

Increase Your Booth's Drawing Power with Signage

By Barry Siskind

As the lyrics to the song go, "Signs, signs everywhere there's signs." From dawn to dusk, we are instructed on how we can live our lives by signs: on the highways, in our cars, the parking lots, billboards, the convenience store, in restaurants...everywhere. So you would think that at a trade show we would be used to reading signs and give them all the attention they deserve. Not so.

We have become a population that is used to reading on the go. Highway signs tell us how fast to drive and where the next exit is located. In a grocery store, there are large signs above each aisle that indicate where certain products can be found.

Some signs are meant to be read while you are motionless. Menus written in chalk on the walls of trendy restaurants or posters in subway stations are a few examples. Unlike the highway signs which are limited to a word or two, these signs can go into greater detail because you, the customer, have an interest and are willing to spend more time.

At a trade show, your signs and graphics must satisfy both the attendee on the go and those who will stop and spend the time to read. It is a unique environment.

Think of your booth as having three interest zones.

Zone 1 - Attendees are in the aisle where you will either capture their interest or not. The biggest barrier attendees face is information overload -so much information and so little time to absorb it all. The result - 90% of the words in any trade show remain unread. This is where big attention getting showstopper graphics play an important role. The visitor walks by and is immediately attracted to a universal message that is represented in dynamic graphics. Smaller pictures won't do the trick.

Zone 2 - Now the attendee's interest has been piqued, and you need to methodically draw them into your booth. A corporate tag line should do the trick. These tag lines are short statements (less than seven words) that tell your prospects how your products and services will present a solution for them. Here your signs can go into a bit of detail, but not too much. Perhaps some of the major benefits of the product can be posted - but no more.

Zone 3 - Prospects are really interested and willing to venture back further into your booth. Here your signs can give even more information. In-booth signs strategically placed in zone two and three are designed to help the boothers in their presentation. Talking an attendee through the information is much more powerful than simply letting them read it.

The trick to creating good signs is less is better. Tell them everything, and there is no need for them to talk to a boother. Whet the attendees appetite and create a desire for more information and your signage has done it's job well.

Signs should be positioned so that most attendees can see them easily. Keep your signs away from product demonstrations (people watch the demo not the sign), games, videos, and other areas of your booth where people are likely to stand. Make sure your signs are within the attendee's sightline. This means not too high and not too low.

Your signs should be printed large enough for an attendee to read them from half way out in the aisle. The print should be clean and easy to read. Avoid difficult to read fonts and horizontal lettering which is impossible to decipher in this environment.

Use booth lighting to enhance your signs. Well-placed lighting will draw the attendee's visual attention to specific areas of your booth.

At your next show, carefully plan your signs and graphics to move your prospects easily from zone one to three.

Barry Siskind, President and Founder of [ITMC](#), is a trade show consultant, trainer, speaker, and an internationally recognized expert in trade and consumer shows. Each year, he addresses numerous conferences and association meetings around the globe. Over the past twenty-five years, Barry has traveled throughout the world working with thousands of public and private sector clients in virtually all industry groups. He creates, facilitates and delivers a wide range of services to companies involved in exhibit marketing. Barry is also a best-selling author of trade show business books: *The Successful Exhibitor*, *The Power of Exhibit Marketing*, *Making Contact*, *Bumblebees Can't Fly*, *Eagles Must Soar*, and his latest book *Powerful Exhibit Marketing*.