

Tradeshaw Tip Sheet

This month: Green Exhibiting

Green Exhibiting: What Does it Take?

More and more companies are looking to 'go green.' Their desire comes from a more eco-friendly, responsible and earth-conscious mindset. So what does it take to go green as an exhibitor? And how far should a company go?

The answers to those questions should be determined internally, as you discover what the costs might be, what the savings might be, what impact your actions will have – as well as the perception among your clients and customers (which admittedly is a key point for many industries).

It's almost certain that when a company wants to 'go green' it will affect more than just the tradeshow booth. In fact, the whole greening is usually pursued by a champion within the company. What are your company's current commitments to

recycling, consuming energy and using eco-friendly materials?

As your company's green commitment evolves, it will extend to your tradeshow booth. So let's look at some ways that you can implement eco-friendly and sustainable practices in your exhibiting.



Booth Materials

When considering a new custom booth, be sure to raise the question of sustainable materials with your booth fabricator. Some of the materials that might be considered include bamboo, FSC certified wood, recycled metal, low VOC, organic or recycled latex paint, or tension fabric (low weight which cuts down on shipping costs and the carbon footprint of the shipping).

Many booths may be made with re-claimed materials, which can often be sourced locally. Which means lower shipping costs. Plus for each dollar spent locally, three dollars stay in the community so spending locally reduces carbon usage and helps sustain the local economy.

It's true that many sustainable choices are not cost

-neutral, and in fact may bust your budget.

When one client of ours constructed a new booth a few years back they explored a variety of materials options. Even though they wanted to use those sustainable materials, it turned out to have enough impact on their budget that the decision was made to use more typical materials for fabrication. It didn't give them a look they were comfortable with. The financial and aesthetic considerations outweighed the desire to use sustainable materials.

There's no wrong answer and each project requires its own examination – but one worth pursuing, as there are new material choices coming to market all the time.

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'Green' exhibiting can be practiced with booth materials, exhibiting practices, shipping and more



Who's on our latest tradeshow podcast?

Find out today at interpexhibits.com/podcast

Industry 'Best Practices' for green exhibiting are detailed in a Convention Industry 'Green Meetings' Report

Staying Green at the Show

The Convention Industry Council's 'Green Meetings Report' (2004) details environmental practices and explores strategies to implement them. It addresses on-site waste reduction, encourages vendors to print materials on double-sided, post-consumer recycled paper using vegetable inks, provide materials via PDA downloads and other ways to reduce the environmental impact.

As you plan your greener exhibiting plans, be sure to consider the importance of tooting your own horn. Your audience may offer you great support for your practices – but if you don't tell them how will they know? By detailing those practices in your display you are liable to gain points with customers who appreciate your efforts – so be sure to tell them!

Green Graphics

Are there green products for graphic production? **Brian Hart of Ivey Graphics** spent 18 months digging into that subject, and eventually realized that while there are sustainable materials available, the market is still evolving: 'it's a mixed bag.'

He says there are three parts to graphic production where sustainable practices come into play: products, process and the practices that go into interacting with your community and the planet.

There *are* recyclable and biodegradable graphic production materials available, but not all graphic shops are at the leading edge of what's out there. To pursue sustainable practices with your graphics production vendor may involve ongoing conversa-

Bottom Line on Green Exhibiting

Green exhibiting is still in its infancy, but busting out of its baby clothes

When you look at available materials and sustainable practices with an eye to cost, reaction from those who want to implement elements of green exhibiting is still a mixed bag. But many businesses today want to know what your 'green' practices

are, and having the awareness and specific practices in place is often the price of entry.

If serving food and drinks, make sure your cups and plates are recyclable – and find out how the show organizers are going to handle the recyclables. What good does it do if you're using recyclables but the show site is trashing everything? Your in-house 'champion' may have to ask some hard questions of the show organizers, and many of them are getting on board with sustainable practices more than they used to—because the market (you) demands it.

Download the Convention Industry's 'Green Meetings Report' here:

http://www.conventionindustry.org/projects/green_meetings_report.pdf



tion, research and review of what is available to them.

"Based on demand, [sustainable] materials are running 15% to 40% increase in cost" above typical materials, said Brian. Often recyclable materials don't have the printing quality of other materials, and you'll find yourself making judgments from many different angles: client reaction, public perception, and in-house requirements.

Still, he says, everyone is asking about 'green.'

We've been compiling information on green exhibiting recently in our podcast. We urge you to check it out and listen for yourself:

<http://interpexhibits.com/podcast>