



BEGINNER TO WINNER:
guide to become a better exhibitor



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GUIDE TO BECOME A BETTER EXHIBITOR

For the novice exhibitor, entering into the world of trade show and event marketing can be intimidating. This Beginner to Winner trade show guide is designed to help you masterfully navigate the challenges brought forth by trade shows with expert advice on everything from event planning and budgeting to managing your trade show assets.



1

PLANNING FOR A TRADE SHOW

To ensure that your trade show campaign is well-organized, you should ideally begin planning a year in advance of the show. During these crucial months, you will first select the trade show, set clear event marketing goals and objectives, draft a concise budget outlining event-related expenses and create a timeline to keep on schedule with important dates and deadlines.

STEP 1:

SETTING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Benchmarks and goals serve as a roadmap for trade show plans and strategies. Because trade shows are a strategic investment in time, money and resources, you will need to center your goals on measurable criteria—such as leads collected, value of new business, amount of total sales and prospect consultations—to prove return on your investment. After the show, evaluate your performance and make tweaks and adjustments for future events.

WINNING GOAL EXAMPLES:

- » Increase brand prominence within industry
- » Launch new products and services
- » Build better relationships with current clients
- » Generate qualified new business leads for the sales team

STEP 2:

EVENT SELECTION:

Selecting the right event is crucial if you want to have a significant impact with your target audience. To begin, acquaint yourself with trade show opportunities within your industry or niche and make a list of the ones that best align with your marketing goals and objectives. After compiling a list of events, identify the shows you believe will yield the highest return on your trade show investment.

Contract space in the show as soon as you can. Booth space is limited, must be reserved in advance and involves a cost, which varies according to square footage, type (inline, island and corner) and, at times, location on the exhibition floor.

WINNING TIPS:

- » Request show statistics to compare attendee numbers and demographic information.
- » Select national shows over regional events if you are looking to heighten brand exposure.
- » Identify shows that attract a high percentage of qualified buyers.

STEP 3:

TRADE SHOW BUDGETING:

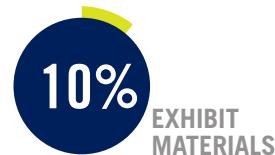
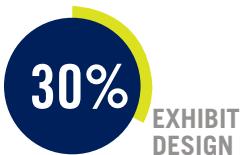
The simplest way to estimate the cost of—and how much you should budget for—a trade show is to take the cost of the exhibiting space and multiple it by three.

Example: If you plan on spending \$15,000 for space at your trade show, your budget should be around \$45,000.

WINNING TIPS:

- » Take advantage of early bird discounts from vendors.
- » Consult your “exhibitors’ kit” to identify advance warehouse cut-off dates to avoid additional fees.
- » Pay close attention to show services while planning your budget.

after creating a rough budget estimate,
break down your event-related costs as follows:



Source: “Budgeting For Dummies” by EXHIBITOR Magazine

STEP 4:

SCHEDULING AND TIMELINES:

Schedules and timelines are important tools for trade show planners and serve to structure trade show planning around concrete dates. Timelines help exhibitors save money by preventing missed deadlines and other costly mistakes.

When drafting your trade show timeline, begin by organizing into quarters or three month intervals. Place the most time-sensitive items at the beginning of your timeline to make sure they are done promptly.

WINNING TIPS:

- » Book your booth space early for a prime location on the show floor.
- » Create a spreadsheet, Google sheet or shared calendar to track progress of deadlines.
- » Give yourself enough time to design the right exhibit for your brand.

**it is recommended to follow a 12-month timeline
when planning your trade show:**

12

Months Out

- Book space in show
- Create a budget

9

Months Out

- Select your exhibit partner
- Design your exhibit
- Set goals and objectives

6

Months Out

- Develop a marketing plan
- Select and train staff
- Plan event logistics, electric, rigging, flooring and more

3

Months Out

- Begin pre-show marketing
- Finalize booth materials
- Finalize travel plans
- Finalize shipping and drayage



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CHOOSING AN EXHIBIT PARTNER

Finding the right exhibit partner is essential for first-time exhibitors. An experienced and skilled exhibit partner will make exhibit design as simple and streamlined as possible by taking your goals and budget in mind and crafting the perfect solution to meet your exhibiting needs.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN AN EXHIBIT PARTNER:

When searching for the right exhibit partner, price should not be the only factor. You should look at what the exhibit partner offers when it comes to **expertise, quality materials, structural integrity, warranties and graphic options**. The adage, “You get what you pay for,” is especially true when it comes to many exhibit types, especially custom-designed.



PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING:

An ideal exhibit partner will meet your needs throughout the design process. However, an exceptional exhibit partner is one who will not only design and build your exhibit, but one that offers **full end-to-end support** for the many facets of exhibiting, such as storing and prepping your exhibit for all shows, managing your exhibit shipping and logistical needs and providing installation and dismantle services.

12 questions to ask!

Before heading into your meeting, create a list of questions and concerns to present to your potential exhibit partner. Below are our top 12 recommended questions to ask, but feel free to tailor to your own needs.

How long have you been in business?

Who will be my primary contact at your company?

Do you offer services such as building, installing and storage?

What will I be responsible for during the exhibit design process?

What are the requirements I need to provide to you?

Where will you build and store my exhibit?

Can you provide me with a price list of fees and services?

What percentage of your projects end up at or below your client's budget?

What work will be subcontracted, and what markup I can expect?

Does your company provide rental exhibits?

Will you provide me with references from past clients?

Do you have a portfolio of past projects you have designed?





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DESIGNING AN EXHIBIT

After selecting the perfect exhibit partner, it is important to familiarize yourself with the most popular exhibit layouts and types. With the range of exhibit options available, you will need to select a solution that is not only cost-effective, but one that will help you accomplish your on-the-floor goals.

FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH EXHIBIT LAYOUTS:



➤ **Inline exhibits** are typically 10' x 10' or 10' x 20' where only one or two sides are exposed to trade show aisles.



➤ **Island exhibits** are typically 20' x 20' or larger and are exposed on all sides to the trade show aisles.



➤ **Peninsula exhibits** are exhibits exposed to the aisles on three out of four sides.

UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN POPULAR EXHIBIT TYPES:



» **Portable displays** are smaller exhibit solutions that can be set up by one or two people. Available in a variety of graphic options and sizes, portable displays are good solutions for smaller events.



» **Off-the-shelf** modular displays are typically available in 10' x 10', 10' x 20' and 20' x 20' sizes. These exhibits feature fabric graphics and aluminum extrusion pieces that fit together simply.



» **Custom modular exhibits** are popular due to their versatility. Modular exhibits can be modified to fit into multiple space sizes and orientations. They offer exhibitors a multitude of design options and often require an on-site crew for setup and tear down.



» **Custom exhibits** are one-of-a-kind designs fabricated from a variety of materials including metals, fabric and wood are designed to meet the particular needs of an individual exhibitor. Custom exhibits do require an on-site crew for setup and tear down.



A DEVELOPING A MARKETING PLAN

Effective trade show marketing campaigns are comprised of a collection of moving parts, seamlessly working together to bring maximum brand exposure and return on investment to an exhibitor. To help you better manage trade show marketing plans, we provide you with concise tips that can be implemented seamlessly into an event marketing campaign.

PRE-SHOW MARKETING:

The foundation of a successful trade show marketing campaign begins months ahead of an event. It is recommended to begin your pre-show marketing program two to three months in advance of the show and focus all of your efforts around your goals.

For example, if your goal is to increase sales, use your sales team to communicate show promotions and schedule times for in-booth visits.

WINNING TIPS:

- » Send pre-event emails to clients and prospects with free passes to generate buzz.
- » Plan your own party, dinner or event surrounding the show.
- » Launch a pre-show contest to build excitement.
- » Build a landing page in support of your event campaign to raise awareness.
- » Use media contacts to publish press releases and articles about your company's participation in the event.

IN-EVENT MARKETING:

Marketing on the trade show floor will help your company increase trade show ROI. It is important to attract the right people to your booth, so consider your goals when planning your in-event marketing campaign tactics.

WINNING TIPS:

- » Friendly staff make attendees feel comfortable with approaching your exhibit.
- » In-event promotions such as giveaways, contests and games are effective at attracting crowds.
- » Lively and engaging product demonstrations will pique the interest of passersby.

To get the most out of trade show marketing, pre-, in- and post-show strategies have to align well with one another. To learn more about smart event marketing and best practices, download our informative and easy-to-follow [Smart Marketer's Guide](#) and check out our blog at [nimloktradeshowmarketing.com](#)

POST-SHOW MARKETING IDEAS:

After an event has ended, you and your team need to turn the attention to converting newly acquired leads and prospects into clients.

WINNING TIPS:

- » Instruct your sales team to quickly follow-up with prospects after the show.
- » Create content, such as blog and social media posts, covering the highlights of your trade show campaign.
- » Motivate your prospects to take action via targeted social media and email campaigns.



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ASSET MANAGEMENT

Your trade show exhibit and assets are significant investments that need to be properly handled and managed. The best way to protect your valuable trade show assets is by partnering with an experienced exhibit vendor. With the right partnerships your exhibit properties will arrive on time, be installed and dismantled carefully, repaired when needed and stored in a safe environment.

maintenance, repairs and refurbishing

After multiple uses, even the most solidly built exhibit needs refreshing to keep it floor-ready between shows. After each show, inspect and clean your exhibit to address normal wear and tear. Contact your exhibit partner for any serious issues, such as hardware damage or lost components.

warehousing and storage

Many exhibit partners provide warehouse space to store exhibits between shows. Before shipment and upon return, make sure you get a full inventory list of exhibit components and assets as well as an inspection of your exhibit to avoid missing items and unwanted surprises when assembling your exhibit.

installation & dismantle

For exhibits that involve more complex assembly, it is best to contract a professional installation and dismantle (I&D) service to set up and tear down your exhibit. Experienced I&D companies can install and dismantle exhibits quickly and properly, letting you focus on your trade show marketing.



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With trade shows—as with all disciplines—the more practice and experience you gain, the easier and more streamline the trade show process will become. As you continue to hone your trade show prowess, you will be able to increase your customer base and your trade show ROI. Begin today by identifying events for your company and taking steps to outline a plan for each show.