

5 Stand design

This chapter deals with the main considerations involved in the selection of a stand location, the design and construction of stand display, and the presentation of the exhibiting enterprise.

Choosing a site and booking space

The factors to consider are the location of the stand in the trade fair halls, and its shape and size. Small stands tend to receive low priority from organizers and if it is suspected that the first offer, for example, is distant from main visitor traffic routes, an alternative should be asked for. The best guide to selection is accurate advance information on the likely neighbouring exhibitors. Clearly a national group that commands far more space is in a better negotiating position. But it is necessary to consider the merits of exhibiting in an 'international hall' with a general spread of exhibits or seeking a site in a specialist hall. These decisions must be made by the exhibiting crafts enterprise when they have identified their target audience.

Stand location. By and large, maximum frontage stands and corner sites are advantageous, but care should be taken as to the position. One should always avoid sites too far from main doors or on higher floor levels. The following points are important:

Positive locations

- Facing entrances
- To the right of entrances and cloakrooms
- At the ends of blocks of stands
- On main gangways
- On corners of aisles
- Adjacent to catering facilities or special features
- Towards the front of a hall

Negative locations

- Distant from entrances
- Facing away from activities
- Off main gangways
- On galleries
- In sections cut off from the main hall
- Behind large pillars or stairways
- In corners against the back of the hall

When considering site locations the following factors are equally important.

Products. Choice of products, their size and weight, floor and/or wall space and other special display requirements.

Exhibitors. How many exhibitors on the stand? (Allow between four and five square metres of net stand space per exhibitor. Net stand space is space not occupied by exhibits.)

Visitors. For more visitors, more floor space is required. If there is to be a craft skill demonstration, additional space is needed for the public to stand and observe.

Stand activities. If business discussions take place on the stand, then privacy is needed for the client and exhibitor to confer.

Size of neighbouring stands. The neighbouring stands may be much larger, and, therefore, reduce the impact of an exhibitor's products.

Stand design brief

If a customized stand is to be designed and built, then a designer has to be briefed and a contractor appointed to build the stand. A clear brief will allow a designer to work quickly and efficiently, making independent decisions to create an attractive and effective stand that will help promote the exhibits. Some exhibitors may choose to appoint a designer from their own country who is familiar with the products to be displayed and can perhaps be briefed locally for a lower fee. On the other hand, there are advantages in appointing a designer based in the overseas country who is used to working at the trade-fair site and more familiar with current local design trends, architectural regulations and trade fair management.

Basic information. The brief to the designer should first cover the title of the trade fair, the location and dates of the show, the stand number, the amount of space that the exhibit will occupy and the number of open sides on the stand. A floor plan of the trade fair hall should also be provided, showing the position of the stand and also the names of exhibitors who will be located near the stand.

Types of products. Information on how many products may be displayed, as well as their weight and dimensions, will be important to the general layout of the stand, and these details should be included in the brief. The designer should be provided with brochures and photographs or even the products themselves. The budget should also be discussed with the designer at the outset.

Storage space. When the stand is being designed, set aside ample backroom space for storage. Tools, demonstration equipment, samples, literature, lockers for personal belongings, coats and space for briefcases and suitcases should be hidden from view.

Stand personnel. The designer will need to know the number of staff who will be running

the stand and whether a small office or meeting space is necessary or storage areas needed for publicity material and products.

Fair rules and regulations. The trade-fair organizer's rules and regulations, along with the fire regulations, may determine what material the designer uses to build the stand (should the organizer's stand contractor not be employed). The fair handbook will include details of the dates for constructing and dismantling the stand, names and addresses of official contractors and other necessary information for the designer.

The designer should be informed of the date on which the outline plan should be submitted. This date should be fixed in conjunction with the deadline for submitting the proposed stand design to the organizer for approval.

Trade-fair stands convey an image of the products on the stand and of the enterprise in the market-place.

Other design considerations

The design of the stand is aimed at stimulating all the senses: sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. It will be influenced by its location in the hall, the fact that the organizers' shell scheme may have been opted for, and the type of exhibit that has been selected. The design should focus the visitor's attention on the products. It is the products that are being sold, not the stand. The visitor should see at a glance what is being promoted. While there is any amount of time to plan and design the stand, its actual construction has to be done speedily. Any temptation to make last-minute alterations should be avoided if the budget is not to be overstepped.

For national group stands, a central administrative area should be considered to serve as an office, as well as for coats, telephones and serving of refreshments. The stand furniture on order should match the overall design.

Some guiding principles. Use the product as the centrepiece of the exhibit; demonstrate the product and, if it is a craft product, show the artisan at work; show images – graphic, film or slide projection, computer-aided presentations; lay out the stand to be visitor-friendly, with space at the front, seats towards the back, space to circulate around the exhibits and talk, with no barriers or steps to dissuade visitors; use memorable colours which identify the product or country; use explanatory graphics and few words (and ensure that captions are well translated), and keep designs simple and uncluttered.

Using the organizer's stand contractor

Many exhibitors will choose to use a basic 'shell' stand scheme provided by the trade-fair organizer and simply mount their exhibit material and exhibits within the stand system provided. Organizers usually recommend contractors who are able to carry out a large amount of work for many exhibitors at once and who are probably familiar with the particular trade-fair hall. Their record of charging reasonable prices will also have been considered by the organizer.

The shell scheme. Stand costs can be reduced by using the trade fair organizer's shell scheme. This is a stand designed according to a standard pattern, equipped with certain basic furnishings and built by the contractor officially designated by the organizer. With recent improvements in modular shell schemes, many ancillary display elements have been introduced that enhance the appearance of the basic stand. As a result, a shell scheme can be as effective in promoting the products displayed as a more expensive purpose-built stand. A shell scheme also takes less time to set up.

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Checklist for stand design

1. Preparing the stand design brief

- Select and book the site
- Decide whether to use a shell scheme or a custom-built stand
- Obtain site plans and relevant documentation
- Collect exhibits and promotional material
- Assemble craft enterprise ideas on exhibitions
- Collect any ideas that staff may have to discuss with the designer
- Calculate the budget

2. The design brief (for custom-built stand)

- Exhibition details: name of event, location, dates, stand number and site plan, stand area
- Budget available for stand design and construction
- Deadlines for design, shipment and installation on site
- List of products, and weights/dimensions, for display
- Brochures and photos of products
- Posters or information panels, electronic or film/slide-presentation equipment
- Colour and stand identity preferences (relating to craft enterprise's image needs, as well as trade fair overall design policies and ambience, if known)
- Stand function requirements
 - Private space for discussions with potential clients
 - Furnishing requirements, display units, chairs, coordinated furnishing
 - Number of stand personnel in attendance
 - Storage needs (publicity, office materials, coats, hats, food, drink)
- Trade-fair rules and regulations and handbook
- List of official contractors (if required)

3. For TSIs and group stands

- Focus stand/office for TSI or group organizer
- National or group identity requirements
- Increased storage facilities
- Meeting space
- Phone-line and computer requirements

The more relevant information given to the designer during the briefing, the more impact the stand will have. The more time given to proper briefing, the more efficiently the design will be prepared.
