Pack, Ship, and Wow: Portable Trade Show Exhibits Made Effortless

Description

Every exhibitor has seen the two types of trade show travel. The first involves a lorry, a team of crew, a forklift driver, an install team, and a small prayer to the gods of logistics. The second sees the exhibit travel in a couple of carry cases, set up by the same people who will man it, and be waiting to receive the coffee orders before the doors open.

The second type of travel is what portable exhibits are for, and companies have become wise to the real-world cost savings of choosing this alternative to traditional exhibitions. Not in value, but in efficiency: the shipping, labor, and storage costs between shows, alongside the stress that the first type of travel brings on the morning of the event, are all very real.

What follows is what makes the portable route work, and what to look for to make certain it does.

5 Ways to Make Portable Exhibits Easier to Transport and Set Up

1. Portable Doesnâ??t Mean Generic

The old stigma of a portable exhibit is one of small size and generic appearance: a portable exhibit is likely to be bland, to use pre-made sections, and to be unable to compete with a proper custom build.

This stigma was deserved in the case of a few years ago, but is firmly in the past.

Portable systems can now make fully custom displays with the aid of full printing, fabric walls of completely branded graphics, backlit options, counters, monitor mounts, shelving, and lighting. A standard 10Ã?10 portable setup today is likely to rival and perhaps even beat a poorly thought-out double that size in terms of presentation, while taking up only the space of a booth. The design principles that make it work are the same ones that any good exhibit designer will have applied, knowingly or not: a single large graphic and minimal other structure.

Companies that make use of a season of these shows, using trade show exhibits that are portable where it makes sense and custom where it is necessary, will see the benefits of both, from the reduced costs to the increased quality of their stand.

2. The Case Is the Product

Consider, for a moment, something most buyers rarely think about: the cases. They dictate much more than the rest of the system as far as how easy or otherwise the exhibit is to get to the show.

Good portable systems pack up into sensible sizes, with wheeled cases that allow one person to move the stand from the vehicle to the venue without help. The best systems take this a step further. The case doubles as a podium or counter when the display is set up, and therefore requires no extra items or space to be shipped.

Before buying a system, the sensible buyer will test whether or not one reasonably fit person can move the completed package from the car park to the hall, alone, and if the answer is anything other than yes, the case may be a good point to consider rethinking the purchase.

3. Every Minute Counts

Every minute of a setup is a minute being paid for, either in the personal hours of the staff or install team, or in the mental health budget held aside for trade shows.

Well-designed portable exhibits will be erected in twenty to thirty minutes without tools, because the frame snaps together and displays are attached using magnets or similar easy mechanisms, and everything is in simple order. Poorly-designed exhibits will have a dozen different pieces, unclear instructions, and a setup process that is simple to follow but should be left to the people who put it up last year. Multiply the hours saved across a year of shows, and it becomes clear how much time this factor can free up.

The ideal, in fact, is that one person can take the exhibit from the cases to the fully set up state in half an hour, and the reverse can be accomplished just as quickly at the end of the show.

4. Lightweight Doesnâ??t Mean Shaky

The real concern over the portability of exhibits is their sturdiness. Something lightweight enough to ship easily is often rightly questioned for its ability to survive the third show in a row.

The answer to this concern lies in the materials, and particularly the frames made from lightweight but strong aluminum that can see multiple shows over their lifetime. The tension fabric graphics weigh a fraction of the rigid panels, and can be folded thousands of times and printed to photographic quality, while modern portable exhibits utilize the same fabric technology and techniques found across the industry, and are in fact designed from the outset not to be scaled-down siblings of their larger counterparts, but to be a force unto

themselves.

Reassurance is found in all the same places as in any high-standard exhibit: the joins, the fittings, the feet. Wherever multiple parts of the exhibit meet, and the promises its structure makes to hold up under pressure, is where quality is most keenly felt, and a reputable supplier is likely to back it up with a hardware warranty of their own.

5. When the Full Custom Build Isnâ??t the Spend

In the way it can reduce the costs of a show, the use of a portable exhibit can open up a new avenue for exhibitors to spend or save money: buying a good-quality structure second-hand.

Exhibitions are made to be used, and a well-maintained exhibit is likely to have several more years of shows in it after it is sold on, at a fraction of the cost of a brand-new stand and with no carbon footprint attached. For companies looking to test out new shows, scale back the number of events they hold in a year, or even just cut a corner for the sake of the budget, the used market is worth considering.

Reputable dealers will take the time needed to ensure their products are in good order and stand behind their sale, and no one at an exhibition will know what a stand costs to rent, nor is it ever likely to matter. Companies entering this market through a used trade show booth are likely to find that the savings made can be funneled into the other long-term costs of exhibiting, particularly travel and staffing.

End Point

Finding an efficient way to exhibit is rarely about finding one perfect product, but instead about considering all the costs and choosing the structure that minimizes all of them while retaining the presence the company wants at the show. Portable exhibits achieve this goal in the ways they have been chosen, by being designed around the necessity of transport and therefore using lightweight materials and simple mechanics, but also by making the set-up time a brief affair and presenting strong graphics that nobody would suspect came from a case barely larger than a shoebox.

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