

Tradeshow Tip Sheet

This month: Booth Set-Up and Dismantle

- > 1865 Beach Ave NE
- > Salem, OR 97301
- > 503-371-9411
- > Fax: 503-371-9402
- > www.interpexhibits.com
- > info@interpexhibits.com
- > Editor: Tim Patterson

Tradeshow Booth Set-up and Dismantle

Here at Interpretive Exhibits we work several clients that have moved up from small 10x10 pop-up booths to larger island booths that can no longer be set up by their staff. So they've had to move out of their 'comfort zone' in a number of ways. One of the biggest impacts of exhibiting with a bigger booth is the challenge of getting it set up.

When you have a 20x20 booth with a 15-foot tower that takes 2 - 4 people half a day to set-up, there is no way to avoid working with a show services company. It seems common in the tradeshow industry to share stories of dealing with union labor - and not too many of them complimentary to the set-up folks.

So what's the real story? Can you actually hire a company that will do a good job, quickly and for a fair rate? What does it take to get your exhibit shipping crates to the show floor? And how much work can you do yourself on the show floor? And yes, what about those *power tools*?



Moving from a small pop-up booth to a custom booth means moving out of your comfort zone. Here's where good planning really helps.

Moving the Booth from Your Place to the Show

With a larger booth it's likely that your company will be shipping a number of large crates. While "standard" crates are 4'x4'x8' in size, there is no end to the assortment of sizes and shapes of booth crates. When setting up shipping, keep in mind that shape and weight do play a factor in the shipping rates you will pay. There are also shipping companies that specialize in shipping tradeshow booths and materials. Using these companies usually means a higher rate, but more specialized handling of your booth.

Many clients we've worked with prefer to use shippers that handle the tradeshow cargo as a specialty item because it does insure that the crates will be handled with more care than a typical carrier. They figure the higher cost is worth it because of the amount of money that they've invested in the custom booth. So it may make sense to spend a little extra to make sure the booth lasts longer. And the longer you are able to use a booth (or the less you spend over time for refurbishing) the longer you can stretch your exhibit dollars.



Who's on our latest tradeshow podcast?

Find out today at interpexhibits.com/podcast

If there's an issue with set-up, such as damage or unexpected overtime or missed appointments, deal with it at the show. Don't wait until you're back in the office.

Set-Up Day Arrives

It may sound obvious, but when you plan to exhibit at a tradeshow, make sure you (and your tradeshow staff) know the rules. The rules are designed to make the show floor as fair to all exhibitors as possible. Get your booth orders in early enough to take advantage of any early-bird specials.

If you are contracting labor for set-up and dismantle, confirm that someone from your staff is there at the appointed time to meet the set-up crew. If not, it may be a long wait for them to come back. Make sure you have photos and drawings so that the set-up crew knows what it is they're setting up.

Some of our IE clients all work with the same contractor, so they're able to share labor crews for various shows, which helps save money and time. If you work with a separate labor group (apart from the show-supplied group), ask to see if they are setting up other booths at the same show. Often there will be some flexibility in sharing crews to keep hours down. But you may not know unless you ask.

If there are issues at the show, such as billing problems, labor disputes, booth damage, or theft, deal with them at the show. Don't wait until you get back to the office. If an exhibit or crate has been damaged by show labor, document with a digital camera and get any statements in writing that you can.

"Tools? We don't need no steenkin' tools..."

A common story of tradeshow set-up and dismantle goes like this: exhibitor arrives to set-up small booth, pulls out screwdriver, hammer or power tool to assemble booth. Union labor rep notices and informs exhibitor that tools are forbidden unless handled by a union laborer.

"But I thought I could use a (screwdriver, hammer, etc.)," complains exhibitor. Bad feelings ensue.

The trouble is, it can sometimes be true. And sometimes not. What are the rules from city to city? Sometimes the rules state you have a maximum of 30 minutes to set-up a booth or it must be assembled by labor personnel. Other cities have less stringent labor rules. Again, make sure you know the rules going in so that you're not caught in a bind.

Bottom Line

With a larger island booth or one that takes time to assemble, you'll need to enlist a show services group to set up the booth. If you want a recommendation from groups that have worked with out clients and gotten great reviews, please contact us at Interpretive Exhibits.

With small booths that may be set up by your staff, make sure you read the rules. Book services early (electricity, for instance) so you can

If you're hiring show labor for an island booth, it's not an issue. Just make sure someone is there to make sure the set-up is off to a good start. Same for dismantle. Show floors are chaotic on set-up and dismantle days, but often having a rep from the company there means an easy answer to a question that might otherwise have taken an hour or two to answer and run up labor costs and delayed set-up or dismantle.

get early-bird discounts. Set-up rules will vary from city to city, so your best bet is familiarize yourself with the rules of each show you go to as soon as you're able. Knowing the rules and early-bird discounts available ahead of time will give you a leg up on planning for the show, and it'll help head off any extra charges or run-ins with show management.