



Improving Exhibiting Effectiveness

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- A value-added exhibitor service provided complimentary by your show organizer.
- 21 question evaluation process to help you improve the effectiveness of your exhibiting program to increase results from your next tradeshow.
- Practical tips and suggestions to make immediate improvement in your overall exhibit presentation, product/service demonstrations, and booth staff performance.

AAOS
American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons

Competitive Edge
"exhibiting excellence"

INTRODUCTION

Because your show organizer wants your company to have a positive and productive exhibiting experience, they are investing significant financial resources to provide your company with the Exhibiting Effectiveness Evaluation as a complimentary value-added service.

E3 is designed to acknowledge and reinforce effective exhibiting practices, and to spotlight areas of potential improvement. E3 also provides direction on how to make any improvements identified during the evaluation process.

This e-book will share 21 evaluation questions and provide practical ideas you can immediately use to improve your exhibit results at your upcoming show.

As you read this e-book, I encourage you to have photos or a rendering of your exhibit in hand. Ask yourself, *"How well is my exhibit executing the concept I am reading about?"*

Remember, sometimes a few small changes can make a big overall difference in exhibiting performance and results.

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Area 1. Overall Exhibit Presentation



1	**Does the overall exhibit grab attendee attention?** Your exhibit is like a billboard on a freeway. The attendee is driving down the aisle at 65 miles per hour. The first thing your exhibit must do is attract their attention. Step outside and look at your exhibit. Put yourself in the shoes of your target audience. Observe how you are using exhibit architectural properties, materials, shapes, size and scale, color, lighting, graphic images, text and copy, motion, multi-media tools, and product displays. If you were the attendee, would this grab your attention?
2	**Is it quickly/easily discernible what the company does or offers?** Interest in learning more about your company and viewing specific products is one of the primary reason attendees visit the exhibit hall. An attendee will not invest time trying to figure this out. Prominently showcase products of interest in the booth so they are visible from the most important angles approaching the exhibit and support your brand with a listing of your capabilities. Your capabilities can be communicated using multi-media including signage with images, PowerPoint, video or other visual means along with short graphic narratives.
3	**Is it quickly/easily discernible who the company is?** Once an exhibit captures attention and communicates what you offer, the visitor must determine who the company is. Stand outside your booth and notice from what angles and at what sight levels your company identity is visible. Make sure your company name and logo is well placed at various levels so attendees can see it from all perspectives of the hall including from a distance, approaching the booth, and at eye level - close to and in the exhibit.
4	**Are there sufficient graphics/are they legible/well-placed?** With the billboard analogy in mind, your exhibit needs to communicate some form of message to capture attendee's attention and educate them about your capabilities. Effective placement and implementation of graphics (signs) is instrumental. Graphics need to include: product/service identification, application and/or category, and high level benefits. This can be executed using copy, design and images to communicate critical information. Position of the graphics is important - in an in-line space, you want to be sure copy is not blocked by high tables or chairs and is positioned above the sight line. In larger exhibits, it is important that some are located on the periphery to attract attention and help attendees determine if they are interested in learning more. The rule of thumb is that information on the outside of the booth is succinct and more detailed descriptions are used inside the booth.

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	Overall Exhibit Presentation
5	**Do the graphics communicate clear and concise messages?** Attendees move quickly through the exhibit hall and past individual exhibits. They experience sensory overload easily and won't take much time to read a lot of copy. They scan a booth very quickly and need both images and text that communicate clear, concise and specific messages. Provide consistency within your messaging throughout the exhibit so that at a glance people can understand what you offer and how this relates to their business to encourage them to stop and learn more.
6	**Do the messages inform, educate, and give attendees a reason to stop?** An effective exhibit tells a quick visual story. Use short headlines and a short product descriptive to communicate the what. Use bulleted application, feature/ benefit messages to inform and educate about the product. Also, remember, since one of the primary reason attendee's visit the exhibit hall is to see what's new, you will attract more attendees by showcasing new products and services and placing NEW messaging in highly visible areas around the booth.
7	**Is the exhibit easy to enter?** You want attendees to cross the carpet line and enter your space. Avoid obstacles that block or limit the entrance to your exhibit. Obstacles to entering include exhibit properties, tables, information counters and/or display cases, exhibit staff. Sometimes positioning a table or display case a few feet off the carpet line can make a difference whether or not attendees decide to enter.
8	**Is the exhibit easy to navigate?** In a small, in-line booth, navigation is usually not much of an issue. But in a medium or larger peninsula or island booth, especially with multiple products, navigation must be given careful thought. Consider where products are placed and the navigational flow of moving from one product/service area to the next. Consider using a zone approach where there are natural "meet and greet" stations near the perimeter of the booth or a few high visibility, interactive product/service demos to help attract visitors. In turn you can use the center of the booth or a circular or semi-circular layout for placement of more involved and detailed display.

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	Overall Exhibit Presentation
9	**Can visitors quickly discern what is being displayed and where?** Use larger, visible identification and directional signage to help attendees quickly and easily find what they are looking for. When product kiosks are used, it helps to clearly label what is being presented in the kiosk a little above eye level. Think about the placement of the display/information areas next to each other and how those areas support each other to tell a story or establish a relationship between the products. You might find an attendee focused on one product area but did not see a related product that they might not know you provide.
10	**Is there enough open space for attendees?** You must have sufficient area in the booth so it is easy for attendees to enter and navigate around the booth and interact with your staffers. We see too many exhibitors trying to cram too much into both small 10x10 and 10x20 booths and island exhibits. An overcrowded booth that is hard to enter, with little or no open space, is unappealing to attendees. It detracts from the overall visitor experience and reduces the number of people who enter and the time they spend in your exhibit.
11	**Is the corporate identity effectively integrated in the exhibit design?** Make sure your corporate colors and images are effectively weaved into exhibit architecture, signage, kiosks, furnishings, and even down to the color of the carpet. Display your corporate identity at tiered viewing levels so it can be seen from a distance, as you approach the booth, and at eye level throughout the exhibit. Corporate colors provide continuity throughout the space as well as make the space feel larger. Unifying your exhibit using consistent corporate colors repetitively throughout the space will also help you achieve enhanced brand awareness and improve visitor recall of your brand.

How to Improve the Attention Grabbing Impact of Your Exhibit

Exhibits are like a billboard on a busy freeway. Attendees are flying down the aisle at 70 miles per hour. There's a lot of visual clutter competing for their attention. Your exhibit must QUICKLY grab visual attention and force them to look at it. Here are 10 ways to improve the attention grabbing impact of your exhibit:

1. **Color**: Use large swatches of vivid and unique colors in imagery, exhibit graphics and properties, and carpet. Don't be shy!
2. **Lighting**: People are attracted to lights. Possible areas of focus are the point of sale, product counter, back lit photo images.

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How to Improve the Attention Grabbing Impact of Your Exhibit

3. **Imagery**: A relevant picture is worth 1,000 words. Six or seven little pictures or one big eye-catching image that best embodies the message. For in-line exhibits, grab attention with a single focus. Photos of people with your product will grab attendees' attention.
4. **Technology**: Video walls and interactive touch screens captivate visual interest.
5. **Motion**: A great way to draw the eye. Consider things that move, flash, and blink.
6. **Sound**: Is there a sound that ties with your product or exhibit theme? People are naturally curious about sounds. Be careful not to make the sound so loud it makes communicating with visitors difficult.
7. **Smell**: A great way to draw attention as passersby look for the source of the smell!
8. **Size**: Bigger is better. Is there an element of your product/service that can be enlarged and serve as the focal point of your exhibit?
9. **Shapes**: Unique shapes stand out from all the boxes. Consider adding unique shapes and materials to the exhibit structure that are eye catching, such as arches or angles.
10. **Materials**: Fabric, steel, and other materials can make an exhibit stand out.

Quickly and Visually Answer the Three Questions in the Mind of the Attendee

As an attendee navigates the visually cluttered exhibit hall, they are trying to determine where to focus their attention. Answer these three specific questions quickly and visually and you dramatically increase the odds attendees see and process your exhibit.

1. **What do you do?** Make sure it is crystal clear what your company does. If you're in a 10x10 booth, it takes the attendee one and a half steps to walk by your booth. Make it blatantly obvious what you do so attendees can tell in 3-5 seconds or less.
2. **Why should I care?** Your exhibit messaging should visually:
    - Communicate something NEW, BETTER, FASTER, CHEAPER, SAFER, GREENER, MORE EFFICIENT, MORE EFFECTIVE.
    - Emphasize what they will LEARN, GAIN, SAVE, AVOID by stopping and entering.
    - Dangle problems and situations they are likely to be grappling with.
    - Use large visual images. Exhibit graphics should deliver a short and compelling headline, followed up with a few bullet point messages.
3. **Who are you?** Often exhibits have the company name as the focal point of their visual imaging. If your company name isn't descriptive or a recognized brand, consider making what you do more visually dominant than your company name. If you're a well-known brand with the goal of maintaining or increasing market visibility, then keeping your company name as the focal point makes sense.

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Area 2. Product/Service Presentations/Demonstrations



1	**Are products/services effectively displayed and/or presented?** A display is static. A presentation is interactive. Tradeshow attendees love to get hands-on with the products and/or learn about services interactively. Simply placing products or pictures of the products in the booth is generally ineffective. Ask yourself, what is our core message about this product or service and how can we effectively educate visitors?
2	**Is the display/presentation thoughtful/creative/unique?** The extra thought and effort you put into your product/service presentation is instantly evident to visitors and demonstrates your commitment to a quality visitor experience. The objective in your product/service presentation is to demonstrate creativity while economizing on the amount of time visitors need to acquire the information they seek. Think about your product or service and try to find a fun, unique and engaging way to recreate a field based or real world application for maximum impact. Proving your claims with interactive demonstrations is extremely effective. Showing cutout and expanded views along with instructions on how to use the products or imaginative ways of showing how to take advantage of services is also very effective.
3	**Is the display/presentation engaging and/or interactive?** Visitors want to physically engage with products and services. Long term retention is improved when multiple senses are engaged: visual, auditory and kinesthetic.
4	**Is feature/benefit signage integrated into display/presentation?** Don't just tell them… show them! Only presenting product information verbally limits sensory input and thereby limits impact, understanding and recall. Supporting product messages with visible, bulleted, key-point copy expands sensory input. This can be achieved with exhibit or wall signage, table top signs, flat panel monitors with continuous loop PowerPoint or video presentations. If you are presenting a PowerPoint, video or DVD on monitor(s) in the exhibit, be sure to identify what's being shown on the monitor. This can be achieved through topper(s) attached to the monitor or on an easel sign on a counter. The signs can be very helpful for the audience as too often the volume is turned down and attendees are watching a "silent movie". The signage identifies the presentation topic and helps put content into context for viewers so they know what they are watching.

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	Product/Service Presentations/Demonstrations
5	**Is takeaway product/service information readily available?** Despite increasing preference for receiving information post-show, there are always some attendees who want detailed information to take with them for more immediate review. Whether you use printed materials and/or provide data via USB Drives, CD ROMs or QR codes, it is important to have information readily available for those who request it. It's a good idea to always bring some literature and have it available for those who need or want it right now too. You could even choose to have a print on demand station in the booth. Some exhibitors are now using QR codes in their exhibit to deliver additional product information. While this is a leading edge information delivery option, please remember, smart phones need to have an app to be able to read QR codes.

Remember these primary reasons attendees go to tradeshows and make sure your demonstration/presentation addresses as many as possible:

- Learn **NEW**, better, faster, cheaper, greener, safer, more efficient, effective, and profitable methods.
- Find **SOLUTIONS** to current and future problems.
- **BENCHMARK** practices and procedures.
- Learn **BEST** Practices.
- Learn **NEXT** Practices.
- **INTERACT** with Colleagues, Companies and Products.
- **SEE, HEAR, TOUCH, ENGAGE, IMM**ERSE.
- **DO MORE** Than What They Can Do On Your Website!

Presentation/Demonstration Key Planning Questions

- **Who** precisely is my target audience?
- Relative to what we offer, what are their biggest **concerns, problems, bottlenecks**, and **frustrations**? What keeps them awake at night?
- What key features/benefits of our products **address** these issues?
- What one to three **main points** do we want to convey? What about these main points can be quantified or measured?
- What is the single most important idea they **need to know** to see our product or service as a solution?
- How can we get visitors to physically and emotionally **interact** with our products? How can we blow them away?
- What do we want them to **do, know, and remember** after participating in our demonstration/presentation?

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Area 3. Booth Staff



1	**Are there an appropriate number of booth staffers?** The rule of thumb is one staffer per 50 open square feet of space. Understaffing or overstaffing a booth is counter-productive and generally ineffective. Consider the size of your exhibit and exhibit hall traffic flow and patterns. Make sure you have enough staff available to engage all visitors. But not too many! Too many people can block booth graphics and messaging. This is critical in the smaller booths, so it is best to stand a step inside the booth's edge so your messaging can be visible and graphic messages can cause people to pause in the aisles or draw them in. If you wonder if you have too many staff, take a photo with your staff standing in the booth without attendees before the show begins. If it already looks crowded without attendees, you probably have too many staffers.
2	**Does their dress quickly/visibly identify them as a booth staffer?** This is more of an issue in larger exhibits, where attendees may have difficulty determining who the exhibit staffers are. Consider some form of staffer ID such as uniforms including themed or color-coded apparel or accessory strategy such as a large badge, button or boutonniere to make it easier for attendees to quickly identify your staff. Consider matching shirts, jackets or scarves for the female staff. You can also use corporate branded shirts with embroidered logos worn with matching slacks or skirts. Not only will this make it easier for attendees to find a staffer in the booth, but you will look professional and display an integrated team appearance as well.
3	**Do they keep body language open to visitors/attendees in the aisles?** Over half of an attendee's decision to notice and pay attention to a specific exhibit is based on what the booth staff is doing or not doing. Staffers should be standing – not sitting – placed a couple feet off the carpet line – not behind tables or displays and not out in the aisles or in the back of the booth. They should maintain an open body posture with their eyes directed toward attendees in the aisles and upon visitors as they approach or enter the exhibit.

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	Booth Staff
4	**Are they quickly responsive to booth visitors?** Attendee's time on the exhibit floor is limited and they will not wait much more than one minute to be engaged by a staffer. You should have sufficient staff available at any given time whether it is the first day or the last day to manage traffic flow. To engage attendees who are passing or considering entering your booth requires proactive behavior on your staff's part. You may want to assign specific meet and greet staffers and position them near entrances to your exhibit. This can be an excellent support mechanism to help product demonstration and sales staffers who may be engaged with visitors.
5	**Are booth staff behaviors appropriate?** Behaviors such as sitting, leaning, staring into space or acting disinterested, eating, drinking, clustering in groups, talking to other staffers, working on computers, using cell phones and/or texting in the booth present an undesirable image of your company in the mind of attendees. These behaviors decrease booth traffic by discouraging potential visitors from stopping.

The Rules of Exhibitorship:

1. Be visible, available, and professional.
2. Don't "Hang with the Gang", meaning clustering with your fellow booth staffers.
3. Don't pounce on or ignore visitors.
4. Don't use cell phones/text in the booth.
5. Respect visitor's time and knowledge. Before talking about company or products, booth staff should find out who they are with, why they are visiting your exhibit, and what they need to do so the visitor and your company gets value.
6. Don't overwhelm with information. Present just enough to make the visitor want to know more and be willing to commit to a next step, such as a phone or in-person appointment.

Pay Attention to Booth Staff Do's & Don'ts:

Do's
- Act like you want to be there.
- Work your shift.
- Help keep the booth clean.
- Stand.
- Smile.
- Proactively engage visitors.
- Talk less, ask more questions.

Don'ts
- Be passive or overaggressive.
- Be a "badge-gawker".
- Hang with the gang.
- Maintain closed body posture.
- Pre-judge visitors by appearance.
- Eat, drink, or chew gum in the exhibit.
- Talk on cell phones or text in the exhibit.

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Assignment: Identify three things you can do in each area to improve your exhibit program at your next show.

Action Planning Worksheet Ideas to Improve Exhibit Program			
Idea	**Tasks**	**Assigned To**	**Deadline Date**
Overall Exhibit Presentation			
1.			
2.			
3.			
Product/Service Presentations/Demonstrations			
1.			
2.			
3.			
Booth Staff			
1.			
2.			
3.			

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About the Author



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Since 1985, Jefferson has been working tradeshows, continually studying and researching best exhibiting practices, applying his findings to his own companies and clients he works with, and sharing his findings with over 100,000 exhibitors.

With an intense passion for tradeshows and a strong bias for being results-driven and process-based, he has identified the unique perspectives, and specific strategic practices that help companies turn tradeshows around from expensive appearances to profitable productive investments.

Jefferson has been hired as the tradeshow educator of choice for over 250 Association and for-profit show organizers. He has worked with hundreds of companies of all sizes, in all types of industries, helping his clients improve tradeshow productivity that have led to over a half billion in results.

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