How to Choose the Right Space for Your Next Trade Show Booth

By LISA BERTAINA and LAURIE PENNACCHI

FACT, as it turns out, is not “the final frontier.” In fact, it’s one of the first things you should consider when you start planning for your company’s next trade show or event.

What amount of space on the trade show exhibit floor is appropriate for your company and brand? How do you go about selecting the best spot for your presence? And once you’ve selected it, how can you maximize that space? These are all important questions—and the tips below will hopefully help you to answer them.

Consider Budget First and Foremost
Before you even start thinking about what kind of size booth you want, it’s essential to have a clear sense of your company’s budget for the project. Renting a booth, as opposed to purchasing it, is a great way to start the overall costs of designing, building, implementing and storing your booth will be reduced to about a third of what they would be if you had purchased outright. You can apply some of that savings toward your booth fees, too, because regardless of how much it costs to develop your booth, space cost at many events can get quite expensive—just to participate.

Know Your Booth’s Purpose
At the start of your space determination process, right alongside the “what can we afford?” question, it’s also important to ask, “what is the reason we need this booth at the show?” When you have a clear sense of what role the booth is going to play for your company and brand on the show floor, you can start getting strategic about space. For example, it’s a big jump cost-wise to go from a 10x10 booth to a 20x20, but it might be one of the best marketing investments you’ll make if your goal is to stand out and have room for people to stay and move within your space. Is your goal to impress? To have meetings? To demo products? Perhaps it’s all or some combination of the above. Map out your goals to help determine the space required to achieve them.

Don’t Underestimate Your Brand
Picking the right size booth and space for your next show, as mentioned above, is important. It’s also important, however, to make sure you don’t underestimate your space. Small booths can be effective in the right circumstances, but a booth that is too small for what you are attempting to accomplish at the show can become cluttered and appear not well thought out—and may even do more damage to your brand and image than having no booth at all.

Location, Location, Location
If you’re a first-time exhibitor at a show, and it’s a well-attended event, such as CES or ComicCon, you’ll find your company pretty low on the pecking order in terms of who gets “first dibs” of available space locations. Don’t fret—this is simply part of the rules of the game and there are still tactics you can take to enhance your location, regardless of your seniority factor. Examine the show floor plan carefully in advance to determine whether there are any “obstacles” that might be a hindrance to your space. For example, look to avoid large columns, pillars and other obstructions that could interfere with the design or flow of your booth. Also, know where the fire extinguishers are located. At many shows you are not allowed to obstruct or build around these, so you might end up losing a chunk of your valuable real estate.

Consider Your Competition
When selecting your location for the show, it’s always important to have a sense of where your key competitors will be located. Depending on your industry and corporate strategy, you may want to be saddled right alongside them in the competition—or as far away from them as possible! Either way, it will be helpful to know where their booths are located so you can plan accordingly.

Know the Rules
Every show and convention is different, so having a “set system” that you apply to every show can be a mistake. For a huge show, such as CES, your booth can get lost in the crowd if you don’t pick a location on or near a major aisle or close to the front. Also important is knowing the rules each event dictates for its exhibitors. To understand your space, you’ll need to know— for each show—what the height restrictions are, what kinds of signage are allowed, and perhaps most importantly—how booths are mandated to set up within a space. At some shows, a “20x20” is not actually 20x20 because the edges of your booth have to comply with specific borders within your space. This can be daunting, we know. That’s why we always recommend you…

Ask for Help
When it comes to determining space for a trade show, there are lots of moving parts and it can be challenging to get your arms around everything. Speaking with an expert who is experienced and knows about the particular show where you will be exhibiting can be a huge asset to your space-planning process. As noted above, every show is different, so a well-versed pro can help you determine what idiosyncrasies of a venue to be aware of and possibly avoid.

Hopefully by reviewing these suggestions, you’ll have a better idea of what to expect when mapping out the amount of space you need in your booth design—and where that beautiful booth should be on the show floor once it’s ready!

Lisa Bertaina (President) and Laurie Pennacchi (CEO) are the co-owners of ExpoMarketing. Now celebrating its 25th anniversary, ExpoMarketing, is a pioneer of the trade show booth rental concept. For more information, visit www.ExpoMarketing.com.

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MEETINGS & EVENTS

California’s Premier Seaside Escape: Ventura County West

JUST 90 minutes to California’s Central Coast, Ventura County West breathes life into any corporate retreat, with pristine beaches, charming coastal cities, flourishing farms, orchards and vineyards. Home to Camarillo, Oxnard, Ventura and Port Hueneme, the seaside haven offers more than 200,000 square feet of conference space and 5,000 guest rooms in over 60 hotels and inns. This ideal destination can accommodate anywhere from 10 to 10,000 guests.

MEETINGS & EVENTS
LOCATION SPOTLIGHT
With value-minded, state-of-the-art facilities near water fronts, golf courses, wineries, quaint Old Towns and bustling Main Streets, this coastal haven offers more than 200,000 square feet of conference space and 5,000 guest rooms in over 60 hotels and inns.

Farm to Table Dining
Located along an agricultural greenbelt, Ventura County West is ideal for sampling fresh local seafood and locally-sourced produce.

For a behind-the-scenes experience, the Ventura Food Tour allows foodies to meet local chefs, chocolate makers, and barmasters. The outdoor farmer’s market is popular for fresh seasonal produce, hand-crafted items, artisan cheeses, gourmet sauces and olive oil, plants and flowers.

The Ventura County Wine Trail links 11 artisan wineries in Camarillo, Oxnard and Ventura that source premium grapes from vineyards all along the California coast. The wine trail has plentiful options for gourmet dining, such as the award-winning Tierra Sur, inside Herzog Wine Cellars.

Oxnard’s multicultural influences and farming heritage make it a great place to try exciting Mexican, Brazilian, Thai and Italian dishes. The destination is quickly becoming known for its brewpubs and wine bars, like Twenty88 Wine Bistro in Old Town Camarillo.

Unwind & Explore
Groups can unwind with seaside activities such as sport fishing, whale watching, boat tours and cocktail cruises to inland adventures including golfing, go-kart racing, shopping and wine tasting.

Port Hueneme is a serene beach city whose name comes from the Chumash Indian word for “resting place.” True to its name, Port Hueneme Beach Park features a long strip of soft white sand and 50
acres of beautifully landscaped parkland with picnic areas, barbecue pits, volleyball nets and a pier that is popular among the local fisherman.

Those seeking leisure at its best can head to Camarillo, which has four golf courses, including two public courses open year round: Sterling Hills Golf Club and Camarillo Springs Public Golf Course.

Style-seekers should not miss Camarillo Premium Outlets, with over 160 outlet stores, including Armani, Barneys New York, Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue and Tommy Hilfiger.

At the San Buenaventura State Beach in Ventura, visitors can parasail over the ocean, bike along the promenade, paddle through the harbor and catch waves at Surfers Point. History buffs can tour Mission San Buenaventura, the ninth and last California mission founded by Padre Junípero Serra.

From Oxnard, groups can explore the breathtaking Channel Islands National Park, which features whale watching, kayaking, riverboating and island hiking.

For more information about places to go, things to do, and ideas about hosting a meeting or event in Ventura County West, go to www.VenturaCountyWest.com/meetings.
Meeting Professionals International Introduces the MPI Academy, Launches New Certificate Programs and Experiential Event Series

Last August, Meeting Professionals International (MPI) formally introduced the new MPI Academy, an entity that encompasses and connects all of the education and learning experiences MPI delivers within the meeting and event industry and beyond. In addition, the association unveiled enhancements to its professional development offerings, including a variety of new certificate programs and experiential events. This announcement was shared during the most recent general session of MPI’s World Education Congress (WEC) in San Francisco.

The MPI Academy aligns with the Meeting and Business Event Competency Standards (MBECS) and is designed to provide multi-faceted learning opportunities for meeting professionals at all levels. Its portfolio is comprised of training courses, certificate programs, streaming sessions from MPI events, webinars and tools such as the new MPI Professional Development Roadmap, which helps individuals map out their career, pursue continuing education, and supplement their professional development.

“Our objective with the new MPI Academy is to centralize all of our educational programs and bring focus to the diverse career tracks available,” said Paul Van Deventer, president and CEO of MPI. “As we refine the way we deliver both our proprietary and partner offerings, we believe the academy will soon become the most reputable and valued source for growing one’s knowledge base and advancing one’s career.”

New and Expanded Programming

Last year, MPI began launching new education programs and has more planned in the coming months – most of which are eligible for clock hours and are designed for both planners and suppliers. Recently launched programs include the following and the latter two were offered as pre-conference sessions prior to WEC.

Meeting Essentials – Designed for novice and mid-level professionals, this program will help participants enhance their skills and competencies. The courses cover fundamental knowledge needed to execute and deliver high-quality, relevant meetings, and are recommended in preparation for the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) exam.

Sustainable Meeting Professional Certificate (SMPC) – This intensive certificate course provides education, tools and applicable instruction to immediately begin practicing sustainable meeting planning. It is built around learning and using the Sustainable Meeting Planning Program® (SMPP®), which is the only sustainable meeting planning tool independently certified by iCompil Sustainability, a division of BPA Worldwide, the industry and covers the basics of sustainability within the meeting and event industry and covers the basics of sustainability, how to create a sustainability policy, measurement, reporting and more. MPI is partnering with Positive Impact, a UK-based not-for-profit corporation, to deliver the courses.

Healthcare Meeting Compliance Certificate (HCPC)– This MPI Experiential Event Series – MPI is partnering with high-profile events in key areas such as sports, entertainment, culinary and mega-events to provide unique, intimate education experiences, including behind the scenes tours and discussions. These programs will include certificates in areas like event production and sports event management.

For more information about the MPI Academy and its suite of educational offerings including the new MPI Professional Development Roadmap, visit www.mpiweb.org/ProfessionalDevelopment.

MPI membership is comprised of approximately 18,500 members belonging to more than 80 chapters and clubs in 22 countries. For additional information, visit www.mpiweb.org.
Survey Reveals Top Hotel Trends

Providing the highest level of quality service is paramount in our business and keeping ahead of guests’ needs is a critical component.

KATHERINE LUGAR, AH&LA

The American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA) and its Foundation last year released the definitive industry survey examining the top trends in the hotel industry, which is marked by personal service, healthy lifestyles and convenience.

The survey, “Lodging Study Hotel Trends: An Inside Look at Popular Amenities and Guest Services” conducted by industry data provider STR, illustrates how hotels are adapting to consumer demands by adjusting their services and amenities to take into account guests’ needs.

This survey, funded by the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Foundation (AH&LEF), shows that in addition to advancing consumer service, hotels are also giving back, making charitable contributions and being good stewards of the environment.

Environmentally friendly programs, such as towel reuse programs, recycling capabilities and water savings programs are increasingly popular, with overwhelming majorities of hotels participating. Hotels are also giving to charities, and employees are offering their personal time to volunteer efforts.

The innovation and creativity of the hotel industry continues to benefit the guests. Travelers can expect high-speed and wireless Internet in more places, as well as in-room video on demand services and high-definition, flat screen televisions. Hotels are also prioritizing convenience and comfort with mobile check in, mobile apps, better bedding, and allergy-free rooms.

The hotel guest can also expect a healthier experience, with more access to healthy menu choices, free breakfast and health facilities.

“Providing the highest level of quality service is paramount in our business and keeping ahead of guests’ needs is a critical component,” said Katherine Lugar, president and CEO of AH&LA. “From high-tech gadgets and amenities to charitable giving to being good stewards of our environment, the hotel industry continues to grow, innovate and accommodate changing consumer behavior. It is this flexibility and remarkable adaptability that allows the hotel to grow and thrive even as other business sectors struggle.”

“Since 1988, this survey has been the most authoritative and comprehensive benchmark of services that are so important to our industry,” said Amanda Hite, President and COO of STR. “The hotel industry continues to push for innovation, staying ahead of the curve to ensure hotel guests have an excellent experience. It has been a privilege working with AH&LA on this survey, which is a helpful guide for hoteliers, industry vendors and the traveling public.”

Key findings include:
• High-definition televisions in rooms are the standard with 84% of respondents saying that these are provided. Flat screen televisions are the norm, with 96% of respondents stating their facilities stock them.
• Mobile apps for hotel service continue to grow in popularity with 33% of hotels offering an app for their guests.
• Most hotels (86%) provide computers in the lobby for complimentary use.
• Fewer hotels are charging for in-room Internet services. Only 13% of respondents charge for Internet service. This figure is down from 23% in 2012.
• 97% of respondents have a linen/towel reuse program.
• The popularity of recycling programs continue to increase, climbing steadily and achieving 64% in 2014.
• The percentage of hotels with electric car charging stations has grown to 11% from 5% just 2 years ago.
• 84% of participating hotels contribute to charities, and the majority of hotels (84%) make in-kind contributions of room nights, meeting space, goods or services.
• 82% of hotels offer complimentary breakfast. An all-time high of respondents (74%) stated that they provide healthy menu choices.
• Conversely, fewer hotels are offering newspaper delivery, in room DVD players, and mini bars. Jacuzzis are also on the decline.

The Lodging Survey is conducted every two years, and with more than 9,600 participants, it is the most comprehensive analysis of the trends in the hotel and lodging industry based on direct feedback from hotels. Respondents are also representative of the geographic makeup of the hotel industry.

The American Hotel and Lodging Educational Foundation: Invest, Educate, Empower is the industry’s philanthropic organization, dedicated to helping people build careers that improve their lives and strengthen the lodging industry. Founded in 1953, AH&LEF is a subsidiary of the American Hotel & Lodging Association and provides resources for hospitality-related education and research.

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