

# Tradeshows Tip Sheet

## This month: Shipping Your Tradeshows Booth

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### Shipping Tradeshows Booths

It's unavoidable and more expensive than ever. But if you're going to put on a good appearance at a tradeshow you are going to have to navigate the intricacies of shipping your booth, products and related marketing materials. So is there a way to make it easier, safer, and perhaps even cut down the costs some?

In this month's Tradeshows Tip Sheet, we'll look at

various ways you can cut down shipping costs; keep the booth in good shape during transit and how planning your tradeshow booth at the beginning can affect your shipping costs.

Sometimes it means combining shipments, other times it might mean using different shippers for different pieces of your booth. It might even mean checking your pop-up on an airplane as an extra piece of luggage.

### Getting it to the Show

Months before you schedule your shipments, double-check dates and locations for the show you're exhibiting at and work with your shipper to meet dates and schedules. It'll avoid late fees, lost time and aggravation. Prepare your booth for the return shipment at the same time. Notify your storage facility about impending dates. Before you head out for the show, track your shipment to make sure it arrived as it was supposed to. Confirm that all pieces are there. Make sure you have a copy of your bill of lading with you and send copies to your set-up company.

Design or paint your crates to stand out from the crowd with bright colors or big company logos. Color coordinate your crates. Consider naming and labeling your crates so that people can get used to the contents: "Benji" might contain the dog food, "Garfield" the cat food.

Remove old address labels. Weigh your crates so your shipping estimates are accurate. Put an emergency or after hours phone number on your crates just in case. Plan on at least four hours from scheduled arrival at the tradeshow floor to arrival of set-up labor; optimally you might schedule freight one afternoon and have labor start setting up the next morning.

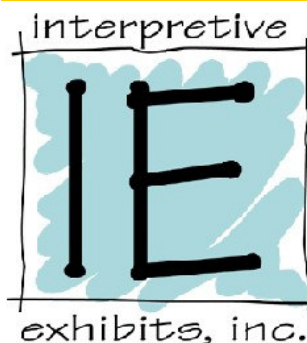
Once the booth is set up, mark the crates as "empty" and they'll be moved to the staging area. Make sure there's nothing in the crates you need during the show as you'll have no access to the crates until the show ends.

Overseas: If shipping internationally, work with a company that is used to handling overseas shipments. They'll have the expertise to navigate docu-



mentation preparation, ATA carnets (international customs documents), temporary imports into foreign countries and the safe return of your shipments to the US.

Painting or marking your crates with unusual colors, designs or logos helps track them down quickly in a sea of wooden shipping crates.



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**"Niche" shippers concentrate on tradeshow-only shipping and offer a 'concierge' type service to ensure safe handling and timely delivery.**

## Shipping Options

Many shippers now offer trucks and shipping options that are designed exclusively for tradeshow transportation. Generally speaking, the costs are higher for this choice, but the payoff may be worth it. When a shipper markets their services specifically to tradeshow exhibitors, they offer a more conscientious, hands-on approach instead of lumping your tradeshow booth crates in with anything else they can stick on a truck.

If your exhibit is smaller, it can possibly be shipped via a parcel carrier, such as FedEx or UPS. Both of those companies have recently added freight to their shipping offerings, which gives you more choices. Check to see if those companies can meet your needs and at what cost before automatically choosing a common carrier or a service that specializes in tradeshow transportation.

Check into a 'niche' carrier that specializes in shipping for tradeshows. You'll pay a bit more but your booth will be handled with TLC and you're often offered more personalized service. Search for 'tradeshow shipping' online.

Billable weight is determined by dimension as well as weight. Dimensional weight is used to compensate the trucker for bulky items with relatively low weight. By properly palletizing your shipment to make sure no items stick out, you'll save on dimensional weight.

Some insurance companies exclude plasma screens from their insurance coverage; you may opt for a special coverage policy that protects the screen (or other sensitive expensive items) from door to door.

## Design a Booth with Shipping in Mind

When you're acquiring a new booth, whether a pop-up type or a custom booth, the decisions you make will have a long lasting effect on your shipping costs. It may seem obvious, but it's always worth sitting down and penciling out some numbers. A new pop-up type booth fits in a smaller shipping case (typically molded plastic) and can be shipped via UPS, FedEx or DHL or a similar service.

When you step up to a custom booth, you'll most likely move into the 'common carrier' shipping services. Large crates weighing several hundred pounds are shipped on large trailer-trucks. With fork-lifts involved, the cases do more than just hold your booth; they'll also act as a layer of protection for your booth. Of course accidents can happen, but more often than not it's your crate that takes the abuse and not the contents.

When using typical fabrication materials such as wood, metals, plastics and laminates to create furniture-type booths, you'll be creating an exhibit that has a lot of heft to it. Shipping costs are determined by weight and size, so you'll pay more to ship a booth made of those materials than a lighter one.

Many exhibits for tradeshow are being made using tension fabrics stretched over aluminum frames, which are significantly lighter and therefore less costly to ship. When designing your booth, shipping will likely not be your primary consideration, but it should come into the equation.



## Bottom Line

Shipping custom booths and all the accompanying paraphernalia adds up to a sizable chunk of your marketing budget and it pays to carefully watch the dollars. Fuel surcharges from shipping companies add to the cost, so it makes even more sense to check and double-check. Condense the size of your

materials as much as possible to reduce costs. Complete the MHA (Material Handling form, bill of lading, shipping forms) before the show is over. Don't leave it sitting on the booth, make sure it is turned in to the show service center. Follow through on everything and your shipping will go smoothly!