



Common Booth Blunders even Experienced Exhibitors Make

There is a fine line between what makes one exhibit good and another exhibit great. Either something is missing or something is added that takes away from your staff's productivity or your exhibit's effectiveness and professionalism. A lack of attention to detail can really mess up a good company image. Here are my most irritating pet peeves. I would love to hear yours.

1. Take down that horrible ID Sign! That ugly black and white cardboard sign with your company name on it that is pinned to the curtain on your back wall drape is there to show you which booth space is yours. After setup of your display get rid of it. 8 out of 10 exhibitors left that two dollar sign up, peaking out over the top of their \$6000 display. Yuk!! It completely distracts from your beautiful presentation and is a tell-tale sign of inexperience. I was compelled to suggest its removal to at least 10 exhibitors at the show, but only a few bothered to remove it.

2. Get rid of the candy bowl. What is the purpose of having candy at your booth if you are not selling candy or using the candy to reinforce your theme or marketing message? You might think that it draws prospects to your booth. Yes, it does. They come by, grab a handful of chocolate and rush off. What good is that? No exhibitor I have ever encountered that has a bowl of candy at their booth has ever engaged me when I come by for a piece. Save the candy for Halloween.

3. Is that table necessary? I know that your booth space includes a 6' table, but do you really need it? If you do need it do you have to place it like a barrier across the front of your booth space? If you are spreading out your five stacks of brochures and one stack of business cards across the tabletop trying to fill that space you don't need the table. Purchase a free-standing literature rack and a small podium counter instead. Keep your booth space open and inviting. Draw attendee into your space. If you have lots of samples to show or need the table for a demonstration or other important items, then think twice whether you want it positioned across the opening to your display as a barrier between you and your customers. Sometimes that configuration works perfectly, but it's more likely not necessary and more importantly it usually blocks the attendee's view of your marketing message and beautiful graphics on your display that you spent a ton of money on. Consider placing the table perpendicular to your back wall or you can just put the table in the aisle during set up and they will take it away?

4. Can you spring for a custom table cover? If you plan to keep the table in your space, please purchase an imprinted table cover that coordinates with your other display elements. When you have a gorgeously designed display in your booth, nothing stands out like a sore thumb more than a table covered in the drape that the show provided. It's a simple fix that will provide a more cohesive look to your company image.

5. Do you need all those chairs? Are you really going to let your employees sit down in the booth? Do you want your exhibit to be a rest stop for attendees or encourage them to sit for twenty minutes and chat with your team? I didn't think so. If you are not hosting a demonstration or consultations at your booth please remove those chairs. Not only are they taking up valuable space in your booth, but most of the time they are blocking your graphics from the customer's view.

6. Why is your literature so messy? Stacks of flyers and brochures spread across your counter look sloppy and detract from your professionalism. Spend a few bucks on a couple acrylic tiered literature holders or a collapsible literature rack. Elevate your important information, keep your display counter tidy and minimize the time it takes to straighten stacks of paper.

7. Don't you know three's a crowd? As you are planning your exhibit space a 10x10 booth seems pretty big, but in reality, by the time you put your display, a table, products, literature, banners and people inside there really isn't that much room. Three or more people in a 10x10 booth is way too many. Not only is it intimidating to attendees, but you are blocking out the view of the display that you spent a fortune creating. A good rule of thumb is two people maximum per 10x10 space.

8. Your graphics are giving me eye-strain. Less is more when it comes to the messages printed on your signs and display graphics. You do not have to tell people about everything you do or everything you sell. Attendees walk past your booth in about 6 seconds. If what they can read in that short time period does not resonate with their needs then they will not stop to talk to you. Keep your statements short and powerful. Succinct messages, few words, short sentences, large font size.

9. What's with all the free stuff? Yes I think a clever give-away can be effective and a game or contest will attract attendees, but at least get something in return. So many exhibitors seem to think their job is to hand out free stuff all day. They have pyramids of post-it notes, rows of water bottles or mounds of mouse pads strewn across their table. That's great if you have a bottomless budget, but if you don't then use the gift as a reward for playing the game, taking the survey or providing contact information. Display a few then keep the rest out of sight.

10. If you are tired, take a nap. Sitting down at a tradeshow is not acceptable, unless you are having a consultation with clients, which also should be reconsidered. Take the chairs out of your booth. Schedule the staff on 4 hour shifts to reduce fatigue. If someone needs to sit then let them leave and take a break. Your staff will look more approachable and refreshed.