



Tradeshows

Get facts and information to help you plan and promote a successful tradeshow. We have tips on choosing shows, selecting booths, budgeting, creating displays, promoting events—even exhibiting internationally—all designed to help you make the most of your events.

Choosing the Right Shows

Picking the right shows is key to any good tradeshow strategy. Start by reviewing your overall goals. If you have not already done so, prepare a written description of your prime prospects, including specifics on industries, buyer demographics and purchasing patterns.

Next, make a list of shows that you may want to attend and gather as much statistical data about the shows as possible. This research should include:

- Total show attendance
- Net attendees (excluding press, exhibitors and non-prospects)
- Net square footage of paid space
- Number of exhibiting companies
- Price of exhibit space
- Description of exhibiting companies
- Product-interest ratio (statistics that show level of attendee interest in your products)
- Audience interest factor (statistics showing how many attendees actually buy)
- Job title breakdown of attendees

By matching data on your prime prospects with data from each show, you can plan to attend only those shows attended by people who can and will become profitable, long-term customers.

Selecting the Best Locations

The location of your display at any show is a key factor in your exhibit's success. When selecting your space, consider how close you'll be to building entrances and exits, registration and press areas and your competition. Make sure your space has convenient access to power and other utilities and is within a reasonable distance of restrooms and food service areas. Avoid dead-end aisles, spaces obstructed by columns and ceiling pipes or other areas that do not promise high-volume attendee traffic.



Here are the types of spaces available at most shows and tips for choosing the best location for your display:

- Island—Surrounded on all sides by aisles; one of the best possible locations
- Peninsula—Surrounded on three sides by aisles; a very good location
- Aisle—One side faces the aisle; three sides connect to other displays
- Cross-aisle—Two aisle spaces opposite one another

Planning Checklist

Long Range Planning: One Year or More Before a Show

- Establish your company's overall tradeshow strategies
- Identify which tradeshows meet your stated objectives
- Consider the number and locations of shows you will attend during the year
- Request information from sponsors of shows you are considering
- Create a projected annual tradeshow budget
- Secure management approval of these broad tradeshow goals

Nine-to-Twelve Months before a Show

- Select the shows you will attend
- Determine exhibit space requirements
- Book space with show sponsors
- Rough out an exhibit plan with promotional, graphic and staffing needs

Three Months before a Show

- Refine the projected size, design and staffing needs of your exhibit
- Set work schedules and completion dates for all show activities
- Start production on any show-specific printed materials
- Select vendors for all key show materials



Two Months before a Show

- Make final exhibit staffing decisions
- Confirm progress and delivery dates with any outside vendors
- Finalize plans for display size, graphics and support materials
- Launch pre-show promotional efforts
- Review your show budget and schedules

One Month before a Show

- Preview your physical show exhibit
- Finalize all travel arrangements
- Confirm availability of product samples and promotional materials
- Review progress of all pre-show promotional efforts
- Confirm all details of your exhibit with show organizers.

One Week before a Show

- Check that all exhibit supplies and materials have been packed or shipped
- Arrange for company checks or credit cards to cover at-the-show payments
- Meet with exhibit staff for a final review of your action plan

At the Show

- Confirm the arrival of your exhibit and materials.
- Hold a pre-show staff rehearsal in your exhibit.
- During the show, conduct daily meetings to assess your performance.

Budgeting

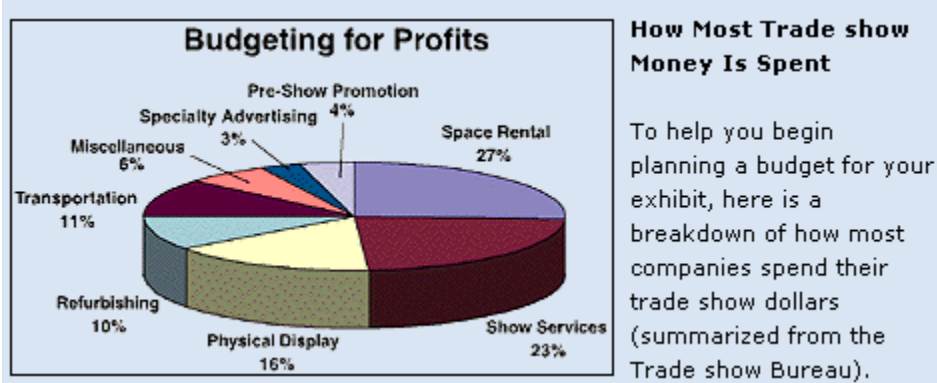
Review your overall tradeshow objectives and calculate the total investment needed to meet those goals. By setting an annual budget, you can then begin to determine how many shows you can attend and how much you should invest in exhibit displays, promotions and other event expenses.

One of the line items on any special event budget should be for signs and graphics. An indispensable component of your strategy, signs help you manage your event by providing a static, consistent method of directing, informing and selling.

Tips

To help you begin planning your budget, here is a breakdown of how most companies spend their tradeshow dollars and a tradeshow budget worksheet that you can use as a guideline.

How Most Tradeshow Money Is Spent



Download Worksheet > [[link to PDF: Tradeshow Budget Worksheet](#)]

Creating a Winning Display

Graphics

Look and feel. Create a graphic look that communicates a clear, strong image for your company. If you're promoting a highly technical product or service, establish a graphic theme that supports a high-tech presentation. If you're selling a recreational product, consider a more creative and colorful look for your display.

- **Color.** Select a color scheme that complements your logo and existing sales materials.
 - Color can also help you attract attention, set the tone or support an established company message. Yellow is an attention-getter; black represents power; blue and gold suggest quality; and green is positive and calming
 - Consider using four-color digital graphics to bring photographic-quality images to your signs, banners or backdrops
- **Images.** Graphic images can be used to attract attention, support a message and illustrate core benefits. Larger-than-life graphics splashed across the backdrop of your display create excitement about your company and your products
- **Letter size.** Make signage lettering large enough to be read from a distance
- **Positioning.** Place graphics where they will guide traffic flow to your exhibit space



Content

Use words to identify your company, position your products and services, and inform and educate your prospects.

- Keep copy short and use action words focused on the buyer.
- Distill your product information into easy-to-read, bullet-pointed copy.
- Copy and graphics should tell a prospect within six seconds or less:
 - Who you are.
 - What you do.
 - How they can benefit from your products and services.

Saving Money on Displays

- Confirm all show, space and labor requirements to avoid unplanned charges
- Order all at-show services early to gain discounts and avoid rush charges
- Book travel and hotel accommodations at the earliest possible date to receive discounts
- Calculate your staffing and materials requirements carefully
- Produce all promotional materials well in advance
- Proofread all copy to avoid extra charges for changes or corrections
- Use durable, long-lasting artificial plants to decorate your display
- When possible, avoid use of higher-cost local service and labor personnel
- Consider using a portable display that:
 - Can be set up and dismantled in minutes by your own staff
 - Is easy and economical to transport by car, UPS or as airline luggage
 - Offers modular flexibility for later use as a lobby display or point-of-sale promotion
 - Is available with island or in-line configurations
 - Can be customized with your company logo, graphics or full-color photos
 - Includes a broad selection of optional accessories
- If appropriate, consider renting instead of buying your display



- Use smaller and more efficient displays. To get big results:
 - Focus your message. By limiting your signs and display to a core message and a few key products, you can use a limited space to its best advantage
 - Limit your staff. The optimum traffic density in a booth is one company representative per 50 square feet of open space. So in a 10' x 10' booth, two staffers are plenty
 - Encourage communication. Your time is best spent talking to good prospects, so don't clutter your exhibit with "take one" piles of literature or "leave-a-card" fishbowls
 - Avoid barriers. Don't put tables or demonstrations where they block access to your space.
 - Keep it light. Use lighting to spotlight products and brighten your entire display

Marketing for Tradeshows

Pre-Show Promotions

By advertising your company, products and any special-exhibit activities before the show, you can multiply the positive effects of your tradeshow investment. Plan early and target your promotions to your core-customer prospects.

Direct Mail, Public Relations and Ads

Rent a segmented list of attendees from the show sponsor and send direct mail letters or brochures announcing your exhibit to the prospects on that list.

- Place an ad in magazines or tabloids published specifically for show attendees. Send press releases to show publications and other trade magazines announcing any new products or services you will feature in your exhibit
- Look into co-op promotional opportunities in which you can share ad costs and space with non-competitive show attendees
- Announce your show attendance in mailings, newsletters or other communications you normally send to your existing customers or prospects
- Include your exhibit booth number in any pre-show promotions

Premiums and Incentives

These free giveaways add to your tradeshow costs, but can be a good way to attract more people to your exhibit. Of course, many people who collect free items at shows may be poor customer prospects. Therefore, if you can target premium items to your prime prospects, they can be valuable tools to build traffic and find new customers.



Taking It on the Road

Multiple Shows

Once you have created an exhibit and gone through the steps to research, plan and make a tradeshow presentation, you can easily extend that program to any number of shows. Use your initial planning and budget meetings to determine which and how many shows make sense for your business. If you will attend a number of shows each year, keep your display fresh by updating it with new graphics, recent product releases and new promotional support

International Exhibiting

Exhibiting internationally is a smart way to test foreign markets for your products and services. Exhibiting at international shows can help you discover new markets, make local contacts and find potential international sales people.

Tips for exhibiting internationally:

- Allow additional time for planning and managing the logistics of an overseas show
- Research the business and social culture of the market you hope to enter
- Seek the advice of professionals who are experienced in that international market
- Learn the language or hire translators or bilingual staff members
- Investigate tariffs, taxes and other fees and charges