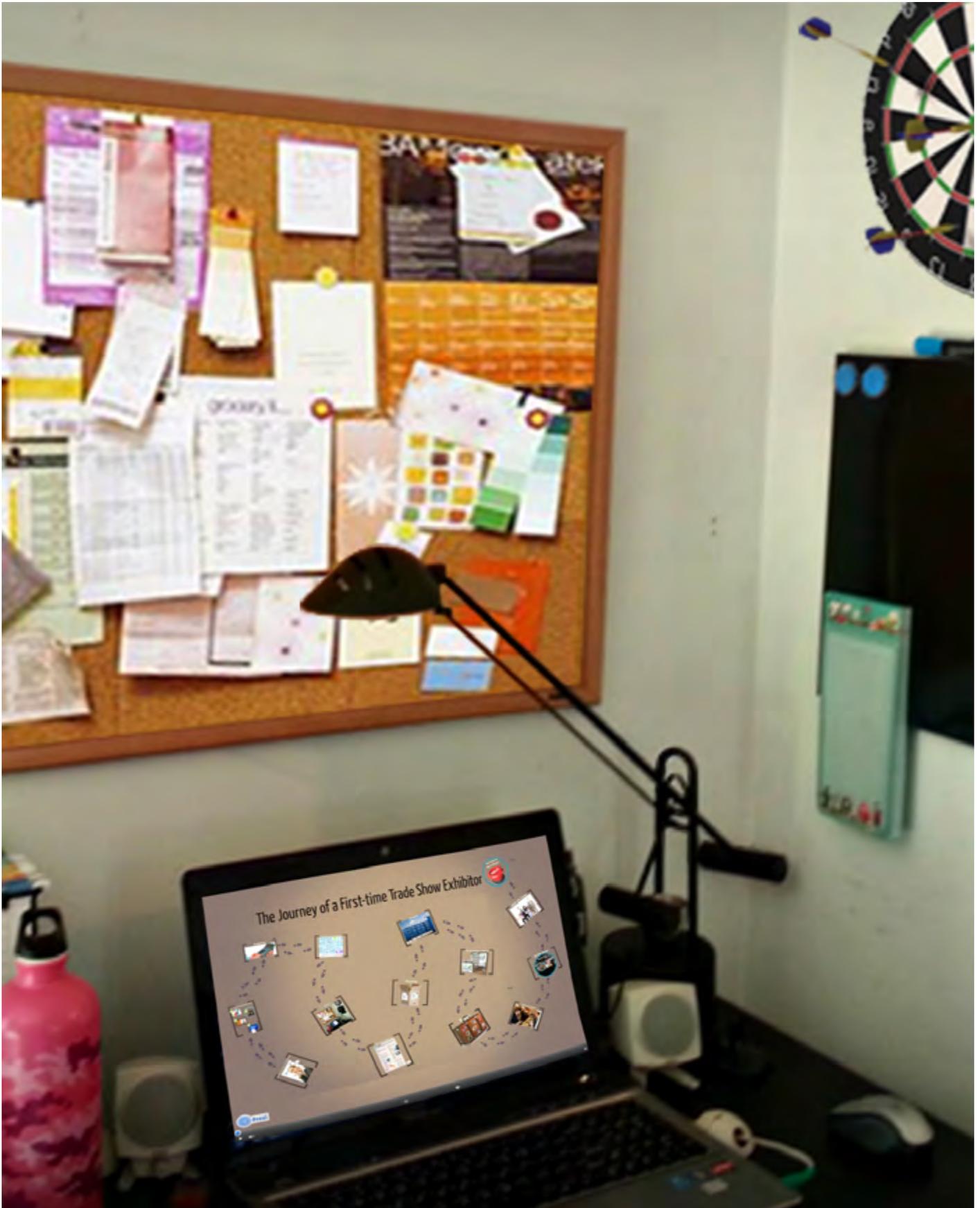


Track 2: Pre-Show

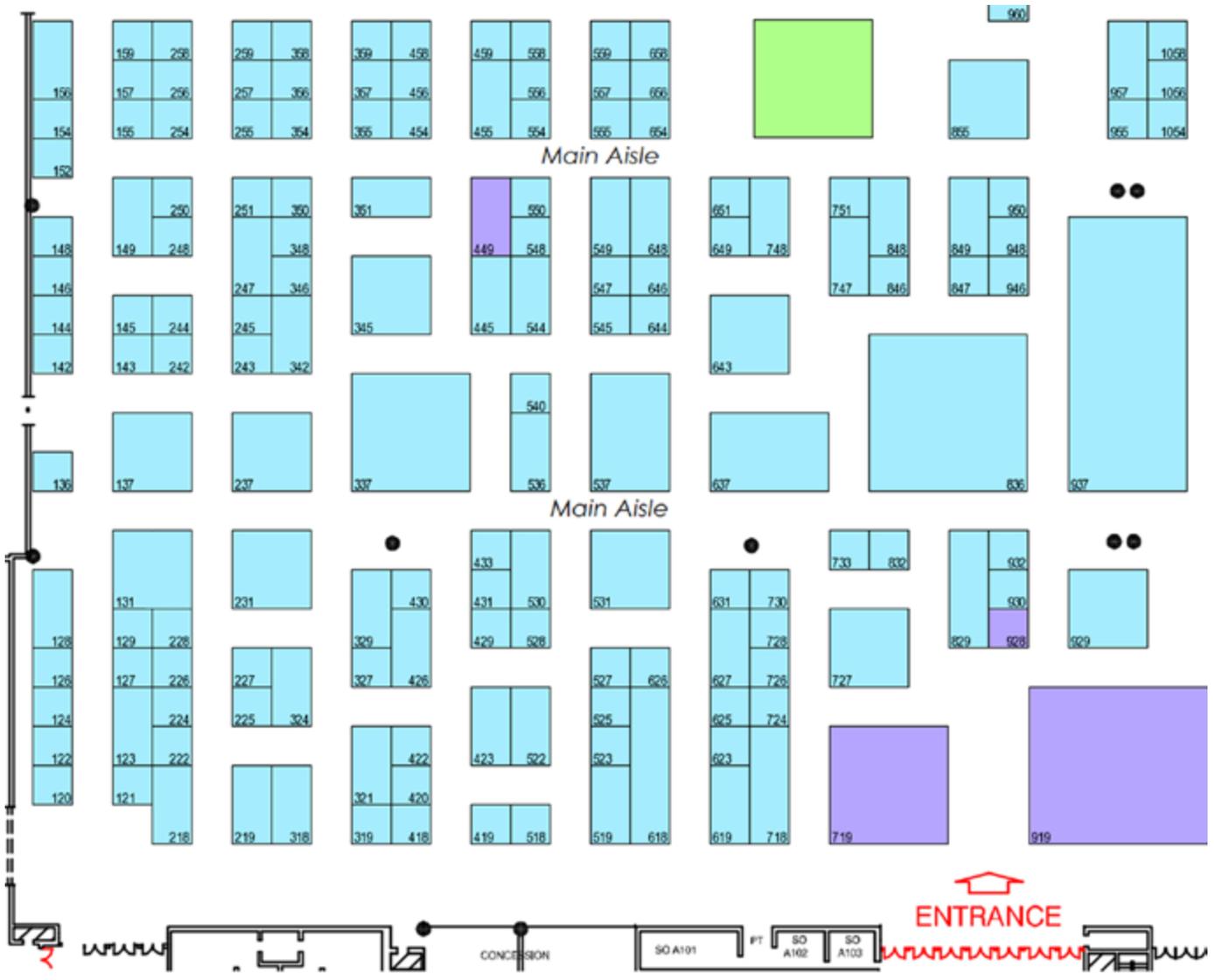
This section provides the first time trade show exhibitor with tips and tools for contracting a booth space, planning, and pre-show marketing.



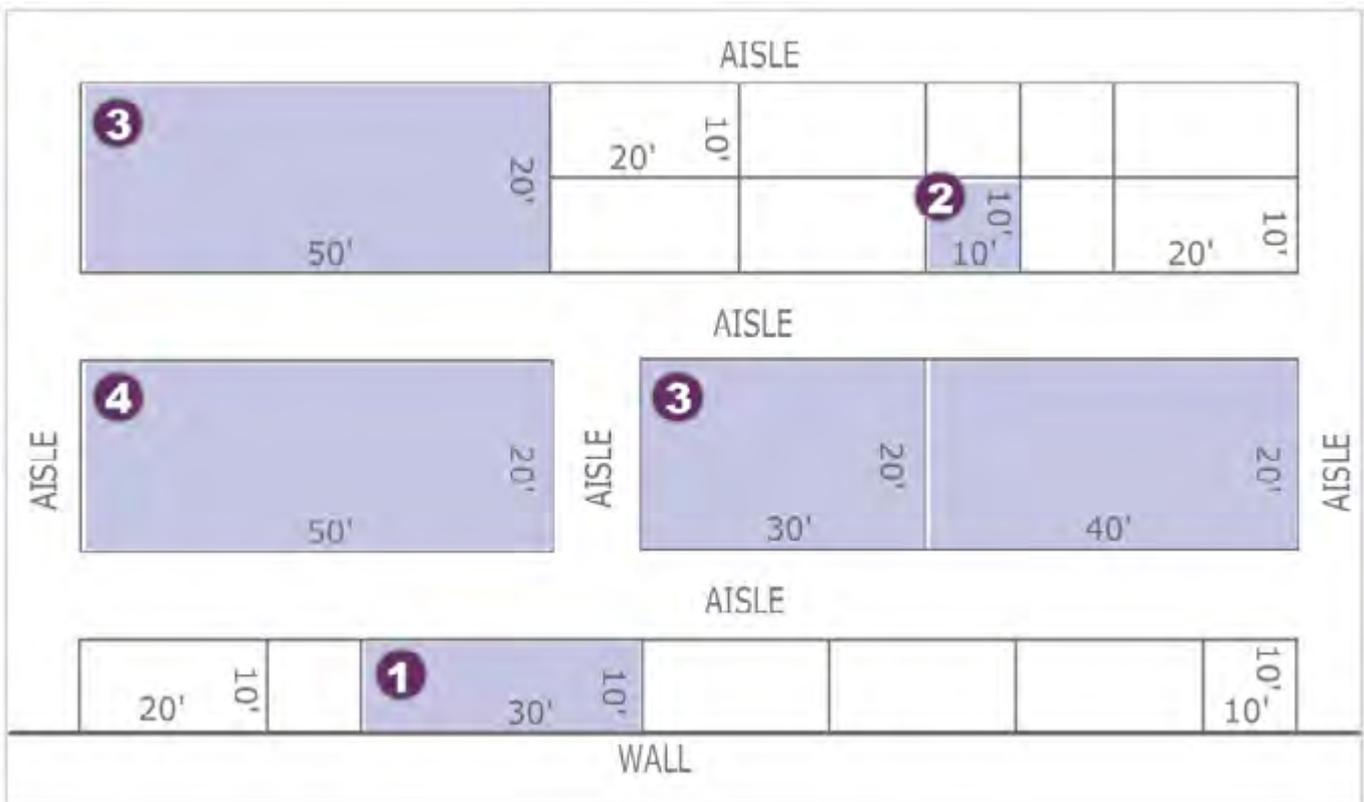
Contracting a Booth Space

Contracting booth space at trade shows can be a daunting task, with the confusion of how to do it and the worry of whether or not you got a good space. Following are tips to help you.

Pre-Show



Booth Space Options



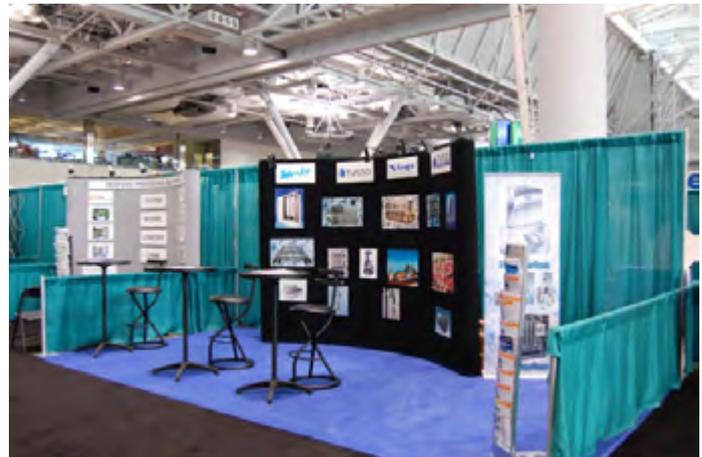
Use this tool to select the right booth for you. View the four major booth types and learn techniques to attract the maximum number of buyers from your target audience to meet your goals. The numbers of the booth types (e.g. 1. Perimeter Booth) reference the graphic below.

**For first-time exhibitors, we recommend selecting either a Perimeter or In-line booth, 10'x10', largely because these are the least expensive options.

1. **Perimeter Booth**.** Perimeter booths are inline booths along the perimeter walls of the exhibit hall. TIP: Take advantage of the higher back wall height restrictions to allow more design options to attract buyers to your booth. Maximize this height allowance to increase exposure – e.g. hanging your signage along the back wall of your booth which will appear several feet higher than your neighbors in regular inline booths.



2. **In-line Booth**.** In-line booths are also referred to as “linear” booths. These booths generally have only one side exposed to an aisle and are arranged in a series along a straight line. TIP: In-line booths have specific height restrictions to ensure your neighbors have visibility. Be sure to design your booth within these regulations so height adjustments do not need to be made on site. (Note: pictured booth is 10'x20')



3. **Peninsula Booth.** A peninsula booth is exposed to an aisle on three sides and is comprised of a minimum of 4 booths and are at least 20' deep. There are two types of peninsulas:

One which backs up to linear booths (a peninsula booth that backs up to inline booths has certain restrictions designed so the booths behind are not blocked) and

One which backs up to another peninsula (also referred to as a "split island booth". Be sure to discuss possible alterations to the booth behind your split island booth with your sales representative. TIP: Peninsulas have more visibility because they are open to traffic on three sides. Peninsulas also have more flexibility regarding height options and booth design and layout. Maximize the height allowance to increase exposure by hanging signage on the back wall or hanging from the ceiling directly over your booth.



4. **Island booth.** An island booth is a booth that is 20' X 20' or larger and is exposed to traffic from all four sides. TIP: Maximize traffic exposure from all four aisles by leaving all four sides open when designing your booth. This will maximize entrance options into your booth from the aisles.



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

Additional exhibit space



Some shows offer additional exhibit space, outside the show floor (e.g. New Products Showcase). This can be a way to entice additional buyers to your booth. Talk to show management about your options and then weigh those against your show budget.

Pick the Right Location

The following tips will help you understand the ins and outs of “location, location, location,” and select the booth space that’s right for you.

Consider proximity to hall entrances and exits

Certainly, many theories exist about the importance of a front-and-center space as well as the actual direction in which most attendees traverse the exhibit hall. But no matter what theories you subscribe to, you need to understand three things:

where all of the hall’s entrances and exits are located in relation to any space you might select

where attendees will be coming from and thus which entries they’ll likely use; and

which doors will be unlocked and accessible during the show.

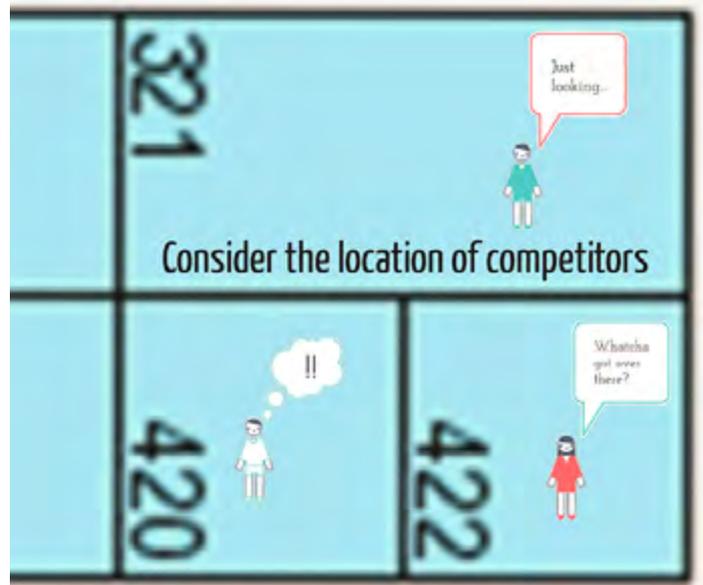


Merely checking the floor plan for “entrance” notations isn’t enough. You need a clear understanding of how attendees will flow into and out of the hall at your particular show (if you chose to “walk the floor” before, this should be easy for you). For example, if you sign up for that front-and-center space thinking everyone will pass by your booth, the value of that real estate plummets if you later discover that most attendees slipped in a side door because of its close proximity to the general session that let out minutes before the exhibit hall opened. Or, perhaps the majority of attendees used one entrance because of its location near the shuttle-bus stop, or the nearby Starbucks.

So always query show management about entrances and exits as well as show-wide activities occurring immediately before and after hall hours. Without this knowledge, you might as well use the “throw a dart at the floor plan” strategy to select your space.

Consider the location of competitors

While you shouldn’t let your competitors dictate your exhibit-marketing strategy, you should at least ask show management where the “big guns” are located in relation to your proposed booth space, and if major competitors have any traffic-generating activities planned.



Again, there aren’t any hard and fast guidelines dealing with your booth location and that of your competitors. But if your main competitor’s booth will dwarf yours and its product displays will make yours look like chopped liver, you might not want an adjacent booth space. On the other hand, if your competitor is spending wads of cash for a Cirque du Soleil show to draw in hoards of attendees, you might be able to capitalize on its expenditure and lure some of those prospects next door for a peek at your products.

Determine the main traffic aisles

Just as with entrances and exits, you can’t solely rely on the show floor plan to identify main traffic aisles. You also need to consider what areas or offerings within the hall will likely draw traffic to and from their location regardless of the aisle designations.



For example, where are the concession stands located, and how will attendees traverse to and from them within the hall? Or, if a specific exhibitor always draws a crowd, perhaps via a giveaway or some form of in-booth entertainment, how will attendees proceed to and from that exhibit within the hall? Every show is different, but the idea is to consider what will be happening within the hall in regards to traffic - and to position your exhibit accordingly - rather than only relying on a flat piece of paper to make your decisions.

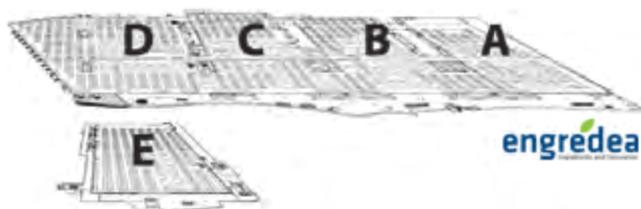
Watch for columns and obstructions

When viewing the floor plan, be on the lookout for exhibit-hall obstructions, including everything from fire-hose cabinets to Internet network pods. While you might have identified a near-perfect space when it comes to traffic and the location of competitors, a fire-hose cabinet or enormous support column can not only mar your exhibit aesthetics, it can be an expensive surprise during setup if you have to reconfigure your exhibit on site. And if you have overhead banners or hanging signage, consider ceiling obstacles, such as air ducts or ventilation units that might block attendees' view of them from aisles away.



Consider main versus ancillary halls

This sounds like a no-brainer, but you'd be surprised how many exhibitors forget to ask show management this simple question: Does the show encompass multiple exhibit halls, and if so, which one is the main hall? Also inquire about which products are typically grouped into each hall, and what type of promotional activities the show will use to drive traffic between all halls. Before you begin to select a space, make sure you're in the right hall, based on your product offerings, show regulations, expected traffic, etc.



Some ancillary halls offer buyer-enticements, such as early opening hours, new products showcases, etc., so you can't rule them out.

Watch for move-in sections/ freight aisles

During setup, freight is typically moved into some sections of the show hall sooner than others, and if your booth space is near a freight door, your freight is often delivered last to make sure there's enough room for contractors to maneuver their moving equipment. So if you know your setup time will be tight, avoid freight aisles and select a section of the hall that is scheduled to be moved in first.



Don't Get Spaced Out

If all the good spaces are taken, ask the space-salesmeister to 'cut space.' The show organizer can re-section a group of in-line exhibits into an island or peninsula, for example, or two smaller islands can be joined to make one larger island. This can free up the space you need. Just because you don't see it on the drawing doesn't mean show management can't get out a pencil and draw it in.

Another option is wait listing. You can tentatively contract for a space you don't love, but could live with, and then note on your contract that you want to be wait listed for space of a specific size or configuration. You'll then have the option to switch if and when it becomes available. My best trick is to contract for the next smaller size than I really want, knowing the space-sales folks can make extra commissions by upgrading me to a bigger, better space as exhibiting companies merge, go out of business, or switch spaces. With the many re-draws of the floor plan that occur prior to the show, a more preferable space will likely become available.

<http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=1219&catID=91#.UdM4zdhinA0>

Planning

As with almost anything, failure to plan is a plan to fail. You can exhibit at trade shows without much of a plan; however, that can be the most expensive way to exhibit at shows. If you plan ahead, you can save money, time, and hassle.



Planning Manual

Download a comprehensive collection of worksheets designed with input from veteran exhibit managers to help you organize the details of your show-planning activities, from setting objectives to budgeting and measuring results. Download at:

<http://www.exhibitoronline.com/exhibitor/magazine/july08/planningGuide.pdf>

Welcome to EXHIBITOR magazine's Trade Show Planning Guide. These handy worksheets were designed with input from veteran exhibit managers to help you organize the details of your show-planning activities, from setting objectives to budgeting and measuring results.

QUICK REFERENCE DATA

Show name: _____
Show Web site: _____
Use code: _____ Password: _____

Show producer:
Account number: _____
Contract number: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
Fax: _____
E-mail: _____

Show location:
City: _____ State: _____
Hotel/Hotel: _____

Booth number(s): _____ Booth size: _____
Show dates: _____
Exhibit hours: _____
Setup dates/times: _____
Dismantle dates/times: _____
Number of meeting rooms: _____ Meeting room location: _____

Show appointed general services contractor:
Contract name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ Fax: _____
E-mail: _____

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Trade Show Planning Timeline

Phase 1: 12+ Months... Set Your Strategy

- Identify the role trade shows will serve, as part of your overall marketing and sales strategy. Then, secure buy-in within your organization.
- Develop a detailed trade show budget and forecast your return on investment.

Phase 2: 9 to 12 Months before Show

- Set specific objectives for your show such as number of product sales, leads generated, publicity secured, etc.
- Identify your booth space needs, along with your exhibitor resources for booth accessories, banners, marketing collateral, equipment, and promotional items.
- Register and reserve your display space with the event sponsor and request full details on exhibit requirements.
- Develop a trade show marketing plan that utilizes a mix of promotional methods to reach prospects. Your plan should be divided into three sections:
 1. **Pre-Show Marketing,**
 2. **At-Show Marketing, and**
 3. **Post-Show Marketing**

Phase 3: 6 to 9 Months before Show

- Write a compelling sales message that gets across the key points you want to communicate at your exhibit in 30 seconds or (preferably) less.
- Determine your exhibit design, layout and graphics needs. You can hire a company to handle design and production or take a more hands-on approach by using web-based exhibition design software to create the look and configuration of your display before handing it over to an exhibit producer. Take your time to select an exhibit firm that meets your needs, based on capabilities, design talent, cost and delivery timing.
- Identify high-impact tradeshow giveaways and promotional strategies you will use to attract visitors to your display area.
- Determine the literature and marketing materials you will need at the show - and begin design and printing work.

Phase 4: 3 to 6 Months before Show

- Order your giveaways or promotional items.
- Continue working with vendors on your display booth, exhibit items, and marketing materials. Confirm delivery dates and adherence to your trade show planning timeline.
- Determine staffing requirements, develop booth schedules, and plan training sessions.
- Identify how you will ship your display and other items to the show.
- Begin making travel arrangements.
- Launch pre-show marketing initiatives. Invite your buyers to see you in your booth at the show. Offer an incentive for visiting your booth.

Phase 5: 1 to 3 Months before Show

- Put together follow-up packets to send immediately following the show to your leads.
- Continue pre-show marketing activities
- Make all travel arrangements.
- Register booth personnel for exhibitor badges.
- Finalize production of booth display, promotional items, and marketing materials.
- Confirm shipping date.
- Schedule dinners or other meetings to be held at the show with prospects, distributors and/or customers.

Phase 6: 1 Week before Show

- Confirm shipping arrival dates for your booth display, promotional items and materials.
- Double check that all action steps on timeline have been covered.

- Print out exhibitor badge confirmations in order to avoid long lines waiting to register at the show.

Phase 7 – Follow-up Activities: 1 Day to 1 Week AFTER Show

- Analyze leads, send follow-up packets, and make contact as appropriate.
- Evaluate success of trade show participation compared with objectives from your tradeshow plan.
- Review your budget compared to your actual expenses for the show. Determine your return on investment.
- Make recommendation whether to participate in the same trade show next year. Include suggested changes, enhancements, and other trade show ideas.

<http://www.trade-show-advisor.com/trade-show-planning-timeline.html>

Video: Five Key Planning Principles

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tAfITVv-Pt8>

Determine Measurable Objectives



Your first and most important action is to decide what your company wants to accomplish by exhibiting at a show. The following are tips to develop your own measurable objectives.

Measurable objectives must:

- Align with your company's overall marketing plan
- Target attendees: customers, hot/cool prospects and new leads



Examples of Measurable Objectives:

- Booth visitors by target audience (accounts, industry, title, etc.)
- Number of one-on-one meetings with key accounts
- Number of qualified leads
- Lead mix by geography or product interest
- Number and value of sales confirmed
- Number of distribution deals completed
- Number of attendees exposed to your demo or live presentation
- Number and quality of strategic alliances confirmed with other exhibiting companies

Use these measurable objectives to guide your marketing decisions.

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

Read the Exhibitor Services Manual

Yes, it can be painfully boring, but by absorbing what is in the exhibitor services manual, you can avoid big problems popping up on the show floor. Every show is different, and each has its own set of regulations. There are exhibitor regulations published by show management,

the convention venue, the fire marshal, and the structural engineer who dictate what is permissible on the show floor.

Note that you can request a variance from show management if necessary. That's not to say you'll always be granted a variance, but it never hurts to ask.

<http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=828&catID=31#.UdMpq9hinA0>

Meet discount deadlines



Pay attention to meeting the show's "early bird" deadlines, and get written confirmation of those orders when you place them. Missing an early bird deadline can double the cost of a product or service. Also keep an eye on when rush charges kick in for the production of graphics and literature and the date by which you have to ship your show-related freight to avoid paying expedited shipping charges.

<http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=668&catID=91#.UdL3WNhinA0>

Pad Deadlines

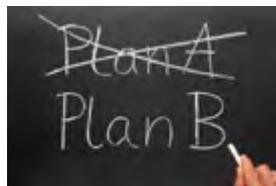
In order to build in cost- and hassle-savings, take the actual deadlines and push them back by three to five days. Also give yourself some extra time with everyday tasks and requests. This way you should never miss a deadline!

Pre-Show Checklist

To help you organize show deadlines, use the pre-show checklist. on the next page

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

Always Have a Plan B



If something can go wrong at a trade show, it will. Have a plan B for all of those worst-case scenarios, such as your freight not showing up, your graphics were scratched, your product broke, your booth got rained on, there was a fire, etc.

<http://www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/article.asp?ID=828&catID=31#.UdMpq9hinA0>

Pre-show Checklist

Use the checklist below when sending your orders in time to qualify for the discounted advance rate. Refer to your Exhibitor Service Manual for deadlines.

	Service	Deadline	Date Sent	Check #	Date Confirmed	Contact	Show Site Phone#
Freeman Services	Exhibit Rental						
	Installation & Dismantling Labor						
	Furniture/Accessory Rental						
	Carpet Rental						
	Graphics/Signs						
	Material Handling						
	Rigging						
	Ship Freight to Warehouse						
	Booth Package Rentals						
	Complete Your Show Program Listing Information						
Select Sponsorships							
Materials for Show Program Advertising							
Reserve Advertisement in Show Program							
New Product Showcase or Competition Deadline							
Send in Key Buyer Form							
Order Badges for Personnel							
Send in Certificate of Liability Insurance							
Exhibitor Appointed Contractor Form							
Booth Approval							
Open Flame Form							
Lead Retrieval							
Make Hotel Reservation							
Plumbing							
Order Ice							
Booth Catering/Liquor							
Health Permit							
Send in Tax Form							
Electrical Services							
Sound Equipment							
Telephone/Internet							
Booth Cleaning							
Audio Visual Equipment							
Computer Equipment							
Ship Freight to the Convention Center							
Plants							
Security Services							
Arrange for Customs Clearance/International Shipping							

Pre-Show

Video: Pinchin' Nickles



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zf1U9Kwli_M

Pre-show Marketing

There are several strategies for attracting visitors to your booth and turning them into buyers after the show.



Identify and Attract the Right Visitors to your Exhibit

Successful exhibitors use targeted pre-show marketing to get themselves on the right attendees' agendas before the show opens. Use the following tactics to help you fill your booth with qualified buyers:

The most important aspect of your show is your pre-show marketing effort. Use a targeted, coordinated pre-show promotion campaign that includes these steps:

1. **Clean and update your database.**
2. **Develop a master schedule and budget for these pre-show marketing efforts.** Promote your show participation and booth number aggressively.
3. **Create marketing pieces that stress unique benefits.**
4. **Communicate to the media.**
5. **Take advantage of your website as well as the show's website.**
6. **Invite key prospects to visit your booth.**
7. **Schedule appointments with key clients in advance.**
8. **Create new advertisements that stress the benefits of visiting your booth.**
9. **Print a flyer with your show's locations and dates, your booth number and a preview of the new-product introduction and/or show specials in your booth.**
10. **Remind your sales partners to invite potential customers to visit your booth.**
11. **Promise a giveaway at your booth that will have business value.**

Use Social Media

The info-graphic below outlines some tactics for using social media for pre-show promotion.

PRE-SHOW

Preparation is key in reaching out to prospective clients. Follow these social media tips to get the conversation started:

Facebook

Set up a Facebook "Event Page" to interact with past and upcoming attendees. Use this as a forum for answering questions, conducting surveys or promoting a contest or special incentive tied to the event.

Twitter

- Publicize your tradeshow #hashtag weeks before the event. This is a great way to encourage attendees to start tweeting in advance.
- Find accounts of clients, vendors, media partners, your competition, and follow them all. While you're at it, follow their followers that are relevant to you!
- Install a Twitter monitor to be able to keep track of new followers and engagement performance.

Companies that use it

- 72% US Fortune Global 100 companies use Twitter

How it's used

- 88% Company news and updates
- 40% Customer service
- 28% To offer deals
- 10% Release career and job information

More followers to choose from!

With Twitter users increasing at a fast rate, your potential audience is expanding.

225,000,000
Total users (2012)

50,000,000
Login everyday

500,000
New users each day

Blog

Establish your voice early with the expo audience by writing fresh and relevant content that builds up to the event.

Foursquare

Make your exhibit a location check-in so attendees can easily find one another.

Pinterest

Is your exhibit design-savvy? Establish a Pinterest account with boards showcasing your exhibit design. To increase traffic to your website, make sure to pin directly from images on your site.

Connect

Be sure all company social networks are integrated so others can easily follow you on their preferred channels.

<http://www.nwcdisplays.com/blog/2012/03/social-media-tradeshow-marketing/>