

**Nomadic**  **Display**®

Special Report

# Exhibit Design Strategies



That Maximize Results

# Introduction

Trade shows bring buyers and sellers together to build relationships and transact business. The overall design of your display should attract visitors, reflect the personality of your business and leave a lasting impression. The style and substance of your exhibit can serve to differentiate you from other companies. Because your display speaks volumes about your company, it can be the foundation upon which to build your exhibit marketing success.

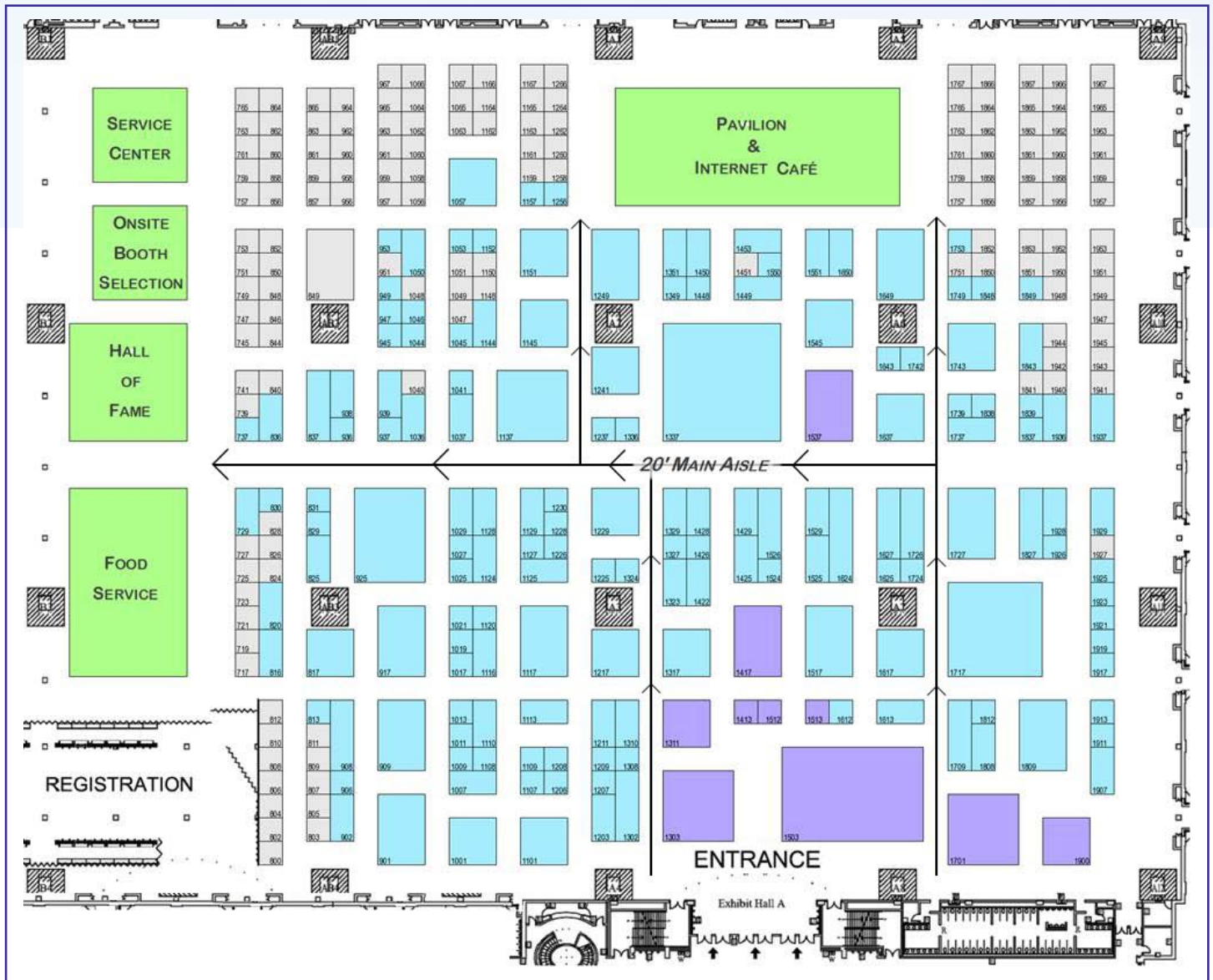
Exhibit design is the most powerful and the least understood element of trade show exhibiting. While the need to set clear, measurable goals for the trade show arena is well-established, it is less well understood how goals impact your exhibit design choices. So how do you know that a design is right for you? What are some of the key considerations for a successful environment? Are there design tips that will help improve your overall trade show results?

The right display design will support your goals and make it easier to attain them. In this report, we'll be addressing the issues that will enable you to acquire the island display design that will best serve your marketing and sales efforts.



# Optimize Orientation

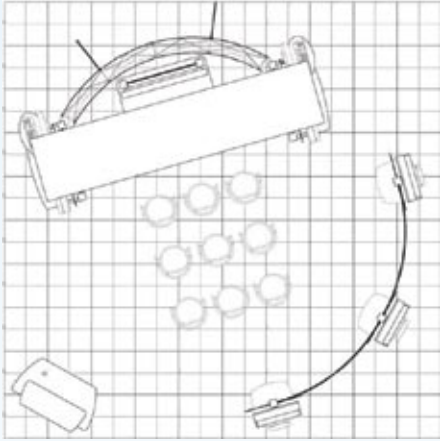
Examine the location of your space on the show floor plan and its proximity to the show entrance, main aisles and areas intended for attendees to gather for education sessions, networking, refreshments, etc. While your display should look good from every angle on the show floor, it should also be oriented to face the heaviest flows of traffic.



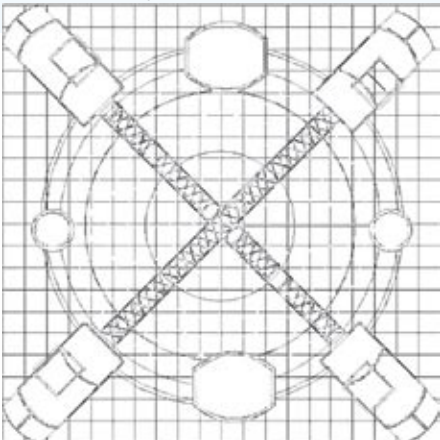
## Control Traffic Flow

Island spaces offer visitors a 360° view of your exhibit. Here are a few examples of floor plans, and how display orientation within the space channels traffic flow.

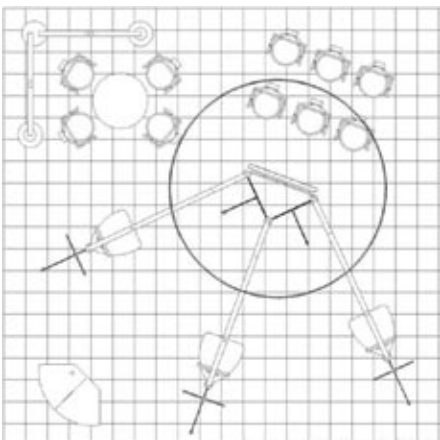
A) Activity is located in the center for maximum visibility from all sides making it the most efficient use of floor space.



B) Activities are located at the corners to maximize traffic flow and exposure from the aisles.



C) Activity is located asymmetrically for dynamic effect and to control traffic flow.



# Aim High

Island spaces are popular among exhibitors for several reasons. Island spaces offer the real estate within which to promote your products and services and engage more visitors simultaneously. Island spaces are often strategically positioned on the show floor plan to benefit from maximum exposure and traffic density. And psychologically, larger spaces are associated with power, dominance and trust. So an island display portrays a company as a prominent player conveying its leadership position in the industry. Industry research indicates that exhibit size increases attendee memorability.

The first step is to get the attention of visitors. One sure way to do that is to build high. A 20x20 island offer 4 times the space of a 10x20 inline space because of the height allowance. Use it to your advantage. Stand head and shoulders above the crowd by filling the height limit of your space. Draw visitors to you with commanding graphics at high points where they may be viewed from a distance and ensure that you're visible from every direction.

Tall structures such as towers can serve multiple uses – storage, an anchor to which other structural elements are connected, and as surface walls for mounting plasma screens.

**Tip:** Lightweight printed fabric structures can be attached to tower structures to provide a dramatic effect without the expense of the rigging equipment needed to suspend them from the ceiling. And your structures may be set to rotate to draw attention through motion.



# Open Up

Remember people do business with people so you need a display that buyers feel comfortable approaching and entering. Visitors are more apt to enter a warm, inviting environment. Think of your target visitors as specialized and discerning shoppers that you must entice into your space.

An open design is easily accessible from multiple entry points, welcoming to potential clients and offers easy visitor flow within your space. In a recent study by Trade show Week, exhibitors cited booth layout as one of the top three factors that improved their show results. Specifically they noted more entry points, more open space and less clutter.

An uncluttered space enables you to control the focus of your visitors' attention and helps to create an approachable atmosphere.

**Tip:** As a general rule you want at least 60% of the frontage open and at least 60% of the floor space in the exhibit unoccupied.



# Lure Attendees

First you want to spark a visitor's interest, selling comes after. Visitors are flooded by stimuli when they enter a show - lights, colors, noise, and crowds. It takes a visitor seconds to walk past and sum up whether or not to stop at your display.

You want to capture their attention, intrigue them, and make them stop in the midst of a hectic atmosphere – long enough for a member of your team to begin an interaction.

Use something or someone to attract passersby and encourage them to stop. The attraction you choose may involve one or more of the five senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch.



- Sight – Visitors recognize your brand or are intrigued enough by what they see in your display to stop. Large screen video presentations can be used to get attention, support theatre style presentations or run your “story” on a continuous loop.



- Sound – Visitors are attracted to sounds emanating from your booth whether its music, a presenter’s voice, or the audio supporting a large screen monitor program.



- Smell - Its the strongest sense for triggering associations and memories. Good smells such as aromatic fragrances or food scents such as cookies or popcorn can reach out to visitors and lure them in from the aisles.



- Taste - Offer beverages or light refreshments to entice your visitors’ palettes. It may help lengthen the duration of their visit. If your company is associated with food products, sampling is a great way to build traffic and demonstrate your business.



- Touch – Entice visitors with a tactile experience, the opportunity for true hands-on interaction.



# Determine Activities

So once you've stopped visitors and greeted them, what do you want them to do in your exhibit space? You need to define the activities to take place in your booth and, if applicable, their sequence for your visitors. Consider the possibilities:

## Attend a theatre style presentation

Live presentations are an extremely powerful strategy. Determine how many visitors you want to accommodate at each session. Seating will consume a portion of your floor space. Formal presentations involve 5 or more people hearing or seeing it. In addition you should allow some distance for optimum viewer comfort, approximately 5-10' from the presenter or plasma screen for example. Studies indicate that a display featuring an activity creates more memorability than a static one.



## Participate in a semi-private or private meeting.

Whether you are reinforcing existing customers or taking steps to convert a prospect into a customer, relationships are all about recognition, validation, and welcome. You may need some space to support small group conversations to make your customers feel recognized and valued. Sensitive negotiations or the need to conceal competitive discussions may require more privacy. If you plan to provide collateral materials and/or refreshments for meetings, keep in mind that they may need to be accessed from storage nearby and possibly refrigerated.

## Receive visitors/ collect measurement metrics.

Determine at what point(s) visitors may enter your display, their visit with you recorded, their benchmark data collected, and your collateral materials dispensed before exit from your exhibit. This will ensure that you plan for the location, distribution and/or storage of scanners, leads, surveys, product literature, technical guides, premium incentive gifts, etc.



## View products

According to trade show research, 76% of attendees arrive at the show with an agenda. That is, they've researched exhibitors in advance to create their "must see" list. The number 1 reason attendees visit trade shows is to see new products and services.

Highlighting new and popular products is essential. Which products you need in your exhibit, their sizes and quantities will guide where and how to show them to their best sales advantage. You want to strategically position your best sellers to draw people in.

Small products may be viewed within lockable showcases, set upon shelves, hung from retail merchandise racks, or placed on pedestals, etc. These surfaces may be integrated within the exhibit structure or designed to stand alone. Larger products may require their own platform or viewing station.

## Demonstrate products

Nothing sells a product as effectively as the ability to directly engage with it. Whenever possible, let attendees touch your products or experience your services. Give attendees something to do, to engage and interact with.

Demonstrations and 'try it' models are fantastic selling tools: make sure that your display contains adequate space to include these elements. Work with your team to discover how much room you actually need to showcase your materials. And keep in mind that, you may need to allow for free space around your product demonstration areas for people to circulate.



If the quantity or size of your products requires too much space, you should consider presenting them graphically or using computer driven presentations. Exhibit staff may conduct guided tours with a few visitors simultaneously or simply let your visitors have self-service access.

Kiosks are an elegant way to promote the location of computer stations within your space. Taller than counters, kiosks offer areas for graphic messaging, task lighting, keyboard surfaces and lockable storage for equipment.



# Graphic Influence

Graphics are the workhorse of your display. Graphics attract attention, convey your message and build recognition of your brand. They also offer you the added benefit of being easily exchanged to target different market segments or updated to reflect changes in your business. Together your graphics work as team, complementing each other, and presenting a unified and cohesive message.

To be one of your most effective communication tools on the show floor, your graphics should be easy-to-read. In general its easier to read dark text on light background. However, the reverse would apply to backlit graphics. Its also important that your graphics are visible and legible from the distance at which they will be seen by visitors.

Each graphic in your display has a role in your messaging hierarchy. There are three basic levels in this hierarchy.

## First tier – Identification

Think of it as the title of your story. Your highest and largest signs should be bold, visible and easy-to-read from outside the exhibit. Most often, these carry your company name and/or logo. To be viewed from a distance of 20', text should be located between 8-16' above the ground.

## Second tier – Directional

These are the subheads of your messaging. Readable from an appropriate eye level distance, these graphics are designed to direct visitors to specific areas or product groupings within your space. Graphic signage when used as “product indexing” can positively impact exhibit traffic and create product interest. Text should be located no higher than 6-7' from the ground to remain within the average viewer’s sightline.

## Third tier – Informational

This the body copy level. Bite-sized messages designed for individual consumption, they communicate specific details about your products and services.



**Tip:** Avoid placing text on the surfaces below 4 ft high as they are more susceptible to being blocked from view by elements such as people or booth furnishings such as counters.

# Lighting

Graphics need intense lighting to pop. Because lighting has its own tint – pink, green, blue – the colors in your graphics will shift depending on the lighting source illuminating them. Plan to review your graphic test proofs under the type of lighting you will have in your display - - incandescent, fluorescent, halogen, LED, etc.



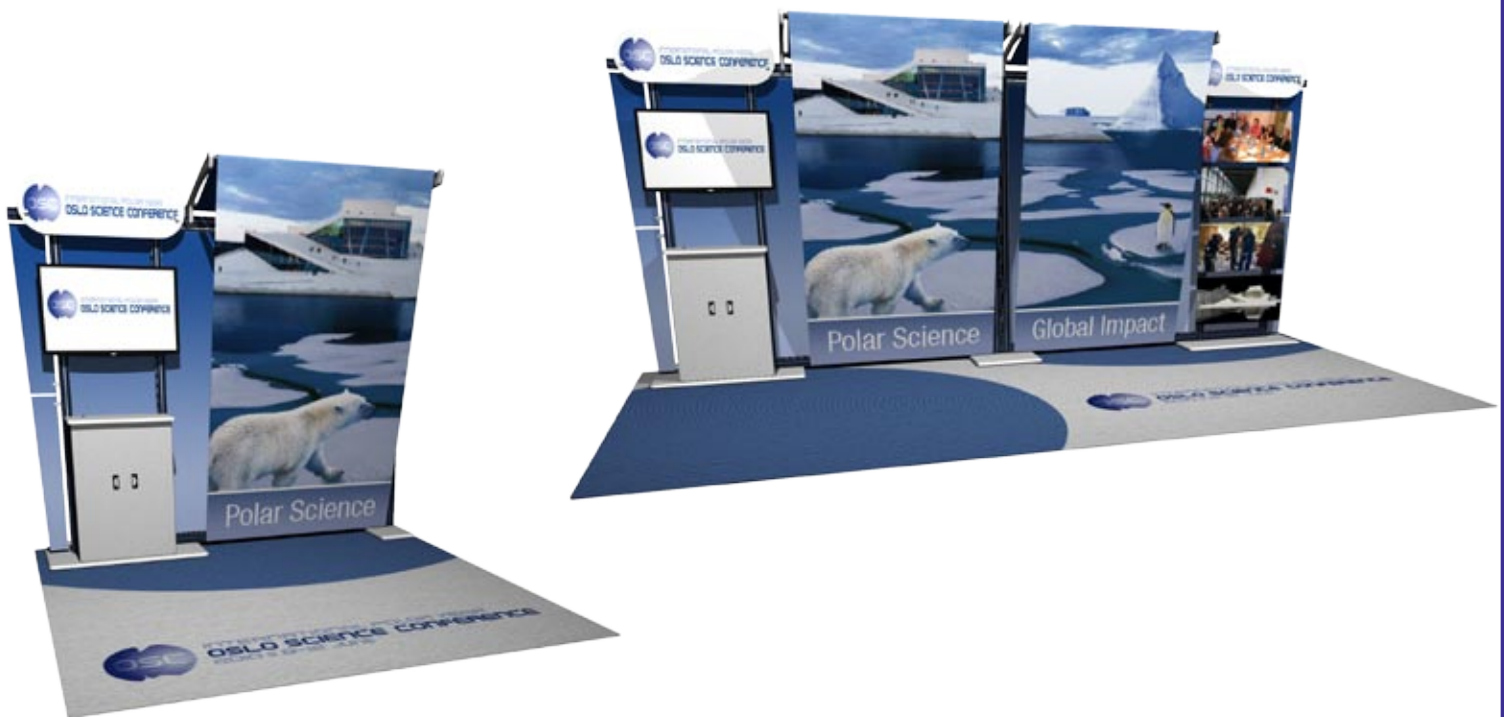
# Exhibit Design and Your Budget

Keep in mind when considering how much funding to allocate to display design that trade shows are an extremely visual medium: attendees shop first and foremost with their eyes. That being said, often what differentiates a great exhibit from a so-so one is about how smart you spend your available budget.

Custom modular exhibits are gaining in popularity among companies exhibiting in island spaces. This is due in part to recent innovations that enable designers to produce exhibits that rival traditional custom-built.

Custom modular island displays offer exhibitors custom-built style with the added advantage of being able to be repurposed. That is, components may be rearranged to offer fresh floor layouts or serve in smaller spaces and be augmented to expand into larger island venues. Many companies are spreading the budgetary impact of their display investment over several events to achieve a positive ROI on each event. Before you start the design process you should ask yourself what other spaces you want the ability to use your display in, to further leverage your investment.

- Do you want to set any of the display up in a non-trade show environment? These might include your lobby, at a sales meeting, or your staff training facility to name a few.
- Do you plan to exhibit in spaces that are smaller?
- Do you want the ability to expand into larger spaces?



Equally important are the significant savings in operational and ownership costs exhibitors realize with a custom modular display. On average, custom modular exhibits are 50-60% lighter than their custom built counterparts. Custom modular displays can be packed into fewer cases, resulting in dramatically lower shipping and drayage rates. And replacing modular components is far less expensive than custom-built ones.

While individual results may vary depending on your specific design, we recently compared Nomadic's average operational and ownership costs to those of the average custom-built display using industry published data sources as shown in the chart below.

So be upfront and direct with your display company regarding your budget. If appropriate, discuss renting your display. This option is a great value to companies who are new to trade shows, want to test new markets or take an island space for that once-a-year national or international event.

<b>20 x 20 Exhibit 4 shows in Year 1</b>	<b>Avg. Custom</b>	<b>Nomadic Display</b>
Design & Fabrication	\$68,400	\$60,400
Operational Expenses:		
Transportation	\$56,000	\$24,000
Drayage	\$16,200	\$10,800
Installation and dismantle	\$16,200	\$14,800
Annual Managementt:		
Return inspections	\$1,400	\$1,000
Maintenance	\$8,800	\$900
Storage	\$2,850	\$3,050
Total ownership cost per year	\$169,850	\$114,500
	<b>Total annual savings</b>	<b>\$55,350</b>
	% of annual ownership savings	33%

Source: 2008 EDPA Economic Survey  
Exhibitor Magazine, Sep 2008

# Working With Your Exhibit Designer

In general you need a display that serves as a branding tool and a selling tool. Combining your goals with the elements of strong, effective design is challenging. And it is critically important to embrace the appropriate display design to facilitate the best possible presentation of your marketing message and value proposition. This is why its important to have skilled professionals on your side.

While you undoubtedly have many other responsibilities, allow yourself plenty of time for a new display design. Waiting too long to get started can result in a design not achieving its full potential. In addition, you want to avoid extra fees such as rush charges to expedite the fabrication of your display.

Work backwards from your show date and allow yourself:

- Two weeks to circulate your objectives and gain consensus and establish a budget
- Two weeks to start meetings with your display designer and obtain a production schedule
- Four weeks to six weeks to finalize your design, approve graphics, complete fabrication and ship



Begin the conversation by sharing your goals and objectives with your Display Consultant. They need to understand what you hope to achieve at the show: they'll have the insight to help you position your products and services in the most effective way possible.

Many display companies use a questionnaire to help gather information. A brief enables you to gain the internal support from key stakeholders – members of your management team, marketing and sales teams – by capturing and documenting a shared vision. The brief will serve as a platform between you, your Display Consultant and your Display Designer. In addition you may use it as a benchmark against which to evaluate design proposals.

On the next page is a sample Exhibit Design Brief which is designed to help you capture and record your vision.



# Exhibit Design Brief

## Key Contacts (Internal stakeholders and external parties such as agencies)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Company Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City/St/Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fax

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name/Role

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name/Role

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Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name/Role

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name/Role

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

### Show Information

\_\_\_\_\_  
First Show Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of First Show

\_\_\_\_\_  
Location

\_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum Booth Height

\_\_\_\_\_  
Space Size

X

Booth number -Mark your space on the show floor plan and those of your key competitors.

### Background

Describe your company: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe what your company does: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe why or how your company helps its customers: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe your competitive environment – key competitors, your position in market, challenges \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe what you are most satisfied with in your current trade show/event display. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe what you are least satisfied with in your current trade show/event display. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Top Ten Critical Considerations in Exhibit Design

1. List your company's measurable goals for participating in this event in order of priority: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Describe how you will evaluate whether your new display is successful: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Who is the target audience you are trying to reach at the event? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Describe how you want your brand portrayed in the design - image style, messages, themes, corporate colors etc.:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Describe the products/services you want to promote at the show in detail. Include key benefits, competitive advantages, major selling points and unique qualities: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. List which, if any, products/services should be displayed together: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Describe what you want visitors to do in your exhibit after you have stopped or greeted them. Include the activities they will view, or participate in, such as video programs, live presentations, interactive demos, meetings, prize drawings etc.: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Describe the materials you plan to provide to visitors in the exhibit such as refreshments, product samples, literature, flash drives, premiums gifts, etc.: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What is your display budget (including graphics and design)? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Into what other space sizes may you want to reconfigure your new display? \_\_\_\_\_



# In Conclusion

Your trade show exhibit should focus on understanding what you want your design to do for you. Beginning with a strong grasp of what you plan to achieve at the trade show – your goals and objectives – and how your exhibit design can be used to achieve those goals.

From there, you can progress to working with your exhibit designer to achieve exactly what you're looking for. This is the most efficient way to approach exhibit design: time is money, and you don't want to waste your limited resources. Realize maximum value on your investment by having a strategic plan for your trade show, and use design to execute it.