gds tradeshow planning guide

WELCOME

Hi there 👋

Preparing for tradeshows can be as stressful as planning a wedding, with countless details that can easily slip through the cracks. That's why our team at Gallery Design Studio, along with our signage and booth build partners at Displayit, have created this guide. Our aim is to provide you with valuable insights and make your event preparations easier.

Inside, you'll find tips, practical strategies, and advice tailored to exhibitors like you, from designing captivating booths to understanding booth specifications, logistics, and realistic budgets. Our goal is to help you be as prepared as possible for your next big event.
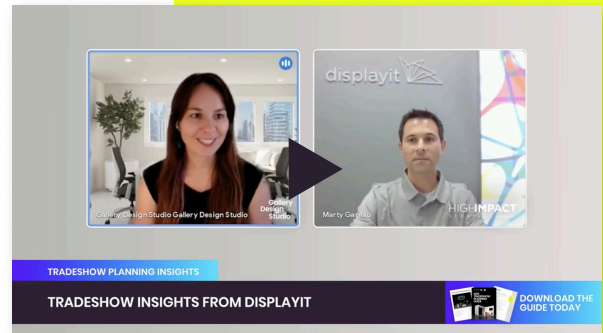
Enjoy,
Caroline

TRADE SHOW INSIGHTS VIDEO

Caroline

Caroline Petersen
Founder + Chief Design Officer,
Gallery Design Studio

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Here is a typical timeline. most will happen sequencially, however it will not always be linear.

Appendix:
- Booth Design Examples
- helpful advice
- Tradeshow checklist

We recommend having a deck with all this information to loop in everyone involved like your event marketers, designers, venue & your vendors.

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S E R V I C E S by displayit

plan

WHY ARE YOU GOING TO THE EVENT?

What is the purpose of you going to the event?

Events create great buzz. But it's critical to set, measure and assess quantifiable metrics to help you achieve goals and continuously improve for future events. Some of our suggested metrics:

IN-PERSON EVENT KPIS

- ☐ Number of booth visitors,
- ☐ Number of contact info received
- ☐ Number of demo requests
- ☐ Number of sales qualified leads (set criteria for qualified leads prior to event)
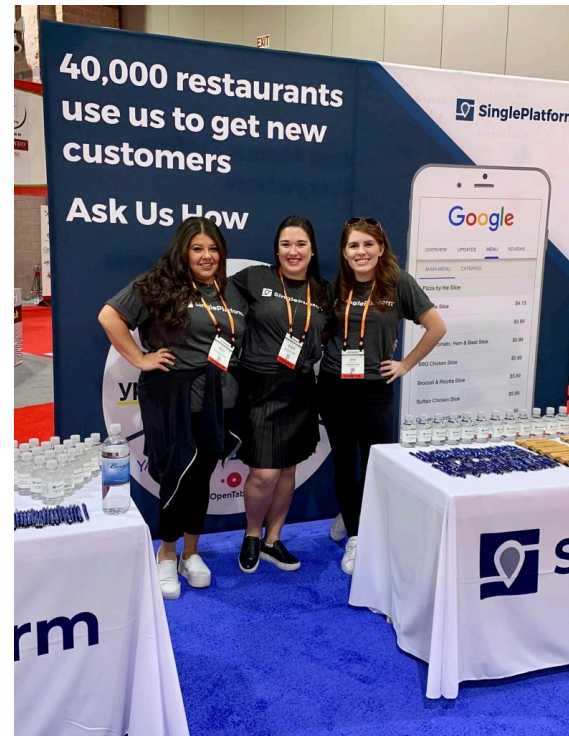
POST-EVENT KPIS

- ☐ Number of event attendees who joined sales funnel
- ☐ Number of event attendees who converted to sales
- ☐ For virtual events, send post-event surveys
- ☐ Cost per customer acquisition

Key questions you need to answer:

- Why are you attending the event?
- What you are trying to acheive?
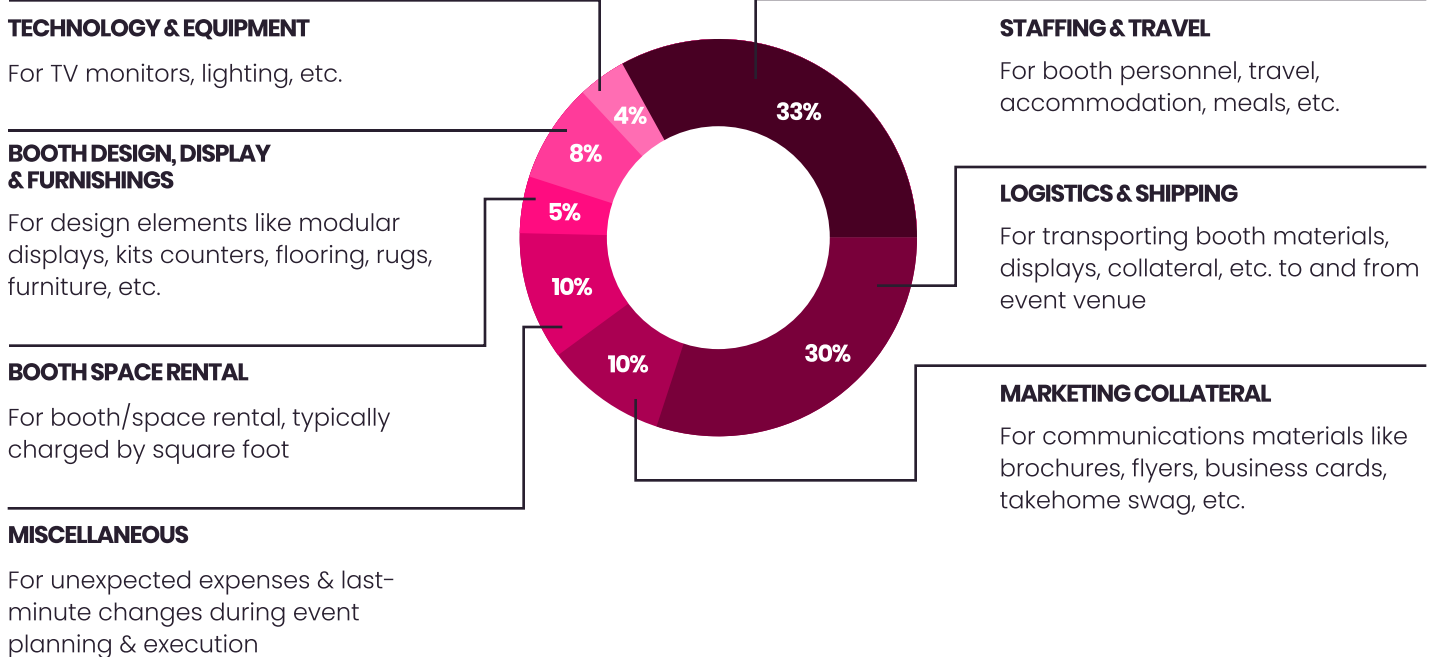- What KPIs will you use to measure success?

SET A BUDGET

When budgeting for a tradeshow, consider the level of design customization you desire, and whether you prefer to buy and DIY your booth or rent a turnkey solution that includes build and logistics.

Rentals typically offer greater customization options, but come with a higher price tag. Keep in mind that booth size also affects the investment required.

Generally, a 10x10 space will require less investment compared to a 20x20 booth.

TECHNOLOGY & EQUIPMENT

For TV monitors, lighting, etc.

BOOTH DESIGN, DISPLAY & FURNISHINGS

For design elements like modular displays, kits counters, flooring, rugs, furniture, etc.

BOOTH SPACE RENTAL

For booth/space rental, typically charged by square foot

MISCELLANEOUS

For unexpected expenses & last-minute changes during event planning & execution

STAFFING & TRAVEL

For booth personnel, travel, accommodation, meals, etc.

LOGISTICS & SHIPPING

For transporting booth materials, displays, collateral, etc. to and from event venue

MARKETING COLLATERAL

For communications materials like brochures, flyers, business cards, takehome swag, etc.

4%
8%
5%
10%
10%
33%
30%

SAMPLE TRADE SHOW BUDGET SHEET

CLICK HERE FOR LINK TO SHEET

A laptop displaying a "Trade Show Budget" spreadsheet with the following visible categories:

Cost Description

Space Rental
- Booth space

Booth Design, Display, & Furniture
- Booth Design
- Audiovisual
- Graphic Production
- Flooring
- Furniture
- Banners
- Counter/Shelving
- Modular Display
- Florist
- Misc. Add-Ons

Logistics & Shipping
- Shipping
- Customs/Export/Imports
- Drayage
- Misc. Transportation Costs

Staffing & Travel
- Per Diem Allowance
- Staff training

Cost Description

Marketing Collateral
- Graphic Production
- Photography / Videography

Pre-Show Marketing
- Onsite Interactive Marketing: Social Media Ads/Campaign; Mailing
- Sponsorships
- Directory Advertisements
- Incentives/premiums
- Influencer: Includes Hotel & Travel
- Press kits/materials
- Prizes/Giveaways
- Onsite Promotional Billboards
- Misc. Promotional Costs

Technology & Equipment (Show Services)
- Electrical
- Catering Services
- Bar Services
- Installation and Dismantle (I&D)
- Plumbing
- Cleaning
- Rigging
- Lead-retrieval system rental
- Security

Budget Allocated / Subtotal columns with $ values.

RENT OR BUY TRADE SHOW EXHIBITS?

RENTING

VS

BUYING

Renting typically includes turnkey installation and logistics services without having to worry about storage

Buying enables you to re-use your displays at multiple events

PROS

Customization on booth displays

Hassle-free logistics with no concerns for transportation or storage

Enables you to stay flexible and fresh at each tradeshow if messaging, branding, or event goals change

Quick turnaround with limited flexibility - you can create the layout and traffic flow you want but within limitations of rental availability

Requires lower initial budget

CONS

More expensive in the long-term

Might be cheaper to start, but if things do not go according to plan or you underestimate costs, expenses can dramatically increase

PROS

Repurpose for multiple events

Controlled Logistics: when you own a display unit, you control every aspect of its transportation and assembly

CONS

Requires higher intial budget

You will have to do more DIYing and work with multiple vendors to get all elements of the booth to come together

Signage can get damaged from usage/ transportation overtime

Hands-on logistics - owning requires your team to manage transportation, installation & storage

5 FAQ TO DECIDE IF YOU SHOULD RENT OR BUY A BOOTH DISPLAY

01

Q: WHAT IS MY BUDGET?

A: Booth rentals can cost between $10-25k depending on booth size of. Purchasing a display is roughly 3-4x more costly. Purchasing is a significant upfront spend, but it's more cost-effective in the long run.

02

Q: I AM NEW TO TRADE SHOWS AND EXHIBITIONS. SHOULD I TEST DIFFERENT DISPLAY OPTIONS BEFORE COMMITTING TO A PURCHASE?

A: It's typically a good idea to start with renting displays. That way you can evaluate which layout and messaging provides the highest return on foot traffic and engagement.

03

Q: HOW FREQUENTLY WILL I PARTICIPATE IN TRADE SHOWS?

A: Will you be attending multiple events? Purchasing may be the right option for long-term usage.

04

Q: HOW MUCH CONTROL DO I WANT OVER THE DESIGN AND LAYOUT OF MY BOOTH DISPLAYS?

A: Booth purchases lends to higher customization to get exactly what you envision. Booth rentals will get you close, however, you'll have to be flexible and open to what is available to rent.

05

Q: DO I HAVE STORAGE SPACE AVAILABLE FOR BOOTH DISPLAYS BETWEEN EVENTS?

A: If you do purchase, keep in mind storage between events. Also note that your team will be responsible for setup and breakdown. Rentals generally come with a crew to handle logistics for you.

COMMON BOOTH TYPES & DIMENSIONS

---

10 X 10

Great for

Versatility and affordability. Perfect for startups and small orgs with limited funds. This 100 square foot space typically has a backdrop and side walls. well-suited for showcasing products or product lines. The compact space encourages focused displays and enables businesses to highlight key features, benefits, and demonstrations.

Best Practices

Shelving and counter displays are important features for this size booth. Well-suited for showcasing individual products or product lines, the compact space encourages focused displays and enables businesses to highlight key features, benefits, and demonstrations effectively.

---

20 X 20

Great for

Creating immersive and impactful experiences for attendees using multiple engagement zones. Capture attention and keep attendees at your booth in order to walk them through a demo or address their top concerns.features, benefits, and demonstrations.

Best Practices

Build credibility and showcase the value of your offering with branded elements, visuals, interactive displays, and multimedia experiences that align with brand identity. Multiple engagement zones are critical, e.g., demo areas, meeting spaces, lounge areas, interactive displays, or dedicated spaces for product launches.

---

20 X 30

Great for

Incorporating all elements of a trade show booth including interactive exhibits, product showcases, brand storytelling, meeting and hospitality space.

Best Practices

Technology integration is important for this booth size. Consider incorporating interactive touchscreens, digital signage, augmented reality experiences, etc. to captivate attendees and provide immersive, personalized interactions with your brand. Enlist well-trained, knowledgeable booth staff who can actively engage with attendees.

design

ANATOMY OF A BOOTH
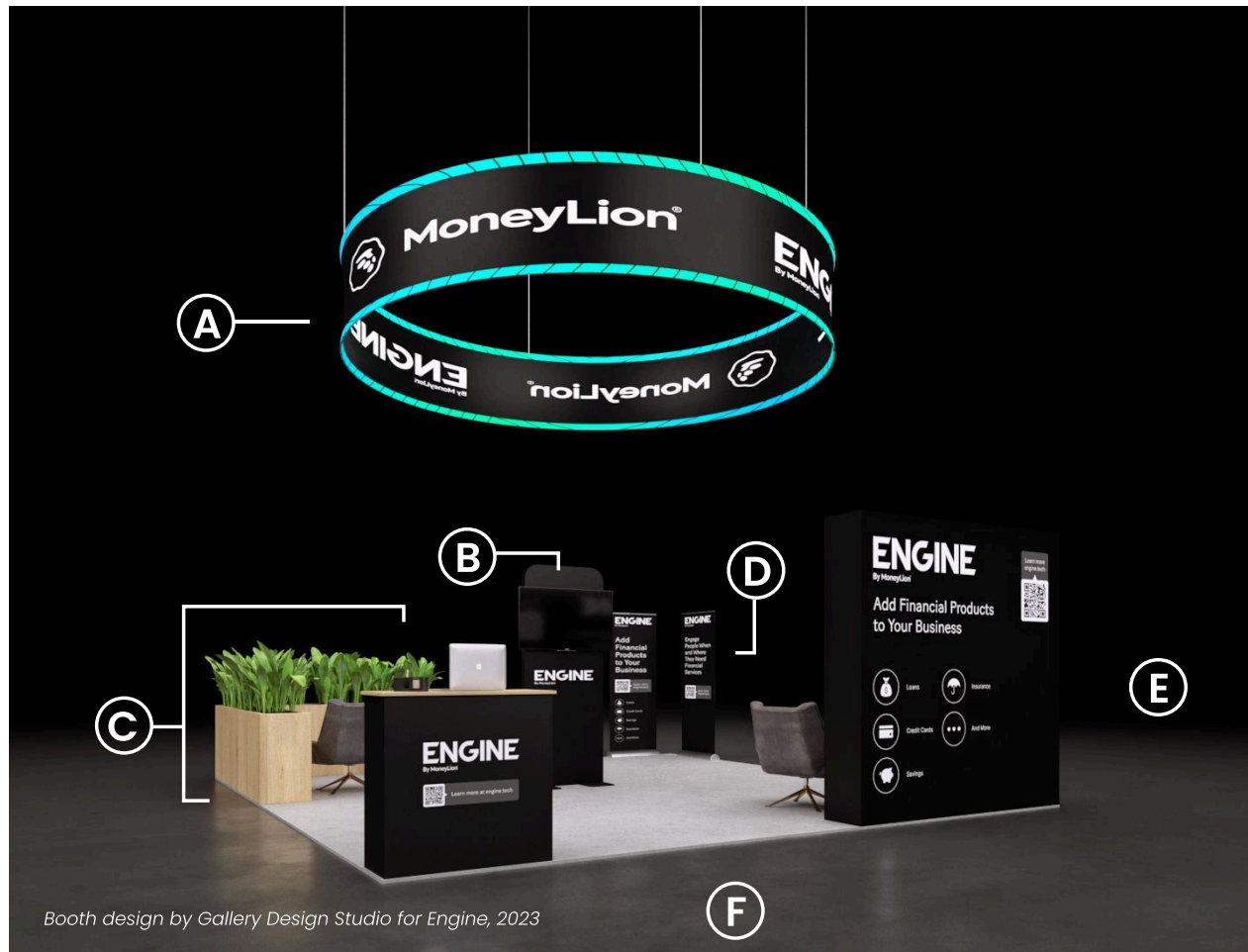
Booth design by Gallery Design Studio for Engine, 2023

Here is a an example of creative assets our team created for a 20'x20' island booth:

A - Hanging banner graphics

B - Looping 30-second video for TV stand/display

C - Furniture & plant selection

D - Standing & pop-up banner graphics

E - Fabric display & wall sign graphics

F - Flooring selection

LAYOUT DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Once you know your booth size, whether you are renting or buying, and have a budget in place, you can start designing the details.

What you need to know:

- What are your goals?
- What do you want to be the focal point?
- What's the flow/foot traffic that you're looking to create?
- What aesthetic are you going for? (natural, chic, conversational, lounge, meeting, basic)

THE DEVELOPMENT STAGES

- Key steps
- Mood boards
- Create sketches
- 3D renderings to visualize your booth design

1. **Conceptual Design:** In this stage, the design team develops initial design ideas and creates conceptual drawings, sketches, or simple 3D models. The focus is on capturing the overall vision and functionality of the booth. This is an iterative process where we capture the information provided, send options for review, and collaborate to get things just right.

2. **Design Development:** The design team refines the conceptual design, considering practical aspects like booth location, materials available, and event policies. Detailed designs are created to fit exact booth specifications and needs. We'll also create a detailed 3D render to help visualize the final booth.

3. **Final Adjustments:** This is the last step where we confirm your design elements to then begin the ordering stage.

*Please note, your budget is a baseline and based on your design, goals, and flow functionality, your budget may increase or decrease based on those needs. The design development stage is meant to try to align your budget with your goals. Where your budget may need flexibility is when we finalize items and confirm what is in inventory.

Create or share inspirational sketches, mood boards, or 3D renderings to visualize your booth design. Incorporate your brand identity, colors, and messaging. Consider the flow of traffic, ease of navigation, and different zones within the booth for specific activities or product displays.

(TVS, TOUCH SCREEN TV)

TV's are a great way to engage your audience. You can have images to view or add an interactive component to better engage your audience.
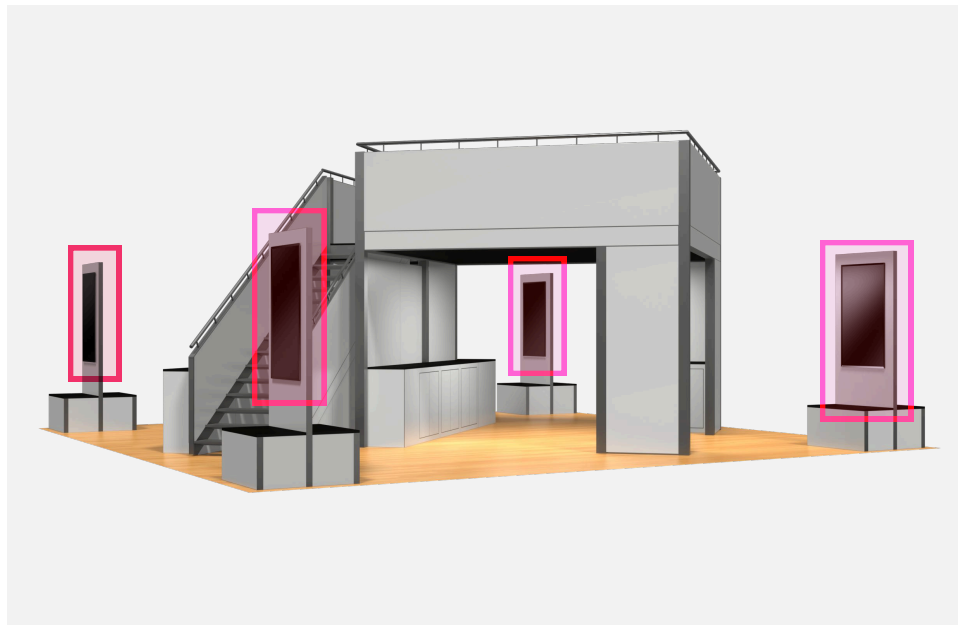
Think about what type of messaging you want to display and how you want your audience to view/see your product/ services

- Will this be interactive?
- Statics?
- Video?

SIGNAGE GRAPHICS & VIDEOS

Once you know what stands you will have based on your booth design and budget, you can design branded graphics & signage based on specs for signage display. This is where you provide key elements of your solutions that will stand out from the crowd

GRAPHICS

Consistent messaging is key. Identify the critical elements you want to communicate to your audience and let our team work our magic.

TIPS

- When it comes to copy, less is more.
- Choosing a theme can help our team select the perfect visuals
- Keep an open mind. With more creative freedom, our team can push the envelope and deliver traffic-stopping designs

VIDEOS

Looping background video at your booth is a great way to showcase your demo or mission.

TIPS

- Needs to be short, but not too short (max. 90 seconds)
- Needs to loop continuously - avoid voiceover or music
- Needs to be eye-catching
- Not text-heavy
- High contrast so it can be seen from a distance
- Big elements within the video

build

SIGNAGE MATERIALS

There are many different types, styles, and forms of signage you can choose. You will want to select the type of signage that best suits the layout and assets of your booth, then start designing based on those dimensions. Creating signage can often become a delay in the process if you are not careful regarding time needed for designing, ordering, and shipping so the earlier you can work on this, the better! Here are some examples of signage types that you can choose from.

ROLL-UP BANNERS

Roll-up banners are the most popular banner type. Easy to transport, set up, and come in various sizes and designs. Plus, they usually feature a roll-up mechanism for quick assembly.

VINYL BANNERS

Vinyl banners are durable and versatile. They can be hung, mounted, or attached to booth structures. They are available in different sizes and can easily be customized.

FABRIC BANNERS

Fabric is lightweight, with a more elegant look than vinyl. Fabric banners allow for vibrant and high-quality graphics. They are an ideal material for creating a sophisticated, sleek booth atmosphere.

HANGING BANNERS
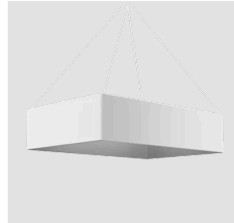
Hanging banners are suspended from the ceiling, allowing you to make the most of available vertical space. They can help your booth stand out from a distance and guide attendees toward your display.
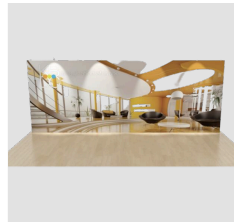
TABLETOP BANNERS
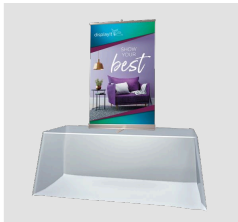
These smaller banners are designed to sit on your booth's table or counter. They are great for showcasing specific products or services and can complement larger banners.
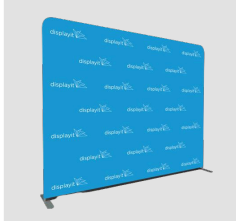
BACKDROP BANNERS

Backdrops are large banners that serve as a background for your booth. They create a unified visual theme and help to establish your brand identity. Backdrops can be particularly effective for photo opportunities.

SIGNAGE MATERIALS CONT...

PRESS/MEDIA BANNERS

Often seen at red-carpet events, press/media banners feature a repeating pattern of logos, brand names, or graphics. They're great for photo opportunities and enhancing brand visibility.

POP-UP BANNERS

Pop-up banners, also known as tension fabric displays, are larger collapsible structures that can be set up quickly. They are usually made of lightweight frames and fabric graphics.

DIGITAL BANNERS

With the advancement of technology, digital banners or screens are becoming more common. These can display dynamic content, videos, or interactive elements to engage attendees.

BANNER STANDS

Banner stands come in various shapes and sizes and can be used to display smaller banners, brochures, or other promotional materials.

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

With Spacial Intelligence Tracking, we can help you convert data into actionable insights that drive powerful and profitable outcomes.

What we measure:

OPPORTUNITY TO SEE

Total number of visitors when you add together passers-by and engaged

UNIQUE PASSERBY VISITORS

Total number of unique devices which have been within the Passerby Distance of a zone (irrespective of time and not including those categorized as Engaged - the two are mutually exclusive)

UNIQUE ENGAGED VISITORS

Total number of unique devices which have been within the Engaged Distance of a zone for at least 30 seconds

CONVERSION RATE

Percentage of your OTS visitors who have become engaged with your exhibit

PEAK TIMES

Times within your event where you experienced the highest levels

AVERAGE DWELL TIME AT EVENT

Average duration of each visit which is classed as engaged

ENGAGED VISITS & REPEATS

Average number of visits made by a visitor into your exhibit

How can this data benefit you?

- Do some A/B testing to see what your audience responds best to
- Determine ROI of the event
- How successful you were with messaging

OPPORTUNITY TO SEE
3,357

PASSERS-BY
2,621

ENGAGED
736

CONVERSION RATE
21.9%

ON-SITE ASSEMBLY

Understanding the timeline of on-site assembly is critical to a smooth setup and breakdown.

1. Back booths get installed
2. Electrical, flooring, and rigging installed (includes hanging signs & TV displays)
3. Furniture and large booth pieces delivered and installed
4. Stand-up signs installed
5. Prepare booth with tablecloths, take-home collateral, swag, etc.
6. Prepare displays and demo equipment

Typically your event or tradeshow will provide a show services document. Be sure to read this cover to cover so you know when things can be installed and when deliver can happen

Timelines are critical - if your delivery is 1 day early or 1 day late it can throw off your entire tradeshow experience.

evaluate

POST-EVENT DEBRIEF

Conduct a post-event debrief with your team to highlight successes and opportunities for improvement.

Consider questions like:

- What went well?
- What went wrong?
- What analytics can we pull for data and comparisons?

Do a debrief after every event to identify patterns and continuous issues.

Compare what you changed from one event to the next. Honing in on each detail will set you up for success to improve your next tradeshow.
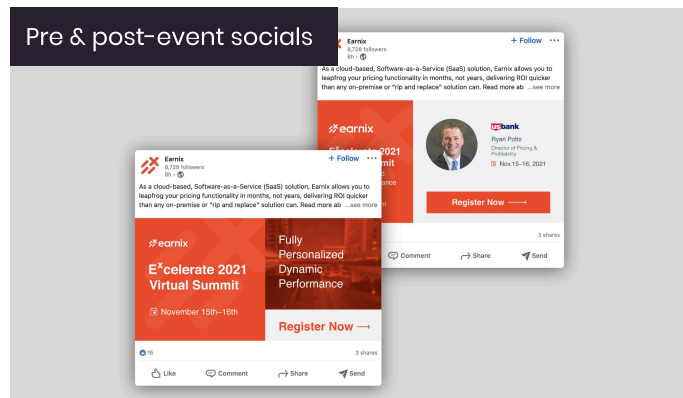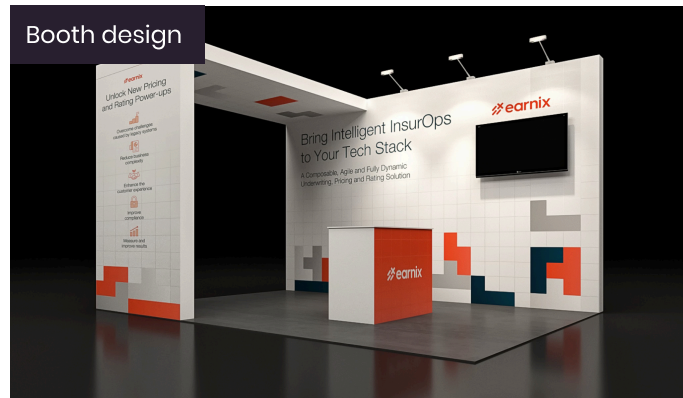
APPENDIX

TRADESHOW DESIGN EXAMPLES

Here's an example of end-to-end tradeshow designs for Questback, including various booth designs, 3D renders, signage and a take-home inforgraphic.

Booth design & 3D render

Booth design & 3D render

Signage

Signage

Banner

Infographic
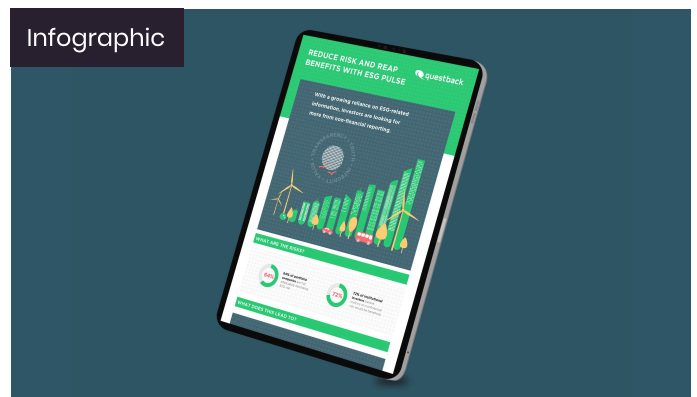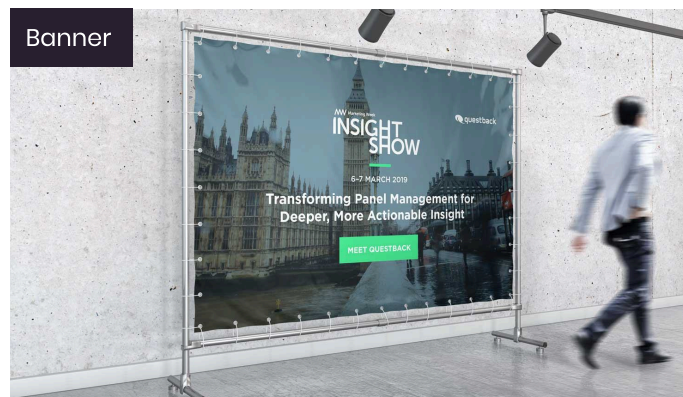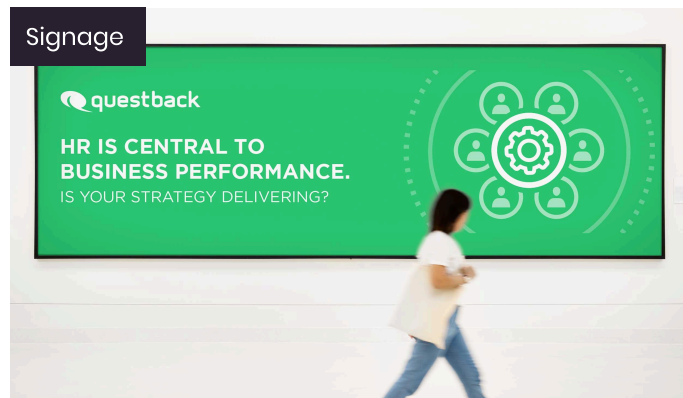
SEE MORE

TRADESHOW DESIGN EXAMPLES

Here's an example of end-to-end tradeshow design for Earnix, including event booth, take-home print collateral, pre- and post-event socials, and videos.
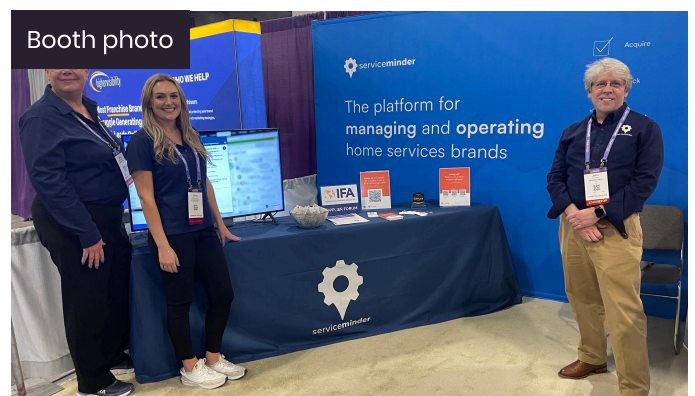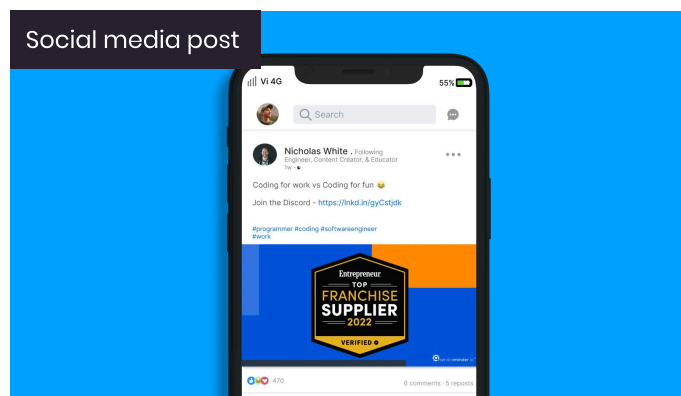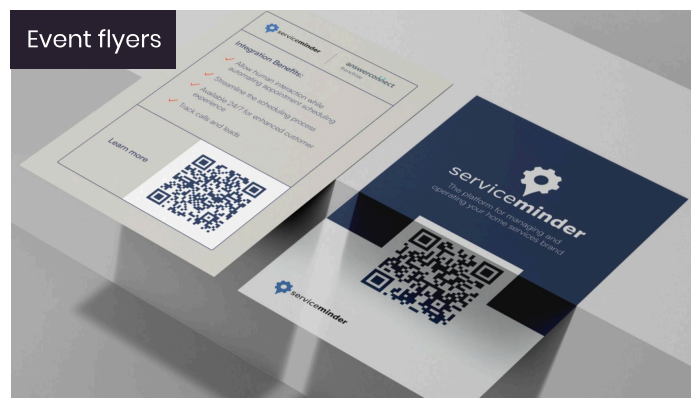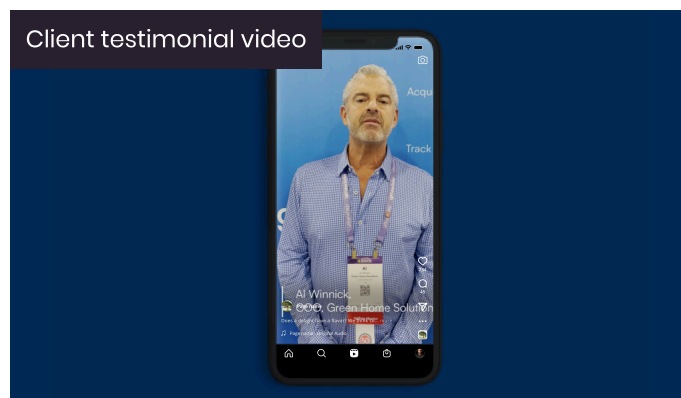
Booth design

Brochure

Pre & post-event socials

Pre-event videos for socials

Post-event video for socials

Takehome infographic

SEE MORE

Gallery Design Studio
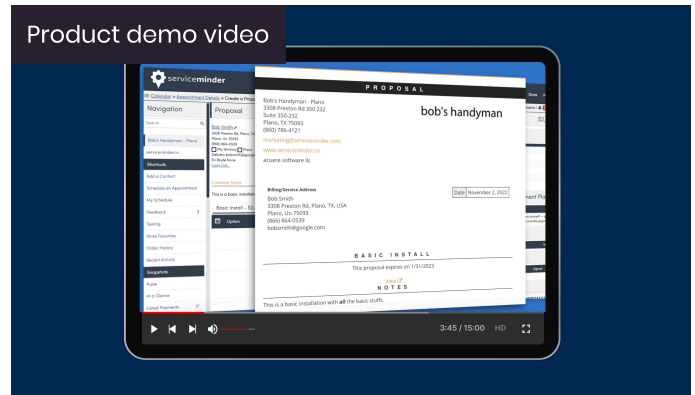YOUR CREATIVE PARTNER   +   HIGH**IMPACT** SERVICES by displayit
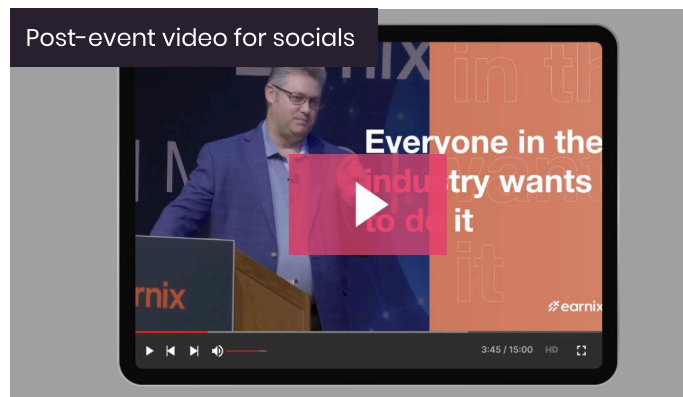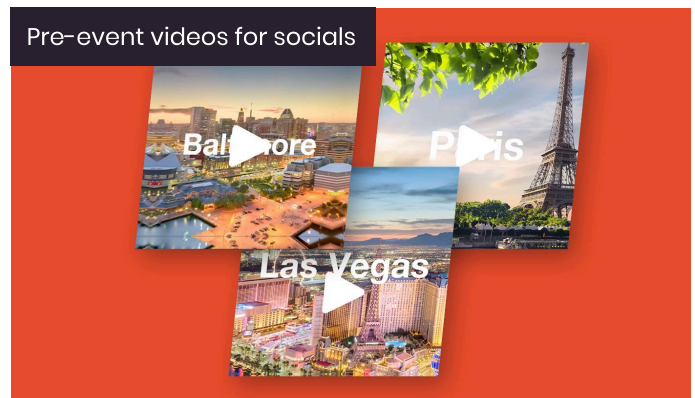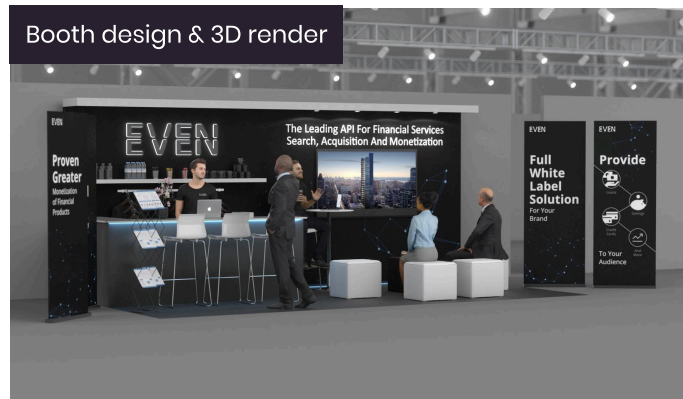
TRADESHOW DESIGN EXAMPLES

Here's an example of end-to-end tradeshow designs for service**minder**, including booth, take-home print collateral and a looping product video. The service**minder** team made 500 contacts in 1 day, recorded valuable client testimonials at their booth and closed up to 95% of leads generated at conferences.

Booth design

Product demo video

Client testimonial video

Event flyers

Social media post

Booth photo

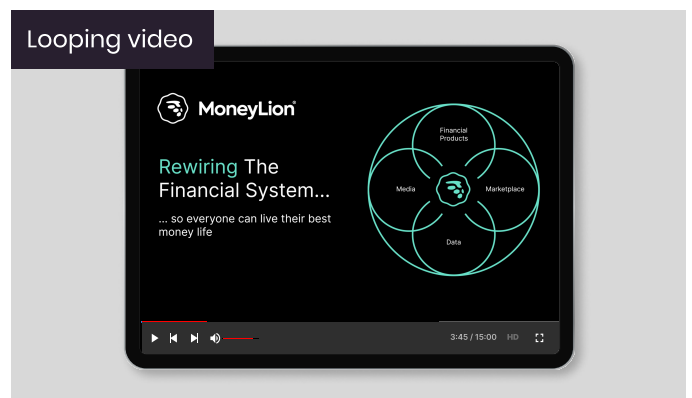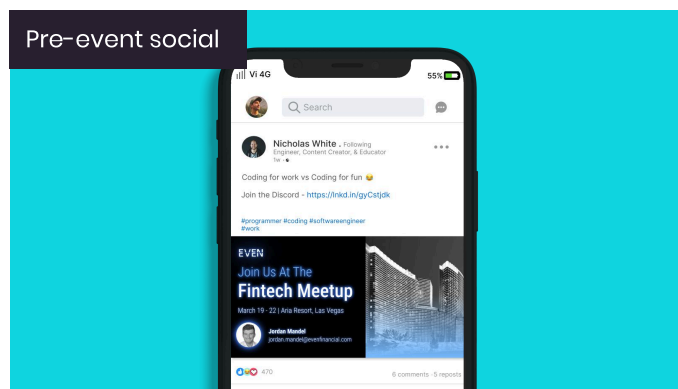**SEE MORE**

TRADESHOW DESIGN EXAMPLES

Here's an example of end-to-end tradeshow designs for Even Financial (now Engine by MoneyLion), including various booth design, 3D renders, and a looping product video.

Booth design & 3D render

Booth design & 3D render

Booth design & 3D render

Booth design & 3D render

Booth design & 3D render

Booth design & 3D render

SEE MORE

TRADESHOW DESIGN EXAMPLES

Here's an example of end-to-end tradeshow booth design for Engine by MoneyLion, including pre- and post-event socials and impactful looping video.

Floor-to-ceiling booth design

Pre-event social

**Looping video**

SEE MORE

TRADESHOW DESIGN EXAMPLES

Here's an example of end-to-end tradeshow designs for SinglePlatform, including booth, take-home print collateral, tablecloths and 3D render.

Booth design & 3D render

Infographic

Photo of booth

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TRADESHOW DESIGN EXAMPLES

Here's an example of end-to-end tradeshow designs for Mender by Northern.tech, including booth design, 3D render, and take-home print collateral such as spec sheets and 1-pagers. The Mender team recorded 190 contacts made 1 day with the GDS booth design.

Booth design & 3D render

One-pager

Spec sheet
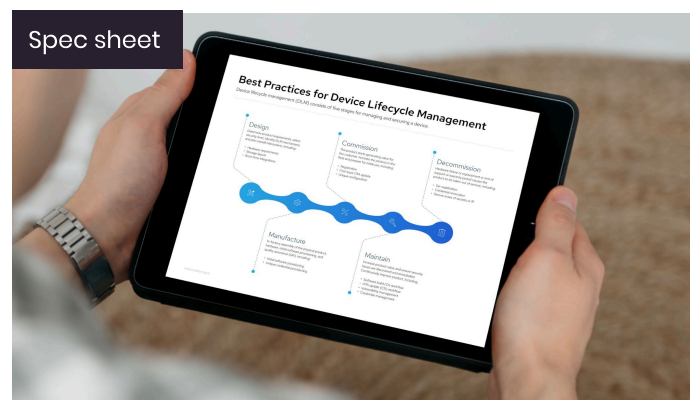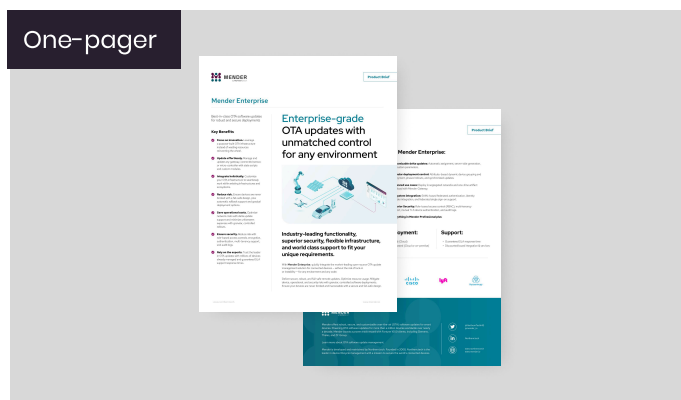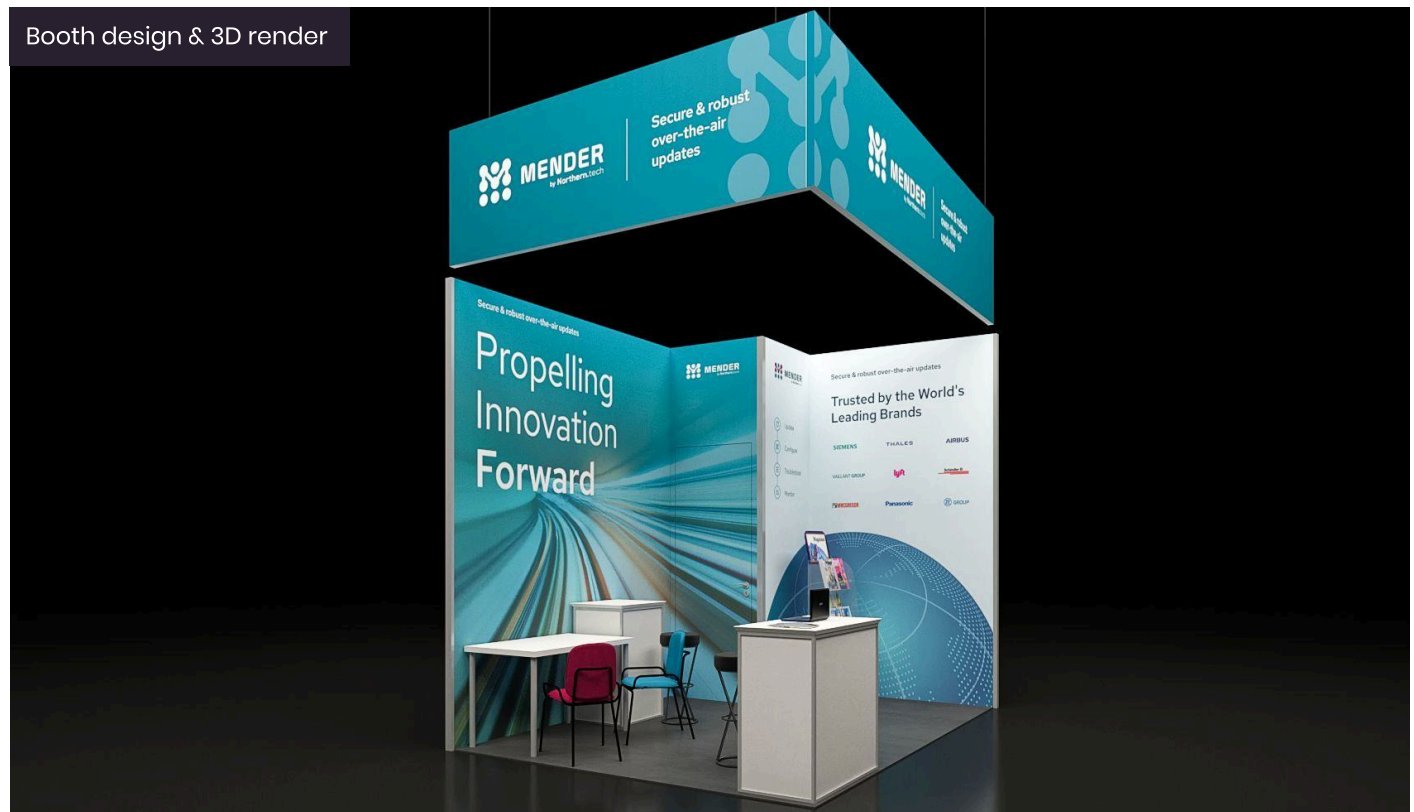
SEE MORE

HELPFUL ADVICE

1. **Give yourself and your team ample time** to plan by not underestimating project timing. Allocate at least 3 months for effective preparation.

2. **Make a realistic budget - and print & ship ASAP.** Your budget should include not only design and budget costs, but also furniture rental, getting graphics & banners printed, etc. Be ware that printing & shipping costs increases as the event nears.

3. **Check with your venue to determine if there are any restrictions** on furniture and banner vendors you can collaborate with. This information will help you make the necessary arrangements.

4. **Obtain all the specifications for your event in advance**, preferably with accompanying images. This will allow you to visualize and plan accordingly.

5. **Remember to pay attention to flooring and ceiling** elements. The quality of the carpet and the design of the banner above your booth play crucial roles in creating a captivating environment.

6. **Foster open communication within your team**. Thoughts can't be heard, so encourage conversations and discussions as they are often the best solution to most problems.

7. **Success is a byproduct of preparation and execution**. Ensure that the level of preparation matches the level of execution you aim to achieve.

8. **After the event, follow up with attendees** and check back in with them. This demonstrates your commitment and helps maintain relationships.

9. **Capture memorable moments during the event by taking pictures**. These visuals will serve as valuable assets for future marketing and promotional activities.

HELPFUL ADVICE CONT'D

10. **Conduct a post-event debrief with your design team**. This session provides an opportunity to reflect on the event's successes and shortcomings, allowing you to identify areas for improvement in future endeavors.

11. **If showcasing a demo live,** ensure you test the demo beforehand to avoid any awkward malfunctions in front of prospects.

12. **If you're hosting, set a theme for the event.** This works really well for large events to truly transform your event into an impactful and memorable experience for attendees.

13. **Measure your event success**. Before your event, set attainable goals for your team. While at the event, be sure to track those metrics. After the event, review your success to find opportunities for growth.

By following the steps outlined on the event checklist in a logical sequence, you can enhance the planning and execution of your event while setting the stage for continual growth and improvement. Be sure to check out the Event Metrics & KPIs checklist for helpful goal suggestions.

EVENT CHECKLIST

3–6 MONTHS BEFORE

- [ ] Set your objective
- [ ] Set your budget
- [ ] Design your booth
- [ ] Network with other exhibitors
- [ ] Design your printed marketing materials
- [ ] Write copy for presentation folders, brochures and flyers
- [ ] Choose and order giveaway items
- [ ] Book travel and accommodations

1–2 MONTHS BEFORE

- [ ] Decide who will work the booth
- [ ] Print & book transport for materials
- [ ] Arrange cover for your office
- [ ] Organize your data-capture system

2 WEEKS BEFORE

- [ ] Push out promotions on social media
- [ ] Order extra business cards
- [ ] Email your marketing list
- [ ] Check in with vendors to make sure everything is on track

1 WEEK BEFORE

- [ ] Hold a pre-show team meeting
- [ ] Do a dry run
- [ ] Pack up your event materials

1 DAY BEFORE

- [ ] Transport your display materials
- [ ] Prepare an emergency kit
- [ ] Set up your out-of-office autoreply
- [ ] Get a good night's sleep
- [ ] Get your bearings
- [ ] Check in with vendors and installers

THE DAY OF

- [ ] Take pictures of the booth, your team, and guests that arrive. They make great social content!
- [ ] Interview your guests and team
- [ ] Walk around and look at other booths and note any features that stand out
- [ ] Relax, enjoy yourself!

1 DAY AFTER

- [ ] Itemize and contact your leads
- [ ] Thank the organizer
- [ ] Celebrate a job well done!
- [ ] For virtual events, send post-event surveys to attendees

1 WEEK AFTER

- [ ] Send those post-event emails
- [ ] Hold a follow-up team meeting
- [ ] Post-event socials
- [ ] For virtual events, follow up with post-event surveys & assess data

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