

Trade Show Lingo for First Time Exhibitors

The language of trade shows can be foreign to anyone new to face-to-face marketing. If you're exhibiting at a trade show for the first time, don't be discouraged! We defined some commonly-used terms to ease your entrance into this world. Follow this glossary and you'll be a pro in no time!

Drayage – In a word, shipping. Often trade shows will have a warehouse where exhibitors can ship the booth materials ahead of time. These materials will then be transferred to your booth location once the exhibit hall is set up. Make sure to pay attention to deadlines for receiving materials to the warehouse to avoid additional fees or other direct shipping expenses.

Exhibitor Move-In – As obvious as it sounds, the time period when exhibitors can set up their booths. Pay attention to the times this can be done and must be completed. Also, be sure to understand the rules regarding work you can do yourself. Some cities require union workers to move boxes or equipment, set up displays or handle activities that involve tools. This will be outlined in your exhibitor information.

Exhibitor Service Manual – Contains all of contacts, deadlines, forms and information you need for exhibiting at the show.

Lead Retrieval – Likely the main reason you're exhibiting at a trade show is to collect sales leads. Today many technologies exist to help exhibitors capture the contact information of the people who visit their booth, from badge scanners, apps and beyond. The show organizer will likely contract with a vendor who provides lead capturing tools. Make sure you reserve or order your lead retrieval tools ahead of time if required.

Onsite Show Guide/Online Exhibitor Directory – Show organizers use either a printed book or a webpage or app to list all the exhibitors, among other show information. Use whatever opportunities they give you in this space, such as a brief company description, to maximize your visibility. Deadlines to submit this information are often well ahead of the show. Additionally, if your budget allows, consider placing an ad here as well as attendees will refer to the guide for the duration of the show and possibly longer.

Priority Points – Many trade shows have established points systems where exhibitors earn points based on different criteria such as how often they exhibit or how much they spend to determine the order in which exhibitors can select their booth location in the future. If you're a new exhibitor, likely you'll choose your booth location after returning exhibitors have selected their spaces. Over time, you'll rise in priority order.

Show Decorator – A company hired by the show organizer to design the exhibit hall and build the trade show floor, deliver exhibitor materials to the booths and supply exhibitors with the booth decorations they order. The decorator maintains an office on or near the show floor for exhibitor support.

Show Organizer – Organization that hosts the trade show.

Standard In Line Booth – A typical booth that stands in a row with other booths. Sizes and decorating styles vary, but many are 10 feet by 10 feet and outlined with "pipe and drape". Booths not flanked by booths on either side are known as "Islands", usually larger, more expensive spaces. Pay attention to the rules that govern your booth decorations including allowable heights and signage.

Tear Down – The point at the end of the show when exhibitors may pack up and move out of their booth. Exhibitors are almost always prohibited from moving out before the show officially ends so plan your travel accordingly to allow someone to pack up at the end of the show. Also pay attention to requirements for return shipping.

With these terms defined, you're well on your way to acing your first-time exhibitor experience!