



The Trend Toward Exhibit Rentals

By Don Woodard

There has been a surge of companies renting their trade show exhibits the past several years. Rentals are not a new phenomenon, but it is a trend that seems to be more and more predominant at trade shows. And it does make sense. There are both reasons and benefits to renting an exhibit.

The Reasons:

First, with the downturn of the economy, though some indications suggest that we are on the upswing again, many companies do not have the budgets available to purchase new exhibits, especially large ones. (Generally, the buying cycle of an exhibit ranges anywhere between 3-7 years. Once purchased, then, the exhibit structure must be able to last that long.) Yet, the same company can rent a state-of-the-art exhibit, make their desired visual statement, and save nearly 70% of the cost of a new exhibit.

Second, rentals are an ideal option for companies who want maximum flexibility within their trade show programs. Since there is no large capital expenditure, a company has the option to change the exhibit year to year or show to show, depending on the company's marketing and sales goals. This is especially useful for companies who only exhibit once or twice a year.

Third, some companies are experiencing changes of ownership, consolidations, mergers, and rebranding. Many things may need to be worked out, such as new corporate identities, logos, product lines, personnel, marketing messages, etc. Yet, they do need to continue to market at trade shows or events to maintain or increase their market-share.

The Benefits:

The biggest benefit of renting an exhibit is reduced costs. Modular exhibit systems can save the company money in both shipping and drayage expenses. Also, a significant amount of I&D labor expenses are saved, due to the large panel sizes and fast, simple (yet strong) connecting hardware. More and more systems offer designs that have speed in mind.

Cost savings are also seen between shows. By using the rental option, storage and refurbishing costs are eliminated. The money that companies save by renting allows them to redirect their funds toward other marketing activities, such as additional or upgraded graphics, ad specialties, pre and post-show promotions, direct mail campaigns, etc.

In addition to cost savings, modular systems can offer high-impact, creative design capabilities that are extremely versatile. With select systems, a company may easily and quickly change their graphics, and if desired, use large graphic messages. The exhibit design may include flat or curved graphic panels. Dye sublimated fabric graphics allow a company to create a truly unique booth and allow for unlimited sized graphic messages.

The decision to rent or to purchase really depends upon the needs and budget of the company; nevertheless, it's good to know that it's a trend that many companies favor.

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*.