

# successful trade shows by the numbers

Quick tips & proven techniques from the  
award winning trade show experts of E & E  
Exhibits, Inc., dba E&E ExhibitSolutions®



**E&E EXHIBITSOLUTIONS®**

## trade shows by the numbers

You only have one chance to make a first impression.

If you've ever had a trade show display, you know the power of face-to-face interaction with your prospects. There is no better business opportunity than the ability to connect with hundreds of prospects over just a few days.

Imagine the time and cost to drive and/or fly to meet with each of the people you encounter over a three day trade show. It would be astronomical and certainly you'd be hard pressed to see a return on your investment. That's why trade shows are so appealing.

In this e-book, the professionals at E&E have compiled a few of our articles to provide tips and techniques for making the most of your trade show investment.



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# *3 Trade Show Questions You Need to Ask*

Designing and building the best trade show displays to represent your company takes time, cooperation and expertise. But what happens to your exhibit after the first show? Trade show displays are a marketing investment. Following are three trade show questions you will want to ask the trade show exhibit company you are working with before deciding to give them your business.

# 1 *How many times can I expect to be able to use this trade show display?*

There may be circumstances when you need a display for a single event that will never reoccur. However, in most cases, when a company invests in a trade show display, they expect to be able to reuse the display many times over.

Many trade show accessories and displays allow for the graphics to be changed, providing some flexibility in your look and message, however, you still expect the frame work to provide many uses. Many tradeshow displays are scalable. For example, they can be used as a 10x10, 10x20, 20x20.

## Here is an example:

A quality trade show exhibit provider will take the time to understand your needs and expected uses and then make recommendations for products that will stand the test of time. Of course, there will be times that it is wise to invest in additional components or even rent exhibit displays to complement your basic exhibit. By asking the sales representative these questions, you have a clearer understanding of the quality of the company.



## 2 Will the electrical cords be camouflaged or do I need to expect unsightly electrical wiring to be visible throughout my exhibit?

One of the challenges in trade show displays is the dangers of electrical cords that crisscross throughout your displays; supplying electricity to your monitors, charging tables, displays and lighting. Most of our trade show systems are designed to allow for cord management. If there is an unusual circumstance....

### Enter the raised floor!

Including a raised floor in your trade show exhibit allows you to manage electrical cords without worrying about safety or fire hazards. With a raised floor you are no longer hampered by available outlets when configuring where you will place trade show display counters, trade show charging stations or any other accessory that might require electricity.



# 3 Will the packing and shipping crates keep my exhibit from being damaged?

If your exhibit components are not packed and sent in high-quality cases, the likelihood that your display and accessories will arrive back at corporate in one piece is questionable.

However, there are hard-cased shipping crates designed specifically for trade show elements like monitors, pop-up displays, tension fabric pop up displays and retail display kiosks. Additionally, many exhibit companies, like E&E, offer trade show labor for set-up and tear down which include packing, shipping and even exhibit storage for your trade show displays so that you don't have to worry about the condition of your exhibit. It will be ready to go for the next trade show event you attend.

*In fact, the key to successfully shipping your trade show components is a combination of experienced packers, quality crates and superior packing materials.*

A lot of the elements of your trade show display come down to quality. You get what you pay for and if you are looking for a pop-up display that you only use once and then toss, pretty much any online company can help. However, if you are interested in making a long term investment in the branding and marketing of your company over the course of a number of events, conferences and trade shows, then you will want to make sure the company you partner with has the resources, materials and experience that will provide the ROI you require.

# *7 Elements of a “Best in Show” Trade Show Booth*

It is important to update your trade show display as new technology and design elements are developed each year. Using the same 10×20 displays space as in the prior two years, we created a whole new look which include some of the most valuable elements.

# 1

## our name

Making sure that your logo and company name are easy to see within your trade show booth, from near and far, allow visitors to immediately know whose booth they are in. Following through that logo element with your accessories and marketing material means that attendees will be reminded in a variety of ways – the more they see your name, the more likely they are to remember you when they need to make a purchase.

# 2

## color

We incorporated our company colors into the accent walls, flooring and wall panels. Using bright colors helps to capture the attention of visitors – whatever helps them take a second look, increases the likelihood they will cross your threshold.

# 3

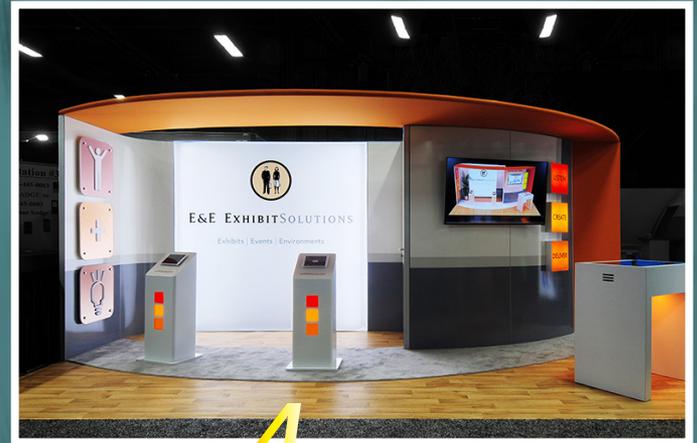
## lighting

The florescent lighting of the venue is placed in the ceiling a million miles above the heads of your visitors. Incorporating spot lights, wall lights and backlit graphics help brighten the look of your booth. Nobody wants to enter a dark, shadow-filled space. Make sure you have plenty of lighting in your booth.

# 4

## flooring

Not only did we incorporate our company colors into the area rug, we also added wood paneled trade show flooring to help define the space of our trade show booth as well as elevating the look and feel of our space. Nothing says “high end” like a hard wood floor.



# 5

## technology

This year we introduced a number of technical elements to our trade show display. We had the iPad tablets which include the special trade show apps. This allows our sales reps to quickly capture attendee information as well as accessing the appropriate products that meet their needs. Additionally, we added the latest in wall graphics, the flexible, lightweight graphic display which connects to your computer to show images and video. This was one of the highlights of our 2016 booth.

# 6

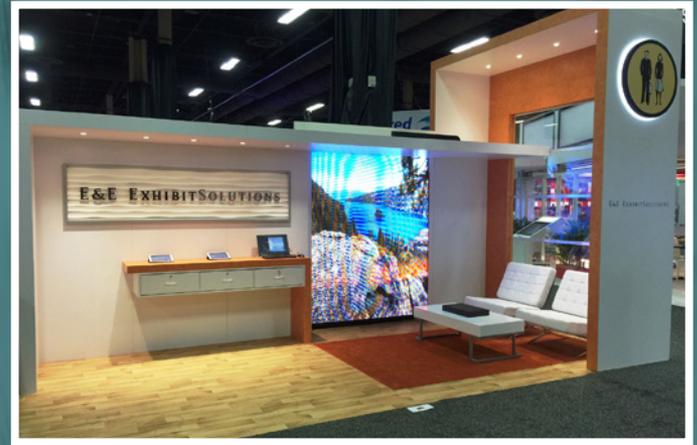
## comfort

We decided to add a small area with trade show furniture to attract visitors and allow for more in depth conversation. Sitting down with a prospect, placing your products or iPad in their hands to help them connect on a more personal level helps to elevate the conversation from prospect to customer.

# 7

## us

We brought our A game with our entire sales staff as well as hiring additional assistance to help draw prospects into our booth. Populating your trade show booth with highly trained, positive, motivated sales personnel helps inspire conversations that last longer than the length of time it takes to hand out trade show swag.



# *3 S's of your Trade Show Display*

There is more to trade shows than just the event. Most articles on trade show displays focus on the event; making the most of the opportunity, creating and building the best trade show exhibit and finding and using the latest technology to stand out from the competition. These are all important, but there is more to a trade show than just the event.

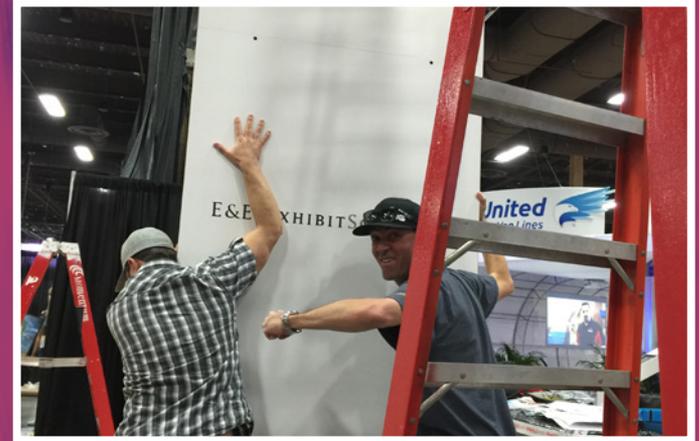
Consider the 3 S's of your trade show investment:

# Shipping Set-up Storage

You've made a significant investment in your trade show display, kiosks, graphics and accessories. As a business professional, you want to ensure your investment lasts for more than just one trade show event. The best way to do that is to spend time focusing on the three S's.



# 1 Shipping



How are you going to get your trade show exhibit to and from the venue? Unless you have an eight foot table top display that fits in your trunk and the event is within driving distance, you'll most likely require assistance with trade show shipping. Not only do you want to ensure your exhibit arrives intact, you always need to make sure it arrives! As trade show professionals in business for over twenty years, trust us – we have seen it all and a display not arriving on time for the event is more common that you might imagine. Plus, unless you are a trade show veteran, you may not know how to navigate through.

## Things to know about shipping:

- Whether or not to ship to advanced warehouse or direct to show
- Need to know the importance of driver check in times. Unlike an average pick up from a business, if they don't show up during the predetermined window for pick up after a show, they can be turned away and the freight will be forced using the show carrier of choice and that will cost a LOT more. Running late just isn't a viable excuse.
- Our carrier(s) will sometimes waive the wait time at many different common show venues. This doesn't apply to all of the venues but it does for a lot of the popular ones. Sometimes they will have to wait hours in line to pick up freight and with another carrier that can cost up to \$100 a hour. Many times they have to check in while the dismantle is still happening so wait time is unavoidable.

## 2 Set-up



Once your trade show displays arrive at the venue, you will need to set-up the exhibit. Each state and every venue have different rules which may or may not include the use of union laborers. Unless you have a history with a particular convention hall, you may not be aware of the regulations. You also may not be experienced in estimating how many hours (and what type of hours) are required to install and dismantle your booth.

Additionally, there are details associated with electricity, plumbing, Internet access, that require special knowledge. Not to mention the equipment necessary to install larger exhibits. If your booth has unusual components or has a complicated design, E&E will send out a supervisor who is specifically trained on your booth to ensure proper I&D (installation and dismantle). We will also ensure that it occurs within the time frame planned and resolve any difficulties that may be encountered. Trade show I&Ds can be unpredictable and you need to be able to trust your trade show partner. E&E Exhibit Solutions utilizes trained and highly experienced professional trade show labor services at competitive rates to set up and dismantle your display in all major trade show-heavy cities throughout the U.S. These labor crews have been extensively trained on all of E&E trade show exhibit lines and they are provided with detailed set-up instructions so your display is set up quickly and handled with care.

The same goes with ensuring the care of your trade show components after the event is over. Make sure you use qualified and trained professionals to take down your display and carefully pack in shipping container so it is ready for set up at the next event.

# 3 Storage



The last S of your trade show display is exhibit storage. For some, you may be able to store in a corner of the mail room, in the president's garage or a walk-in hall closet at the office. You may even want to set up your display in one of your company lobbies and reception areas for branding. Otherwise, storing your trade show exhibit can be a challenge.

Once again, it becomes a question of protecting your investment. Graphics can de-laminate in high temperatures or get damaged. If you store your exhibit in a convenient temperature-controlled location with easy truck load access, your investment will stay pristine and it will be available for shipping to the next show with minimal hassle.

E&E has a dedicated warehouse specifically engineered to store and protect thousands of trade show components. After the event, when your booth returns to our warehouse, E&E professionals review your inventory to ensure they have arrived in good condition for the next show and there are no missing parts. The parts are entered into our software inventory system so you can pick and choose which parts you will want for the next event.

Our facility is temperature controlled, maintained by a state-of-the-art inventory control systems and supervised by a staff of professionals in addition to 24-hour surveillance. Your trade show exhibit is safe, secure and stored intact until you require it shipped to your next event.

# *#1 Trade Show Expense*

But there is one expense so great that if not properly prepared for can be like flushing the cost of your booth down the proverbial commode.

That expense?

# Your Staff

There are a multitude of details required for a successful trade show, not the least of which is a customized trade show display that effectively represents your company brand. But the most important element of your trade show is the staff that represents your company. Make sure they are prepared for success.

If your staff isn't prepared, well trained, and excited about the trade show experience, you might as well just set up an unmanned table and hope someone picks up a brochure.

So how do you ensure your staff will make the most out of the two, three or four days of your upcoming trade show event?

- Training
- Motivation
- Support





## training

Will the staff be trained, not only on product knowledge, features/advantages/benefits of your top selling inventory, but are they comfortable interacting with the participants? You can have a knowledgeable sales associate, but if they just sit on a chair in the back of the booth, they aren't making the most of every face-to-face interaction.

Consider conducting role play experiments, having the staff discuss different scenarios and how they might turn a casual attendee into an engaged prospect. Help them to be prepared for the opportunities a well attended trade show provides.

## motivation

Employees who understand the benefit of participating in the trade show are more motivated to be successful. In some cases, that may mean developing an incentive program but it also means educating them to the benefits of face-to-face interactions. How many road trips and pounding the pavement sales calls would they have to make to equal the number of conversations they can have in the concentrated time of a 3 to 4 day trade show? How will those leads impact their future income? Make sure your trade show staff has bought into the benefits of participating in the trade show; both for the company but also for their own pocket book.

## support

Have you provided the latest in technology; not only of your company products, but also for the staff to capture prospect information? Whether that be an iPad with the new mobile iPad trade show app or the online capability of enhancing their sales presentations with the Touch Screen Kiosks. Make sure your staff has what they need to be successful.

# *3 Myths about Renting a Trade Show Booth*

Have you hesitated to consider renting a trade show booth, display components, flooring, or accessories because of some misconception that it wouldn't look spectacular?

Although custom trade show displays are ideal and offer a variety of configurations from 10×20 displays to double deck displays, a trade show booth rental also provides similar options at a fraction of the cost.

# 1 *Quality – a rental display will be worn and less professional than a tradeshow booth designed for my company.*

## WRONG!

Trade show booth components such as walls, hanging signs, flooring, furniture and cabinets are stored in the same secure cases and crates as custom designed trade show booths. The exhibit storage available at E&E Exhibit Solutions is well managed, safe and secure; ensuring every trade show display (rented or purchased) retains its professional quality.



**2** *Options – an exhibit rental is limited in options. I have specific requirements for the show and they all have to be branded.*

## WRONG!

Exhibit rentals are not only available in a variety of sizes and configurations, but they can be customized and branded. The E&E rental team is experienced in display customization techniques to meet these unique requirements. Accessories, such as display kiosks, banner stands and additional add-ons like flooring, hanging signs and counters are also all available for rental.

# 3 *Customize – exhibit rentals can't be customized to include my products, shelving, perhaps refrigeration or cutouts for appliances, etc.*

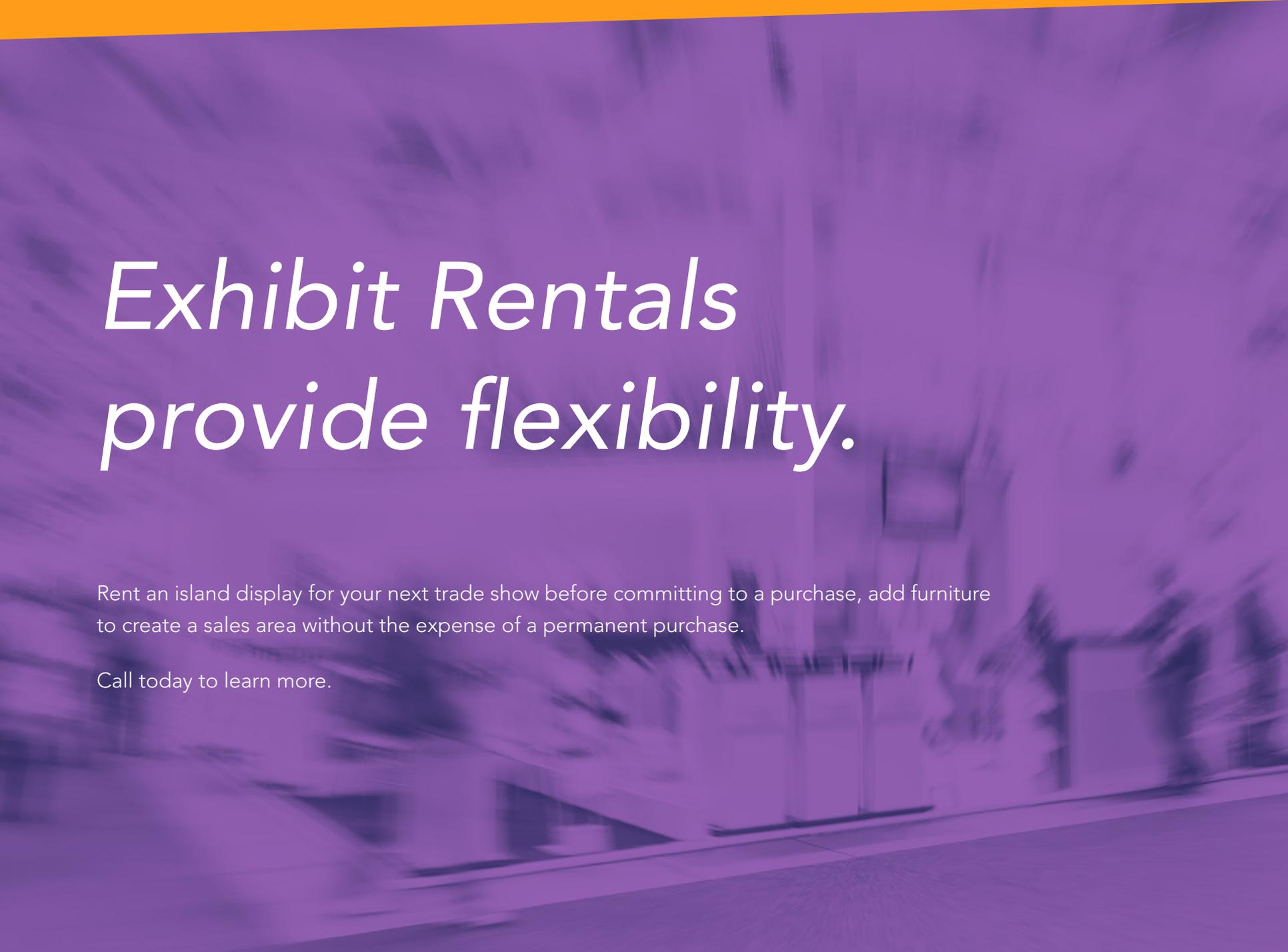
## WRONG!

Graphics, colors, flooring and signage can all be customized to including your company brand message and coloring.

*This is a rental that included:*

- High closed compartment structures with locking storage and cut-outs for backlit product shelves
- Kiosks for 60" TV's
- Customized Hanging structures with lighting, logos, 2 sided, rotating motor
- Plus S-shaped hanging sign printed on both sides
- Custom 3-d raised logos
- Full mural graphic walls
- Wood planked flooring with padding



A blurred background image of a trade show booth with various displays and furniture, overlaid with a purple gradient.

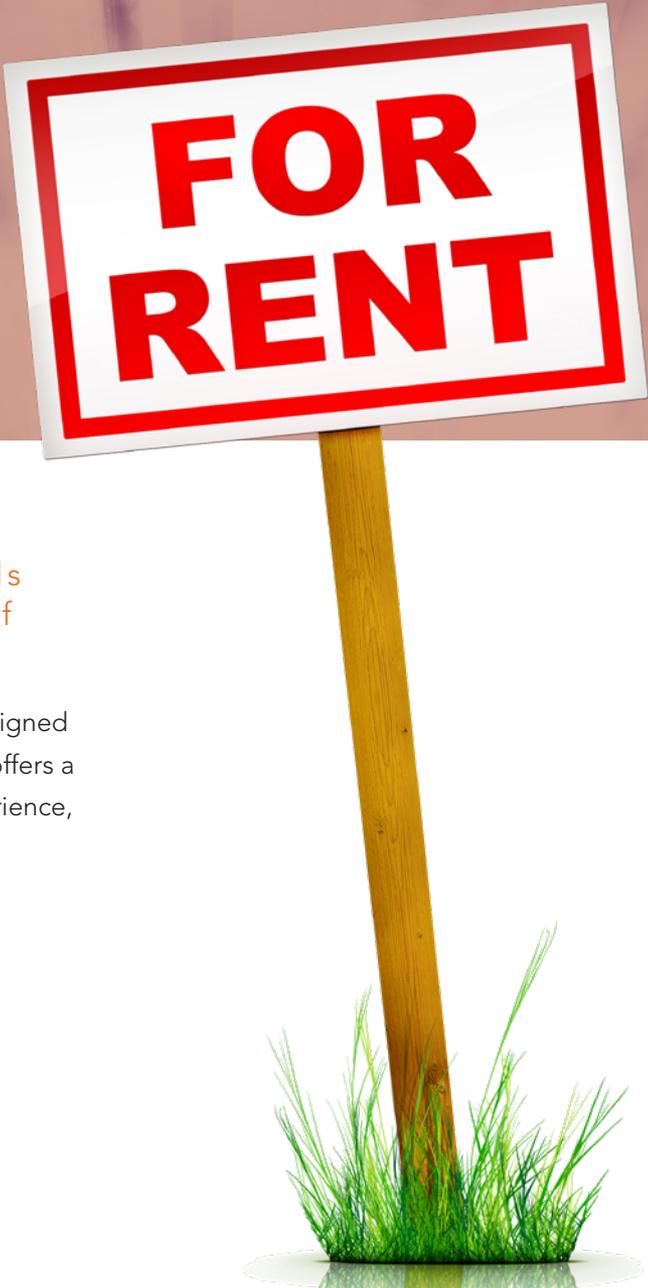
# *Exhibit Rentals provide flexibility.*

Rent an island display for your next trade show before committing to a purchase, add furniture to create a sales area without the expense of a permanent purchase.

Call today to learn more.

# *3 Ways to Customize a Tradeshow Exhibit Rental*

You already know that renting all or part of the components of your tradeshow exhibit is an affordable, flexible way to create an effective trade show booth. But you may not realize the different ways a rental booth can be customized.

A 3D-rendered sign with a white background and a thick red border. The words "FOR RENT" are written in large, bold, red, sans-serif capital letters. The sign is mounted on a vertical wooden post. At the base of the post, there is a small tuft of green grass. The entire scene is set against a white background with a subtle reflection of the sign and post at the bottom.

**FOR  
RENT**

When you think rental, you may be thinking “generic.” However, with tradeshow exhibit rentals you have the opportunity to customize a variety of the components.

Renting your tradeshow booth can save up to 70% of the cost of a newly designed and built display. Even with the cost of customized graphics, a rental booth offers a huge financial savings. So, if you are new to the tradeshow/convention experience, renting some or all of your tradeshow booth components can be a fiscally responsible option for your company.

The following are just three ways to customize your tradeshow rental.



1

## Customize what you have in your exhibit.

By selecting the components within your exhibit footprint, you are customizing how the area will feel to your visitors. Whether you choose pop-up displays, counters with Tv/DVD screens, large format graphic displays, hanging signs or rental furniture; tradeshow rentals allow you to customize the feel of your booth.

2

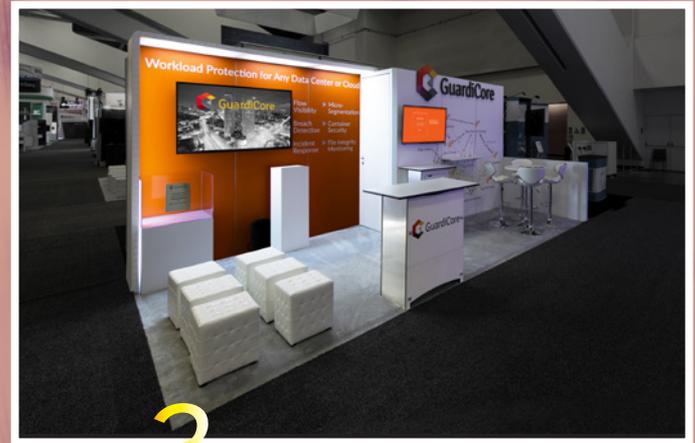
## Customize the look of your tradeshow exhibit

Even though you may be renting the display components, you can add your company colors, graphics, logo images and create graphic messaging that is completely unique to your company's products and services.

3

## Customize the experience for the visitor.

Your presence within the booth creates a unique experience for the visitor. Do you have a separate sales area? Are there interactive opportunities to engage the visitor within your booth? Do you have same products so that the visitor can see, touch and even taste your products? Will you have a prize drawing or free samples for each visitor? Regardless of whether your trade show booth is purchased or rented, you can customize the experience people have when they come to visit your exhibit space.



*If you are seriously considering renting your next tradeshow booth, the Tradeshow Exhibit Consultants with E&E Exhibit Solutions can help you weigh the benefits of customizing a rented tradeshow booth for your event.*

# *6 Reasons Not to Buy Cheap Banner Stands*

Nothing beats banner stands for communicating marketing messages in a flash. You can roll up your banners in seconds and be ready for crowds at trade shows, events, museums, lobbies, retail spaces—anywhere you want to reach your target audience. Quality banner stands from your display company may seem pricey at first; but, before you buy that \$99 special online or at your local copy shop, think about where, how often and how long you plan to use your banner stands.

# 1

## You use your banner stands frequently

For repeated use of your roll up banner stands, you want high-quality units with durable winding mechanisms. If the internal spring ever breaks, you won't be able to retract or pull up your banner, which may also damage your graphic and make it difficult to use at your event.



# 2

## You change your retractable banner graphics regularly

If you promote different messages for seasonal products or services, you need high-quality retractable banner stands with interchangeable cassettes. Simply eject the old graphic cassette and pop in a new one, and your new message is ready to go—without the need to buy another banner stand or ship your existing unit to the shop for replacement graphics.



# 3

## You need weather resistant outdoor banner stands.

Most indoor banner stands cannot withstand rain, snow, wind, sun and heat. Ask your exhibit company about outdoor banner stands with weighted bases that keep your message in place during wind. These outdoor banner stands also feature UV-resistant inks that won't fade, crack or run in the sun and rain.

# 4

You want to purchase a large number of banner stands.

Don't get stuck with a bunch of cheap banner stands that you will have to repair or replace at once. Ask your exhibit house about a quantity discount when buying quality banner stands in bulk. You'll save not only on the hardware cost but also the graphic cost, since you can print multiple copies at one time.

# 5

You are environmentally-conscious

That \$99 special may very well be a one-time use banner stand that you'll need to buy over and over again. Look for a durable model made from sustainable materials you can reuse for years to come. Eco-friendly banner stand graphics are also available.

# 6

You want a warranty and trusted customer service contact.

Look for a quality retractable banner stand with a warranty should any of the internal mechanisms break. A free replacement pays for itself. Ask your exhibit consultant about warrantied banner stand models. He can also guide you to the right banner stands and coordinate any warranty repairs on your behalf.



*If any of the above reasons speak to you and how you plan to use your banner stands, then go for value over price. Contact E&E Exhibit Solutions and let us help you find a quality banner stand to fit your needs.*

# *5 Reasons Stretch Tension Fabric Displays are Right for Your Company*

As a marketing executive or event planner has it become more difficult to “keep up with the Jones?” Double deck exhibits, tension fabric pop-up displays and custom island displays make it hard to compete for attendee’s attention.

E&E Exhibit Solutions offers an affordable, show stopping way to turn heads at your next event or tradeshow: Tension fabric displays.

# 1

## Visually Different.

Capture the attention of trade show attendees with your custom designed stretch tension fabric displays. They can be fashioned in a variety of shapes and sizes. Stand out from traditional exhibit walls with a custom created fabric display.

# 2

## Place Them Anywhere.

Tension fabric displays can be used with a free-standing display or mounted on the wall or even ceiling. Create an intimate atmosphere within your booth with a series of stretch tension fabric displays strategically placed within your booth space.

# 3

## Portable/Easy Set-up.

The lightweight aluminum frames and fabric make transportation, setup and tear-down easy even for just one person.



# 4

## Wrinkle Resistant.

Your graphics look great right out of the box with the wrinkle resistant fabric of our stretch tension fabric displays.

# 5

## Limitless Configuration.

Stretch tension fabric displays can be made in a variety of shapes and sizes. Combining multiple fabric displays offer almost an infinite possibility for your tradeshow exhibit.



A blurred background image of a trade show floor with various booths and people, overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. The text is centered in the upper half of the image.

*5 Cs for More Press at  
Your Next Trade Show*

A lot goes into the planning of your next trade show appearance; the location, the staff, the trade show displays, trade show graphics, sales materials and setting sales goals.

If your company has participated in a number of trade show events, you most likely have the above down to a science, but how well are you taking advantage of the press that attend conventions?

Exhibitor Magazine recently published 10 Ways to Impress the Press; a fantastic article that helps you consider, plan and execute an effective plan for engaging the press and helping them promote your business.

Of those ten, let's spend a few minutes on the five top tips you may not have considered.



# 1

## Craft your primary message

What is the theme of your trade show booth? Are you focusing on a new product or service? Are you tying your participation into a contest or a nonprofit connection? Have you created a unique and memorable message that will stand out from the other press releases the members of the press will be sorting through?

# 2

## Connect early and often

Keep in touch with your venue event management team to access the listing of expected press attendees. Once you know WHO you will be communicating with, provide them information early and often. The goal is to be on their list of “must see” booths. There may be two hundred companies at the trade show event, and you want to be one of those booths the press visit and feature in their reports back to their audience.

# 3

## Compelling press releases are key

Your marketing team may be stellar at writing press releases for the web, but do they grab the reader’s attention in the first paragraph. Imagine an editor’s sword – each press release they review is cut off at the end of the first or second paragraph so make sure all of the most important facts are in the lead. Start with a strong opening sentence and follow up with a quote from a company executive. Don’t be afraid to use humor or shock value to capture the press’ attention.

# 4

## Clever press kits

These are not only filled with the most valuable information, they also include information, images and links that save the press time. Make sure your wording is print ready and your images are professional and camera ready for print and web promotion. You'll need to send off the press kits in advance but also make sure copies are available in the press room at the event. Help save space by putting all your information on a customized USB drive – they'll thank you.

# 5

## Circle back

Before, during and after the event; keep in close communication with the press. Invite them for coffee prior to the event – the day before the festivities begin is a great time for face time. Offer special incentives for them to visit and feature your booth. Most importantly, connect after the event to see if they have any follow up questions, need additional quotes or images for their publication. A hand written thank you note goes a long way in helping develop press relationships for future opportunities.



Obviously, your primary goal at the trade show is to connect with prospects, capture qualified lead information and drive sales, however, don't discount the value of great press coverage

# *3 People You Encounter at a Trade Show*

Although it may seem presumptuous to categorize trade show attendees into groups; those that have frequented these events will agree there does seem to be consistency in the characters we encounter. So the question is "How do I maximize on the brief encounter to, not only benefit my business, but also to offer a solution to the attendee?"

So let's look at three of the common trade show attendees and some possible suggestions for how you can improve the encounter.

# 1 Lookie Lou

These are the attendees that travel through the trade show displays looking for trade show swag, contests to sign up for and ideas they might use in their own booth.

## Suggestion:

Greet them with a smile, hand them your swag, invite them to sign up for your booth prize and ask them one simple question: "What do you hope to learn from this event today?"

Think about it; they can't answer yes or no and the question will force them to stop and think in order to provide a viable response. Listen carefully to their answer for any clues that may lead you to a deeper discussion about their business. They may just thank you for the pen with your company name, but they may also turn into a member of our second group of trade show attendees...Curious George.



## 2 Curious George/Georgina

These are attendees who not only want your swag they are also looking for “something.” They may not be quite sure what the something is; technology to help them work smarter, services that will help their profitability or products that improve their sales efforts. You may or may not have that illusive something but only by asking the right questions, will you begin to uncover their needs.

### Suggestion:

Greet them with a smile. Invite them into your booth by asking “What have you found most interesting today at the trade show?” Their answer may help you uncover a little of what they need. Follow up by asking them “What do you hope to accomplish today?” Perhaps they are interested in the latest and greatest in trade show technology. Show them the products you have that might meet their needs, for example the Literature stands or the newest in trade show charging stations.

Using more hands on demonstrations, show them the mobile iPad trade shows app that you have on your iPad. Make sure to send them customized sales literature using this application.



# 3 Devoted Dora



Lastly, we come to the attendee that we may take for granted. Devoted Dora is a previous or current customer and already understands our business and the positive impact it has on theirs. Sadly, in an effort to obtain new customers, we frequently ignore the opportunity to maximize on our relationship with Devoted Dora.

## Suggestions:

Greet them with a smile and even their name, if possible. Ask about their day, their business and any other personal greeting that reminds them of your relationship. Use this 'in-person' time to share the latest company offerings, such as the Seamless graphic wall graphic and other products or services. This is the perfect opportunity to build on that relationship. Retention of existing customers costs less than obtaining new customers.

With all of the attendees that visit your booth, greet them warmly, ask open-ended questions, gather their contact information and make the most of the every minute they are in front of you. You only have a moment to make a difference – make sure you take every opportunity to maximize on your encounters.

# *4 Ways to Measure the Impact of Your Latest Trade Show Event*

For those that have attended trade shows, you know the work that goes into managing the details of preparing for an event that can potentially reap a large percent of annual sales.

However, what processes does your company have in place to perform an “autopsy” of the event?

Measuring the cost of the event and your return on investment is certainly a key deliverable to examine as well as follow up with leads and orders, however, how do you measure the actual impact?

Double Dutch, an event technology company, recently posted an article featuring the Three Post-Event Metrics Execs Actually Care About. One of those metrics is the impact of the event on your business.

In the article, the author offers these four ways to measure impact:

- Value and number of opportunities
- Average contract value
- Velocity
- Conversion rate



# 1

## Value and number of opportunities

How many did the event influence? How many did the event source?

# 2

## Average contract value

Is the ACV of the opportunities your event influenced higher or lower than your company norm?

# 3

## Velocity

What stages were your opportunities in pre-event, compared to what they are post event. Are you seeing shorter sales cycles?

# 4

## Conversion rate

Out of all the opportunities your event influenced & sourced, how many of them turned to "closed won" versus "closed lost"?

Taking the time to evaluate multiple measurements after participating in a trade show will help to impact future events. Make note of what went well and what could have gone better so that you can learn for next year.

*This year we created an immersive experience using virtual reality (VR) where we embedded our company content into different world experiences.*



You can watch the video by clicking on the screenshot.

A blurred, low-angle photograph of a city street with buildings and a sidewalk, overlaid with a semi-transparent purple color. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

*#1 Most Critical Part of  
the Sales Process*



Recently a question was posed on LinkedIn that had us stop and think. Mark Lotenero Business Development Strategist for Passport, Inc. asked:

### What is the most critical part of the sales process?

- Is it building rapport, credibility and trust with prospects and customers?
- It is identifying the problem?
- Is it presenting your company's solutions effectively?
- Or is it the ability to close the sale.

You may find different department managers offering different answers and at times they are all important. Perhaps the CFO will add a new part of the sale process equation: It is the ability to pay and pay on time. However, in our more than twenty years in business, perhaps the most enduring component is the ability to build that customer relationship. Customers who know and trust you are most like to return for additional purchases, refer you to others and even forgive if you drop the ball.

Following are three key components to building customer relationships that last:

**Communication • Transparency • Consistency**

# 1 *Communication*

One business owner said that communication was how he gained all of his new customers and also how he lost some of his best. When asked for further explanation he said this:

In the beginning, our sales team would communicate on a regular basis, answering questions, providing product information and returning phone calls in a timely manner. We are known as great communicator by our new customers.

However, recently we started losing some of those great original customers that helped build our business. When we followed up to find out why it was because we no longer communicated to them. We basically took them for granted without even realizing it.

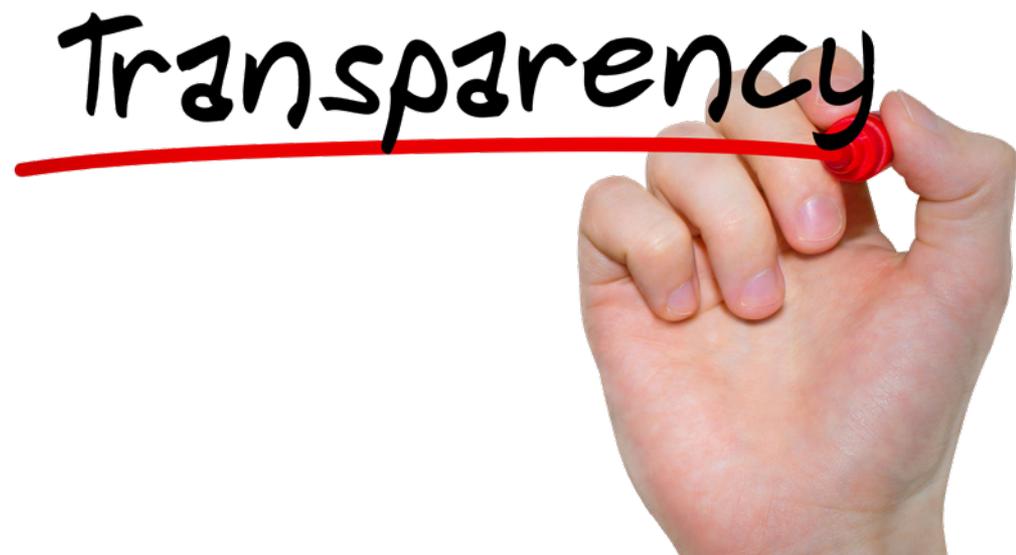
Communication is key from the initial prospecting call and long after that initial payment is received. Being available and also providing updated industry information via newsletters, social media and traditional mail helps customers know they are valued by your business.



## 2 Transparency

Along with transparency comes honesty- even when the honest answer is not a good one. Think about a time when you promised to meet a deadline with a customer. We've all experienced times when that deadline is going to be missed. We can either call as soon as we know and let the customer know and provide our action plans to follow through or we can duck their calls and pretend there isn't a problem. Sadly, there are companies who follow that second path of hoping the problem will go away.

Being transparent with good information as well as tough answers is important to building that trust factor with customers. If they know you will be open, honest and available no matter what, they are more likely to remain loyal customers. Which leads to the final key component...



# 3 Consistency

Being consistent with quality products, great communication, and a stellar experience is what people remember. McKinsey & Company published an article entitled The three Cs of customer satisfaction: Consistency, Consistency, Consistency. They lead off with this summary:

*It may not seem sexy, but consistency is the secret ingredient to making customers happy. However, it's difficult to get right and requires top-leadership attention.*

McKinsey & Company, known for their far reaching surveys followed up by stating:

*Our most recent customer-experience survey of some 27,000 American consumers across 14 different industries found that effective customer journeys are more important: measuring satisfaction on customer journeys is 30 percent more predictive of overall customer satisfaction than measuring happiness for each individual interaction.*

*In addition, maximizing satisfaction with customer journeys has the potential not only to increase customer satisfaction by 20 percent but also to lift revenue by up to 15 percent while lowering the cost of serving customers by as much as 20 percent.*

That is a lot of words to say this:

**Happy customers are more satisfied and spend more.**

And returning customers cost less to serve than constantly marketing for new customers.

No matter what your business, honing the sales process is a continual focus:

- Finding qualified prospects
- Turning prospects into paying customers
- Building customer loyalty for repeat business
- Turning customers into advocates who market your business through word of mouth

# *#1 Way to Increase the ROI on Your Trade Show Participation*

What do you think is the most important part of your trade show displays? With the advancement in technology, you might think your best focus should be on technology or social media or even high tech giveaways. However, you would be wrong.

The number one way to increase the return on your trade show participation investment is by making sure your staff is trained, motivated and excited about the event.

Sound too simple?

Consider the attendee who walks through a crowded trade show convention hall. Which booth will she enter?

The trade show exhibit with sales people huddled around their Smart Phones trying to capture Pokémon?

The trade show booth with smiling sales people at the threshold making eye contact and inviting her into their exhibit?

The staffs of both companies are probably talented and successful sales people out in their regular workday world, however, there are a few special talents (easily trained) that set effective trade show sales people apart.



## Smile/Eye Contact

It literally begins with a smile. It is hard to walk past someone who is openly interested in engaging in conversation. Even just a simple “hey, love your hat” comment is enough to stop the momentum of an attendee who is walking past. There is a lot of competition for the attention of the average attendee. Unless you sell a product they came to the event to purchase, it will require active engagement on the part of your staff to draw them into your booth.

## Ease of Conversation

Slick sales pitches and canned speeches went out with the door-to-door vacuum sales era. Role play with your sales staff in advance to help them gain confidence in their ability to engage in casual conversation. Starting with a smile and jumping to “would you like to buy my widget” will rarely garner a sale. Encourage your staff to have fun with casual conversation as an opener to more qualifying conversations. There is a fine line between gossiping and building trust, however, the benefits of being friendly and inviting far outweigh the risk of long gab sessions between your staff and attendees.



## Open Ended Questions

“Would you like to buy my widget?” can only be answered one of two ways and trust me – they will most likely say no. Make sure your staff understands the difference between questions that can only be answered with a yes/no response and those questions that invite conversation. “What brings you to the event today?” is a question that invites conversation and also the opportunity to learn more about the attendee. A few well worded open ended questions will help qualify the attendee to determine if they are a potential prospect for your company. Practice these type of questions with your staff prior to the event so they become comfortable with the process.

## Listening

Over eager sales people who are quick to judge the viability of a prospect may miss out on subtle clues. Part of your sales training in preparation for your next trade show should include the value of truly listening. One way to listen is by asking follow up questions. “Is there anything else I should know about your company needs?” Attendees who feel they are being listened to will be more likely to want to do business with your company.

## Product Knowledge

Each staff member should be fully versed in the features, advantages and benefits of your product lines. However, they should also understand how the needs of each prospect might be met with your products. Not every product will be a perfect match for every prospect. For those newer employees helping in the booth, make sure they know enough of the right qualifying questions to ask to then connect the prospect with the best sales associate.



## Juggling Multiple Attendees

Let's face it, 10×10 displays will only hold so many people. Your staff needs to be able to effectively manage multiple prospects at once. The Retail Doctor offers a great guide for teaching sales people to hustle (his term for taking care of more than one person at a time):

- Ask permission from the first customer.
- Greet the other customer.
- Get back to the first person quickly and thank them for waiting.
- Restate where they were in the sale.
- Confirm they got it right.
- All the while not rushing anyone.

If a customer comes in while a salesperson is with someone else they should say, "Excuse me, do you mind if I go greet that customer? I'll be right back."

Another great method is to give the first prospect something to do while they greet the next person. For example, signing up for a drawing, entering their contact data into a mobile device, watching a product demonstration video.

## Closing the Conversation

Although you may not close the sale during the trade show event, your staff will want to learn how to secure a next step commitment from the qualified attendee. Emma Brudner has written an article offering 11 closing statements which is worth a read, however, you may want to modify the statements for a trade show event.

### A few examples are:

- I'll email you the product files we discussed. Shall I give you a call next Wednesday or Thursday to discuss further?

Based on our conversation, it sounds like you'll be ready to make a purchase decision in the next month. How can I help?

The real return on investment is the number of closed sales and sales opportunities your staff uncover during the trade show event. You don't get a sale unless you ask for it. Make sure your staff is fully trained on closing techniques.

### Bottom Line:

Prospects rarely do business with a company. They do business with people. Make sure your trade show staff is ready to positively represent your company by training and motivating them to make the most out of every opportunity.

Of course we would be remiss if we didn't mention the value of a fantastic trade show displays as the backdrop for your well trained staff. We can help with that!

# Take your trade show exhibit to the next level!

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