

# ExhibitTips™

## SELECTING AN EXHIBIT HOUSE

Buying a display, whether portable, modular or custom, is like buying a house. It is a major purchase that needs to withstand the test of many varying conditions. Begin with finding an exhibit house which is compatible with your company's needs and style.

To help take the "*If I'd only knowns*" out of the selection process, consider the following 36 guidelines:

### ***Step 1 - Before the Process Begins:***

1. Clearly define your exhibiting goals.
2. Know exactly how much show space has been reserved, or how much space you intend to use for subsequent shows.
3. Know what percentage of your exhibiting budget has been allocated to purchasing a new display.
4. Understand the image you want your company to present at each show (e.g. quality, high-tech, established, contemporary, sporty or traditional).
5. Outline what services you need from an exhibit house and if you have any special requirements.
6. Generate a list of possible candidates (six maximum).
7. Use referrals as a major resource.
8. Visit trade shows and find displays you like.
9. Make sure the potential candidates offer the required services.
10. Determine if any of them specialize in your industry.

### ***Step 2 - The Selection Process***

11. Conduct a preliminary telephone interview with each candidate.
12. Select three candidates (maximum) to make an in-company presentation.
13. Provide each candidate with written presentation guidelines. (Include your exhibiting goals, budget and services needed.)
14. Know if you will be considered a large or small account with each company.
15. Understand how each company charges for services, in particular warehousing and in/out services.

16. Find out what national network each company has for service and warehousing.
17. Ask whether they coordinate transportation for each show.
18. Know exactly what costs are involved in transportation, storage and installation/dismantling.
19. Investigate their willingness to send someone to supervise the first set-up for free.
20. Insist on having a typed exhibit inventory.
21. Investigate how damages and refurbishments are recorded and approved.
22. Do any of the companies offer 24-hour support?
23. Particularly with portable displays, find out how easy it is to install/dismantle. Try it yourself.
24. Assess how well the candidates understand your industry and your specific needs.
25. Explore the ease, ability and cost-effectiveness of expanding your display over time.

### ***Step 3 - Finalizing the Process***

26. Plan a visit to each of your potential candidates' premises.
27. Meet the president, your assigned account executive and designers. Notice how well the team works together.
28. Know who will manage the account on a daily basis.
29. Notice how enthusiastic and responsive people are to you. (e.g. How quickly do they return your phone calls? How much will they appreciate your business?)
30. How well do you get along with the company representatives, particularly with your account executive.
31. Find out what jobs are "jobbed out".
32. Check references. Interview a large and small client company and ask them about their experience with your potential candidate. Hone in on strengths and weaknesses.
33. Investigate their record of meeting budgets.
34. Find out their experience and flexibility in the international market.
35. Make sure you really know what you will be buying for your money!
36. When in doubt about what you **really** want, consider renting.