

Craft Show Booth Setup

Contributed by Shawn Vincent

Your craft show booth is one of your most important tools in marketing your crafts. It's what will give people one of their first impressions of you and your products. As they walk by they will determine in their minds if they should stop to look at your crafts, or continue on their way. You must find a way in the few seconds you have, to get the attention of potential customers, and draw them into your booth.

As you think about how to set up your craft show booth, you need to decide what will draw the attention of potential customers, and make being in your booth a great experience for them. For each customer, the factors of what makes a great experience may vary somewhat. However, there are common contributing factors that can make shopping pleasant rather than stressful. Below is a set of topics I believe touch on a number of those common factors.

Signage

Signs are one of the most important ways for you to communicate with your customers. Signs will give your customers product information, price information, or help to direct traffic flow. Signage is also used to get the attention of shoppers as they walk by. As stated above, you may only have a few seconds to catch the attention of shoppers. In that amount of time, you need to be able to tell them about your products. Signs are critical to that effort.

As you think about what signs you should have, try and think of what you would need to know as a customer. What types of questions would be in your mind as you pass by the booth, or browse the products. You might be thinking "I wonder what they sell?", "What does that do?" or "I wonder how much that is?". Take whatever questions you come up with, and translate them into signs that give answers. Be careful to keep your signs short and to the point. Signage that is too wordy will lose the attention of shoppers. You need to be able to convey your message and information quickly.

The colors that you use for your signs can vary greatly. You may want to use something that grabs attention. Maybe you'd like something that stands out, but fits with the theme and decor of your display. Whatever you decide, make your signs look sharp. Sloppy, hand written signs do not reflect well on you or your crafts. With a good printer and a basic graphics program, you should be able to create most of what you'll need.

There is a lot of information on how to create signs with proper layout and color. Much of it is beyond the scope of this article, so I have listed some links in the Resources section for more instruction. Also, check out the plastic sign holders example page for more ideas.

Easy Flow of Traffic

This is something that is very important to the customer experience. If people can not move easily through your display, and start feeling crowded, they can easily become frustrated and move on. It should be a natural flow and progression from the point they enter to the point they exit.

Setting up your display in an "L" shape, or a "U" shape can help to encourage the natural flow of traffic. Of course, it depends on the amount of space you have to work with. If you have a larger area, you may want to border the entire area with display items and have an entrance and an exit to the display. Labeling the entrance and exit will indicate to people the beginning and ending points of the display.

Having the cash register at the exit of the display will allow customers to browse through your crafts and then purchase on their way out. This creates a natural ending point to browsing your crafts. Remember, the easier you make it for them to purchase, the more likely they will.

Show How Your Craft is Used

Always show how your craft is used, or what it looks like in use. Having worked with your craft items for so long, you may think that it's obvious. Don't make this assumption. Even if people know what it is, it can be hard for them to visualize it in use. Display your craft in such a way as to highlight its benefits. Also, try to think of ways to use your product that may not immediately come to mind. Then consider if you should incorporate these uses as part of your display.

For example, let's say that you sew aprons. You would think that this should be pretty straightforward. You know that at the very least you should be wearing one. Maybe you have one hanging up with some BBQ utensils around it. In addition, how about displaying a child size apron being used as a smock, or a pinafore. That may be something people don't think of immediately. If the aprons have pockets, show items hanging out of the pockets to emphasize their usefulness.

Also, having them displayed on people (even if the people are made from cardboard) shows how the aprons will fit on different sized individuals. It helps people to see how it would work for them, or someone they know. If you can get people to visualize themselves in it, or how it works, then you have a much stronger opportunity for a sale.

Have a Theme for Your Display

Having a theme for your display can also lend to the customer experience. Have you ever walked through a display and felt like you just went through a time warp to be in a different time or place? Maybe you felt like you were back at grandma's house, or back in the simpler times of yesteryear. Maybe you walked through a gardening display and felt like you were in a rain forest. All of this to say that theme contributes to customer experience.

Displaying your crafts with a theme can be done in a number of different ways. You can set up your display to center around a season. As the seasons change, so does your display. You can also center your theme around the crafts themselves. Maybe you sell primitive dolls, and have a very rustic looking display.

Something to be careful of, is not to lose your products in your themed display. Make sure the emphasis of the display is on your products more than the props you are using to support your theme. It can be easy for your products to get lost in the display, and people to misunderstand what's really for sale. One thing that helps is to clearly mark items for sale, so people can tell what is for sale and what is not.

When you are selecting your theme, keep in mind you are trying to create a display which people will have an emotional reaction too - an experience. Think about what type of reaction you want your people to have when they see your products. Create a display that centers on that emotion.

Lighting

Effective lighting can make the difference between a good display, and a great one. It's used to get people's attention, and draw them towards your products. It's used in creating the emotional response mentioned above. Great lighting will show the superb finish on a piece of furniture, the sparkle of jewelry, or vibrant colors in fabrics and paints. Along with your theme, it can set the tone and mood of your crafts.

Some crafts such as jewelry require brighter lighting. You want people to see the shine and sparkle. Be careful that it isn't too bright. Your display could become hard to look at, and a strain to the eyes. Still, other displays will use soft, quiet lighting. If you were selling bath and body items, you might be using soft lighting to create a relaxed feeling. Just be careful that there is enough light for people to still clearly read your signage (such as labels and prices). This is especially important for older customers, since they tend to need better lighting. You don't want them to be frustrated and walk away.

There are a lot of different types of lighting solutions available. Clip on lamps, rope lights, fluorescent lights and even neon lights are all very useful. Clip on lamps can be used to direct light onto particular parts of your display. Rope lights and fluorescent lights are good for display cases and shelving. Rope lights and neon lights may even be used as props in your display.

When setting up your lighting, think about how you can avoid shadows. Lighting your display from different angles will help. This is where clip on lights are really useful.

Keep it Neat and Clean

A messy, disorganized display looks uncared for. The message is that the products may have been constructed with the same lack of care. Make sure that your shelves are well stocked, but not cluttered. Clutter can be overwhelming. But if there are a lot of bare spots, people may get the idea that you don't have much stock left, and should look elsewhere.

A clean display also means you will have a clean work area. So, when someone has a question about one of your products, you can get to the answer right away. For example, you may have someone ask if you have any more mediums for a sweatshirt. Since you're organized, you can go right to the bin behind the counter and check. This type of prompt customer service is always a win. Customers won't go away feeling like you wasted their time.

Packing Your Display

It may sound a bit silly to talk about how to pack your display. But, if you have a larger display, doing it well can save you a lot of time and frustration. If for some reason you're short on time for being able to set up your booth, a good packing job can really make a difference.

Consider packing your display according to display area. This keeps everything from each section together and easy to find. Having your items scattered throughout boxes and mixed with items from other parts of your display will certainly be a hassle.

Ease of packing and transport will also be determined by what you use to display your items. If your shelving, tables, racks, etc. are collapsible or fold up, it will be much easier to move them around and get them into smaller vehicles.

If your items are of such a nature that they can be displayed in bins, buy nice looking bins that fit the theme of your display, or can be easily dressed up for your display. That way you don't have to move the items out of the bin and packing becomes much easier.

Conclusion

After reading this article, you may be thinking that this all sounds great for a large display. Don't be fooled, even small displays can be enhanced by applying these principles on a smaller scale. Even if you just have a table at a show displaying your jewelry, you can still have good lighting and fixtures to show off your products. With some thought and creativity, no doubt you will be able to apply the principals to fit your situation.