



## **Booth Location: Friend or Foe?** **By Don Woodard**

Are there magical locations on the trade show floor that insure exhibiting success? It would seem so, since show management will often charge more for certain locations or use point systems that allow exhibitors with the most points to choose their booth locations first. If others get all the magical locations, then why exhibit?

The reason is because many companies have tremendous success with booth locations that are generally not identified as one of the “magical” locations. Are booth locations really that important? What can you do to equalize the playing field and maximize your exhibiting opportunities, no matter where you are located?

First, when reviewing the show floor plan, consider your proximity to the following and evaluate how each may affect your potential audience:

- Entrance/Exits
- Registration Area
- Food Service Areas
- Restrooms
- Seminar Rooms
- Power, Water, and Air Sources
- Competitors
- Windows
- Escalators/Elevators
- Building support poles

Each of the areas mentioned above may positively or negatively influence your audience. It is up to you to evaluate how they may affect your exhibit’s success.

Windows, for instance, are a rarity in convention centers; however, an exhibitor in Houston had selected a location near windows on the west side of the show-floor. Late in the afternoon, the setting sun caused such a bright glare that it was extremely uncomfortable for those within the exhibit. Although this location was quite nice during most of the show, they may have lost their “window of opportunity” to meet with some of their potential audience during the hours the sun was setting.

### **Equalize the Playing Field**

So how do you “equalize the playing field?” Regardless of your booth’s location on the trade show floor, you still need to become a target for your potential audience. You can accomplish this with Pre-show and At-show promotions, focused signs and graphics, and with good exhibit design.

Although it is a common belief that “the best spot” on the floor is essential for exhibiting success, Skip Cox, President of Exhibit Surveys, states the following, “Research concludes that in and of itself, the location of an exhibit in a hall: front, rear, right, left, center, etc. is not a major factor in performance. Factors under an exhibitor’s control, such as exhibit size, pre-show promotion, and the use of attention-getting techniques, are much more important than location in attracting visitors.” So, while location may be important, your trade show strategy is really what gets attendees to visit you.

## **Promotions**

Ideally, your customers are attending the show to see you. Make it easy for them to find you; booth numbers should always be on every marketing message. Plus, use your website. The trade shows that your company will be attending throughout the year should be listed on your website and easy to find. (Frankly, it is amazing how many companies don't use the easy and cheap marketing message.) The use of pre-show promotions should inform your existing customers and prospects of why it would benefit them to visit your booth at the show. At-show promotions should inform both your unknown and known audience of the benefits to them of visiting your booth. Post-show promotions should reiterate the benefits...a good reminder of what they saw, heard, and experienced during the show.

## **Graphics and Design**

Clear, focused graphic messages in your booth should inform the viewer of their benefits when using your products or services. If your benefits are on target with their needs, they will visit you. Do not forget that show attendees are spending their time and money to visit with people who can be of benefit to them. Graphics with focused messages are a key "equalizer."

It's easy to fall into the idea that a booth's location is the end-all, be-all factor of its success, but that idea just isn't true. Instead of pinning your ROI on that "magical" space on the trade show floor, hoping that attendees will find you, use your trade show strategy to make your booth a target.

**Don Woodard**, President of Blue Goose Exhibits, has worked in the exhibiting industry for over 30 years. He has presented seminars and training programs for exhibitors across the country. He has been a contributing author for *National Business Media's* numerous trade publications as well as *Exhibitor Builder Magazine*. He co-authored *The Still More Secrets of Successful Exhibiting* and authored *The T.S.K.S Handbook* and *The Exhibit User's Handbook: Fried Goose Eggs*.