

TEN EASY WAYS TO CUT EXHIBITING COSTS

Are budget cuts stressing you and your marketing plans? Are you looking for ways to stretch your exhibiting dollars? Here are ten tips to cut costs and save a few dollars.

1. Rent an exhibit. Rather than shipping your exhibit property across the country, rent one in the event city. Most show decorators have turnkey exhibits for rent. Make certain you know exactly what is included with the rental.
2. Read the exhibitor manual. This is where you find the rentals and services discount deadline (saving yourself 25-30%), what is provided (free) with your exhibit, and the rules and regulations you must follow.
3. Book hotel and airfare through web-based services like Expedia or Hotels.com. You can find hotels for less than the show rate if you're willing to shop. Airfare prices change by the hour – check alternate airports, different airlines, and different flight times to keep your costs low.
4. Downsize your exhibit space. Most shows are shrinking both in total exhibit space and number of attendees. How much space do you need to present your product? Do you have a strategic partner or sister company with whom you can share an exhibit space? Space cost is 30-40% of an average show budget.
5. Look for alternatives to “official” services. Shipping, AV, carpet, computers, labor, and plants can be outsourced. Be sure they know the exhibit business and understand the sense of urgency show biz demand.
6. Plan ahead for potential problems. It's hard to repair or replace materials in a strange city. Save time and money by arriving prepared. Carry a CD with your graphic and literature files so a local vendor can reproduce them in case of loss or damage. Use the decorator, the internet, and toll free information (800.555.1212) to find hardware, electronics, printers, and other resources.
7. Pack your own supplies. Everything cost more when you are a captive audience. Save a bundle by shipping everything you might need. Remember extension cords, outlet strips, office supplies, tape, shipping labels, FedEx account number, all-purpose cleaner, and towels.
8. Refurbish your existing exhibit instead of buying new. New exhibit property is expensive (starting at \$2500 for a 10' pop-up exhibit). Dress yours up with new graphics, fabric draping, better lights, and velcro-

- applied décor. Use your imagination and don't follow convention (pun intended). Be different and you'll draw attention to your "new" booth.
9. Create your own giveaways. By using stickers or business cards, anything can become an effective giveaway. Match the premium item to your marketing plan then apply a sticker with your company name, logo, website, and phone or punch a hole in your business card and tie it to the gift with a ribbon.
 10. Cut back on printed materials. Literature is expensive to print and ship to the show and it's hard to keep it from being damaged in transit. Cut costs by eliminating all but one inexpensive fact sheet. Then email targeted information to your contacts every night after the show closes.

Its not hard to trim your trade show budget if you plan ahead. Organization and strict adherence to a plan is the best advice. Make all decisions in advance and resist the temptation to add things at the last minute when they're the most expensive.

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