



Exhibit Ergonomics: Two Important Issues That Improve the Effectiveness of Your Exhibit

By Jefferson Davis, Competitive Edge

There are so many factors that must be taken into consideration when designing an exhibit that really works. And while your exhibit house should be the experts on ensuring your exhibit works, it is helpful for exhibit and marketing managers to have a working knowledge of effective exhibit design principles.

Here are two critical factors; the first factor is ensuring your exhibit grabs the visual attention of attendees and quickly communicates who you are, what you do, and why the attendee should stop and engage.

There are three specific viewing tiers in an exhibit that need to be given careful consideration. For a **peninsula or island exhibit** they are:



1. **Top viewing tier:** Typically a hanging sign that can be seen from a distance around the exhibit hall. It needs to communicate the messages of who you are and what you do. Lighting and motion can increase the impact.
2. **Middle viewing tier:** Typically part of your exhibit property and can be seen as attendees approach your exhibit. It needs to reinforce what you do and why they should be interested in stopping and engaging.
3. **Eye level viewing tier:** Typically part of the exhibit property and may include solution area graphic panels and product stations and kiosk. It needs to reinforce the why and provide more information on how.

For an **inline exhibit** they are:

1. **Top viewing tier:** Company logo answering the who question with short narrative copy answering the what you do question should be at the top of the exhibit.
2. **Eye-level viewing tier:** Value proposition or reason why they should stop should be highly visible. Include a few large visual images that support the copy.
3. **Mid-level viewing tier:** Inserting a few copy bullets is an effective way to deliver drill down information.



Once you visually grab the attention of the attendee, now you must give careful consideration to the critical issues of accessibility and navigation in the exhibit.

For smaller in-line booths, this may be simply ensuring that tables, counters or product displays are not blocking attendees from entering your space. There is a psychological shift that takes place when a person crosses your carpet line and enters your space, so you want to avoid leaving attendees standing in the aisles, if at all possible. If you must have a table or counter along the front, at least pull it back a few feet from the carpet line encouraging the attendee to cross the line and enter your space.

For larger island exhibits, take a careful look at points of entry from all sides of your exhibit and ensure it is easy to enter and to exit from all sides. If it's difficult to enter from all sides, this will reduce the number of people entering your booth. If it appears difficult to exit, many attendees will avoid entering at all for the fear of being trapped in the booth for longer than they want to be.

Once you have designed your exhibit so that it is easy to enter and exit, now you have to think about making visitor navigation within the space as easy and efficient as possible.

In smaller booths, this will mean reducing the amount of furnishings and products in the booth. You need to have enough open space for the attendee so they don't feel cramped and avoid your space. For companies with multiple and/or larger products, this will mean bringing fewer products. If this describes you, the hierarchy in terms of what to bring should be 1) new products, 2) products that address a top of the mind problem or issue, and 3) your pillar product or service.

In larger booths, this means having well defined solution areas that are clearly marked with mid-level signage. You also want to give careful consideration of where you physically place products within the exhibit. Grouping products by application, type or usage in the warehouse or distribution center can help create a natural flow within the exhibit. Providing learning and hands-on product demonstration areas will help create a more valuable attendee experience. Being thoughtful and strategic in designing the navigation of your exhibit can help you increase the amount of time attendees spend in your exhibit and better support cross-selling objectives.

In closing, if your exhibit does a great job of: 1. attracting attention and quickly communicating what, why, and who, 2. making entrance and exit easy from all sides, and 3. making navigation within the booth obvious and efficient, you will create an exhibit environment that attracts more attendees in the exhibit hall.

Jefferson Davis, president of Competitive Edge is known as the "*Tradeshow Turnaround Artist*". Since 1991, his consulting and training services have helped clients improve their tradeshow performance and results to the tune of over \$800M. Mr. Davis can be reached at 704-814-7355 or Jefferson@tradeshowturnaround.com