

Leaving Las Vegas: When the show's over & the lights go down



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What happens at Vegas trade shows doesn't have to end in Vegas, if companies will pull out their props and let the show parade itself back to the home office, rather than into storage.

When the show closes, those high-octane trade show graphics and fixtures can shine on as interior marketing, if companies realize the many ways to use them in daily business.

Make your trade show exhibit work year-round: Set your display in your headquarters lobby, as living art deco for the cafeteria, as a practical way to augment training centers or on the road as mobile sales/demo space. Because trade show properties should be flexible, robust and interesting enough to lead multiple lives.

A microcosm of brand imaging and focused product messaging, trade show material can easily animate corporate lobbies, training centers and in-house events. The fixtures disassemble easily for tear-down and set-up, and it's possible to engineer more complex systems such as portable workstations to serve dual roles.

Much of the media and property that's created for trade shows can be parlayed into daily marketing capital, letting companies gain extra mileage from their investment by leveraging properties in events, such as at user group and sales meetings. The key to this is for companies to realize that their exhibit design firm is actually an interior design partner that's already demonstrated its ability to solve a unique corporate marketing challenge.

Interior design, clear messaging and pliable architecture are the essence of what exhibit design firms do. They're experts at creating exhibits that are not just visually compelling, but are also engineered to be economical to own and flexible enough to be re-used in different venues and in different ways.

The greatest impact could happen right at home. Trade show marketing is designed to project and protect your corporate brand, so let the people who work for your company see the brand that they're building! Most employees don't see the products that their work supports; they may serve in accounting or human resources and never see their company's final product or the brand imaging behind it at a trade show.

Engineers and the marketing team work doggedly to prepare for a major event, but others must stay behind once the lights go on and don't get to experience the end result. Trade show design firms are notorious for this. Our own designers and fabricators work day and night creating the elements that go into an awesome display, but most of these employees never get out on the trade show floor to see how it really comes off.

Trade shows are typically the stage for major product launches that the company has been focusing on for months. There's a lot of hard work, stress and build-up that suddenly jumps on a plane with a handful of team players to Vegas for the week, while most everyone else waits to hear how it all turned out.

Where's the excitement in that? Where's the aura of a job well done? The answer is easy: Bring it home! It doesn't take much to reward the folks who stayed behind. Just a 10'x10' booth-in-a-box exhibit unfolded from a crate will start the cafeteria buzz will let employees know what they're part of. The logistics are easy if you plan ahead, and this also spares storage costs!

Companies can put their people into the limelight at booster events or parties staged with theatrical lighting systems and Gobo projectors from their own trade show kit. The matte black framework of optical radiance carries home the point that people really have accomplished something.

Other companies use elements of their trade show properties to stage user group meetings and mobile product demonstrations. Graphic messaging easily turns a bland hotel workspace into a focused environment that speaks to customer needs. Portable workstations are designed for easy lightweight transport and can be managed as part of a rental program by some design firms. This is a cost-effective solution that may combine rental inventory with custom components to create unique environments for different groups of users or different sales programs during the year.

Turnkey rental programs are a good example of the marketing leverage that's available to companies that collaborate as partners with their design firm. As a partner, the design firm can provide trade show management programs that help organize production, logistics and storage for all aspects of exhibition services. And, this is how the leveraging and lateral movement of trade show properties happens best.

When a company lets its design firm know what general business plans are in the works for the year, many possibilities for lateral movement beyond trade show environments can be put into play. It becomes quick and easy to set up an otherwise

elaborate exhibit in corporate lobbies and cafeterias when partners know in advance that the opportunity is available. A well-developed trade show exhibit program offers far-reaching opportunities to further support and strengthen the corporate brand image.

Partnering with the right exhibit design house will go a long way to making sure that the trade show doesn't end when the doors close.

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