

Trade Show Exhibits Buyers Guide

By Sue AALUND

Published at Smashwords

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History of Trade Shows



Trade shows follow the tradition of trade fairs once held in medieval Europe. In those days, farmers and craftsmen would often display their wares at local fairs and in village squares. But the trade show concept is much older than that. Ancient civilizations like the Romans and the Phoenicians held annual events showcasing the work of merchants, artisans, and farmers to display and sell their products. Archaeologists recently excavated an area on the Mediterranean coast that may have been the site of a 2500 year old exhibition center. Trade shows have been around for quite a while!

The modern trade show really took off in the 1960's. Today's trade show is often an exhibition which allows companies in a specific industry to showcase the latest in products and/or services. Trade shows are recognized as an effective way for people in a specific industry to meet and make deals or gather contacts for future deals. Trade shows provide a forum for companies to keep up with competitors and suppliers for their industry. Public trade shows have become an effective way to get new products out on the market and allow manufacturers and distributors to meet directly with consumers.

An example of a high profile trade show is the Consumer Electronic Show (CES) which is held annually in the Las Vegas Convention Center. Despite its' name, the CES is not open to general public consumers, Rather, it is advertised as the world's gathering place for all companies and businesses who thrive on the business of consumer technologies. The CES trade show is a meeting place for people in the technology industries and it is there that they showcase new products. An example of a high profile trade show in the

pizza community, is the International Pizza Expo which is also held in Las Vegas. This trade show is not open to the public either. It is advertised as a meeting place for pizzeria or pizza-concept restaurant owners, operators and managers, as well as distributors and food brokers.

Many modern trade shows to include boat shows, auto shows, home shows and wedding shows are usually open to the public. Some trade shows are hybrids where the show is closed to all but industry professionals for a few days and open to the general public for the rest of the show.

If you plan to be an exhibitor at any type of trade show, expo, exhibition or event, your goal will be to showcase your company in the best possible light. The best way to do that is with a trade show exhibit that makes a statement.

Benefits of Trade Shows



There are over 2,500 trade shows held annually in the United States relating to a wide variety of industries. Trade shows are also popular all over the world. There are many benefits to exhibiting at a trade show which is why they continue to be popular even in our technology driven world. One major benefit is one-on-one marketing; there is something powerful and effective about looking a person in the eye and shaking their hand. If you are looking to build trust, build supplier or partner relationships, build brand or product awareness, there is no substitute for one-on-one marketing and no easier way to meet a lot of people than a trade show.

For some companies, the main benefit to exhibiting at a trade show is direct sales. A specialized industry event appeals to a targeted audience. Attendees are there because they are interested in the specific products displayed; if they were not interested, they would not be there. Trade shows enable exhibitors to put their products in front of many potential buyers at the show venue. Since multiple buyers and potential buyers gather in a single place, cost per sale is lower than approaching buyers in other formats.

For other companies, the main benefit of participating in a trade show is brand awareness. Trade shows offer a great platform for new companies to establish themselves in an industry, or for older established companies to introduce new goods or services to the market. Older established companies often use trade shows to promote brand loyalty via technology displays, hospitality and networking events. Being involved in a trade show type exhibition can provide exhibitors with opportunities to branch out to business-to-business trading. It is also a great way to create a customer database from the visitors to the company display booth.

For some, exhibiting at trade shows is a way to save time. In a global marketplace finding or keeping in touch with suppliers can be a big job. Industry related trade shows attract multiple suppliers. Meeting face-to-face with current suppliers and/or identifying new suppliers can be a big benefit for trade show attendees and exhibitors.

Some companies attend trade shows to gather information or to keep up with new trends and competitors. Visiting the booths of competitors and examining their latest products is an extremely effective way to learn what is going on and to design strategies to keep up with competitors. In addition, many trade shows feature conferences and industry leader speakers often share information that is not available anywhere else.

The benefits for exhibitors are many and vary from show to show and industry by industry. But the continued popularity of trade shows provides testament to their effectiveness. If you attend any trade show regularly, you will notice that often the same exhibitors are there year after year. Clearly, they are there because exhibiting is beneficial to their company. You will also notice new exhibitors at each event, an indicator that within a modern marketplace, trade shows are recognized as effective business tools. It is interesting to note that attendance at trade shows has continued to increase even in this digital era.

Evolution of Trade Show Exhibits



The evolution in design and construction of trade show booths and exhibits has changed drastically as the trade show industry has grown. Images from trade shows in the 1940's indicate that many displays were little more than a card table and a sign. Most of these simple displays were "build and burn," designed and only used for that particular event. These uncomplicated displays were generally created in-house by a company's art or marketing department.

Through the 1950's and 1960's as trade shows gained popularity, and companies recognized the value of exhibiting, they also realized that having a professionally designed booth or exhibit was a worthwhile investment. It was not (and is not) just a status thing; companies realized that they only get one chance to make a first impression. Two companies of equal size, selling similarly priced products, can compete equally in most markets. But if one company is at the trade show with a beautiful booth with modern graphics and design, and the other company has something that looks like it was thrown together by a few employees in the warehouse, then there is no competition! The company with the better display will attract more attention and present their company in the best light. The company with the inferior display will look second rate!

Trade shows got very competitive starting in the late fifties. Companies wanted their displays to be the hit of the show. Booths got larger, more elaborate, and had more

features. There were two and three story display booths; booths that looked like buildings or rivaled the interior of stores. The “build and burn” booth was long gone by the late 60’s as the cost of designing and developing a booth was so high that it became more cost effective to have a booth built, save it and use the same display at multiple trade shows.

A few companies were able to create nice booths in-house but by the 1960’s several companies sprang up whose primary business was designing trade show booths and exhibits. By the 70’s and 80’s the in-house built booths were becoming rare. Even the companies that had the capabilities to build in-house found it was more cost effective to buy from a dedicated trade show booth company. Although expensive, these booths were somewhat modular and often designed to be moved and stored so they could be used at more than one trade show or event.

For many years, custom design was the only option, but now companies have more choices. Each option will be explained fully in future chapters but we will touch on them briefly here. Custom design is still a solid option, costs have dropped as the construction of booths has become more standardized and the materials easier to obtain. A relatively new option is the pre-designed booth; a booth that is built in standard sizes and then branded with the individual company’s graphics. The end result is an excellent brand new booth without the cost of a totally custom design. Renting booths is another newer option. The rented booth is branded with the company’s graphics. This option saves the company the cost of ownership such as storage and upkeep. The used trade show booth market is substantial: booths originally costing thousands of dollars can be purchased and re-branded with new graphics at a fraction of the original cost.

If you are not sure which option is best for you, call **800-898-8485** and tell the customer service representative that you got the number from this book. They will schedule you for a free half-hour no sales pitch consultation to help you determine which option is best for you and your business.

Custom Trade Show Exhibits



For companies with large budgets and detailed requirements, a custom solution may still be the best option. For some companies, just having a great looking display is not enough. They want their booth to be the showcase of the trade show. Custom solutions can provide that **WOW** factor. Custom designs tend to be more graphic extensive, built with better materials and may include meticulous metal fabrication and/or detailed carpentry. At most trade shows there is always one booth that really draws the crowds and gets people talking, in most cases that is a custom trade show booth.

The advantage of a custom trade show exhibit is you can get exactly what you want; working with your trade show display manufacturer you can create something unique and never seen before. When the existing inventory does not fit your vision there is one option left to you. Custom build it!

One of the companies creating custom trade show exhibits that have the **WOW** factor is Southwest Displays & Events. With fabrication facilities in Dallas and Chicago, Southwest Displays & Events utilizes CNC part fabrication to insure the utmost accuracy and ease of assembly. Full Design, Project Management, Account Management, Graphics and Logistic services make obtaining a custom exhibit as painlessly easy as making a phone call. Try it yourself by calling **(800)898-8485**.

Creativity and ingenuity combine to bring your story to life in the face-to-face marketing arena. Southwest Displays & Events will listen to you and craft a design solution tailored to you, a solution that brings your product, your story to life.

A custom-built trade show booth can be much less expensive than you might think. Southwest Displays & Events has the expertise and experience to bring your vision to life. They have graphic design and construction crews ready and able help you create something truly unique and spectacular. Southwest Displays & Events can often create a custom-built trade show booth, exhibit or display for less money than the other guys sell generic standardized new booths.

As one of the largest independent trade show companies in the United States, Southwest Displays & Events is a privately held company offering exhibition services world-wide. You can reach them at **(800)898-8485** or view their [website here](#).

Here are some custom booths previously created by Southwest Displays and Events.



A custom booth created by Southwest Displays and Events for Cognizant Business Consulting.



A custom booth created by Southwest Displays and Events for Southwest Airlines.



A custom booth created by Southwest Displays and Events for Adapco



A custom booth created by Southwest Displays and Events for Aventura.



A custom booth created by Southwest Displays and Events for American Leather.



A custom booth created by Southwest Displays and Events for Chatsworth Products.



A custom booth created by Southwest Displays and Events for Fossil.



A custom booth created by Southwest Displays and Events for Peterbilt.



A custom booth created by Southwest Displays and Events for Inarca.

To see more you can view [Southwest Displays & Events website](#) to learn more call toll free at **800-898-8485**

Pre-Designed Trade Show Exhibits

Pre-designed booths are the perfect solution for many companies. Because the booths themselves come in standard sizes, the cost is much lower than a totally custom design. But it is still a brand new booth and can be so configurable that when you add your graphics and personal touches it is as unique looking as a custom design. The problem with most companies who offer pre-designed booths is the quality of the design. Pre-designed booths can be so standardized and vanilla looking that although they may give your company a presence at the trade show, they will do little to set your company apart. Blending in is not the goal for a trade show exhibitor; you are looking to stand out and make a positive impression!

One of the leading custom trade show manufacturers, Southwest Displays and Events presents an original approach to the pre-designed marketplace. Southwest Displays and Events created a line true custom, never used before designs, and offers them as pre-designed exhibits at a drastic price reduction from normal custom design. Basically, Southwest Display and Events offers what is comparable to a speculation home in the real estate market; a fully custom high quality home without a specific buyer. Other company's pre-designed exhibits are more comparable to kit homes or modular homes. In the real estate market the difference between the two is the quality of the build, in the pre-designed exhibit market the same difference applies.

Here is a list of great one off pre-designed booths from Southwest Displays and Events that may work for you. They can be tailored to your to your specific needs and your branding and messaging can easily be added. For a hassle free experience, if you are interested in any of these pre-designed trade show exhibits call [Southwest Displays and Events](#) at **800-898-8485**

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