



This Ricoh exhibit's conference room featured 3M IJ-35c 3-millimeter vinyl graphics printed on the Ricoh Pro L4160. (Image courtesy of GAM Graphics and Marketing.)

## Wowing the Exposition

### *Trends behind today's standout exhibits*

A trade show represents one of the more significant marketing investments a company makes, an opportunity for a company to make a big, yet intimate, splash with prospective customers. When designed and constructed properly, a booth can capture attention, create an interactive experience that immerses a visitor, produce memories that last beyond the show, and create new business.

At any given trade show, chances are a few exhibits stand out. Perhaps the look and feel of a particular booth is a cut above the rest, or maybe there's an interactive display or demonstration that keeps attendees talking long after they return home. "Wowing" the exposition, inspiring more interest in the exhibitor's product or service is the goal of any trade show booth.

#### **Planning is Key**

A dazzling exhibit that engages visitors — and goes a long way toward turning a

prospective buyer into an actual customer — doesn't happen overnight. It can take many months of planning, theming and construction to conceive and build a booth that hits the mark.

The first priority is making sure a trade show booth meets essential goals. "An exhibit should communicate a few simple things: who the company is, the services they offer and the solution that they can provide," said Natalie Whited, Vice President of Marketing, Orbus Exhibit and Display Group.

Budget is another critical factor in determining what can be done with a booth. "Our clients may have high expectations for what they want to do, but unless there's a significant budget, you can't get top-shelf work," said Nathaniel Grant, President, GAM Graphics and Marketing.

If the budget is tight, experts suggest prioritizing design over construction. "I recommend allocating a greater percentage

*A dazzling exhibit that engages visitors — and goes a long way toward turning a prospective buyer into an actual customer — doesn't happen overnight.*



By Bill Stein, Industry Author

## Ricoh's Real-World Booth Features Functional Pop-Up Retail Shops

One of the more popular and eye-catching exhibits at the 2018 SGIA Expo was Ricoh USA Inc.'s booth. The booth was transformed into a fully functional pair of pop-up retail shops that showcased real-world applications and demonstrated print capabilities. The booth also created an interactive augmented reality experience through Ricoh's Clickable Paper™, which allowed attendees to use an app on their phone to point, shoot and click at different "hot spots" and be connected to digital content.

Ricoh created an immersive and interactive experience that focused on practical applications of print in many forms. To accomplish this, the pop-up shops' floors, walls, apparel and more were printed by Ricoh devices, highlighting the diverse applications print service providers can create to broaden revenue streams.

The project, the brainchild of Square Root Creative, Ricoh's design agency, was a year in the making. "We wanted to create an environment for the customer that reflected the type of work that our customers' customers could do," said Dan Johansen, Senior Marketing Manager, Ricoh USA Inc. "The booth allowed us to achieve our goals, which were to showcase our new technology and present it in a format that started with an interactive and immersive experience and then lead to the products."

The technologies used to create everything in the booth — including graphics, banner stands, backlit signage, wall graphics, T-shirts and brochures — were all part of Ricoh's product portfolio. This included wide-format printers, flatbed printers and hybrid printers.

"Historically, companies like us have a habit of just showing off our machines and talking about how quickly they can print," said Johansen. "That can be good to an extent, but it's dull, is an approach that everyone's doing, and doesn't allow a business owner to be inspired by what can be done with this technology."



This 50-by-50-foot island exhibit for RTP included bold graphics and unique hanging structures that reinforced brand identity, along with a reception counter, private conference rooms and designated conversation areas. (Image courtesy of Orbus Exhibit & Display Group®.)

of the budget to the design component over construction because you can value-engineer good design to create a better customer experience," said Brian Hite, President, Image Options.

And, as with any other marketing initiative, the basic fundamentals of "know your audience" should be observed in the development of a trade show booth. A thorough discovery process should be completed — including a focus on the audience characteristics, determination of potential benefits to attendees and creation of key messaging.

### The Importance of Good Design

Once planning has been finalized, the critical design phase can begin. Good design can make the difference between attendees staying in the booth long enough to have a meaningful, substantial interaction or simply walking by. The following outlines some key characteristics of good design.

### Visual Appeal

Visual appeal is critical. "Studies show that you have two to three seconds to capture someone's attention on the show floor," said Whited. "That means that your graphics need to be very captivating and very well designed."

Visual appeal can be created through a variety of tactics. Using bright colors is a good way to draw people from the far

reaches of the show floor. A mixture of interesting graphics, substrates and shapes can be effective in catching the eye of a casually strolling attendee. Even seemingly minor details, such as using round tables in a square space, can be provocative.

"There is so much that goes into establishing the look and feel of a booth," said Whited. "Whether it's an open concept, closed concept, symmetrical, or whether it uses hanging structures, towers, fabric-based back walls and special lighting ... all of this is a part of the design process that can make a booth successful."

### Attention to Traffic Flow

The booth should be set up to encourage flow to the areas where it's most desired. If space allows, a seating area can be helpful for attendees who have been on their feet all day long.

### Creating an Immersive Environment

Given that the goal of participating in a trade show is to sell a product or service, keeping a client in the booth as long as possible is important. "You want to look at ways to keep attendees entertained and to get them immersed in your world and make them feel like they're not at a trade show being sold something," said Conrad Coe, Production & Fabrication Engineer — Large Format, GAM Graphics and Marketing.

"We're seeing a lot more use of digital

screens, where clients are building walls out of LED tiles to display live video, graphics or animation,” said Hite. Devoting private or semi-private space for presentations, demonstrations or small group consultations can provide a place for relationship building and ultimately convert a prospect into a client. The use of real-world examples to show what machines can do can also create a “wow” factor that inspires potential customers. (See sidebar on Ricoh exhibit.)

In some ways, the exhibit experience can be extended beyond the show. “We’re seeing more instances where cutouts of a face are used to encourage people to take selfies and post them on Facebook or other social media, so their friends are seeing it as well,” said Grant. “This gives them more bang for the dollar.”

### Fabric’s Rising Popularity

One of the biggest trends in trade show exhibits is the increasing use of illuminated fabric graphics in SEG frames and hanging structures. Fabric offers a number of advantages for trade show exhibitors.

Fabric can produce vibrant colors and create a large presence on a show floor because large walls can be built out of fabric and little bit of extrusion. Fabric can create an impressive appearance since it can cover a lot of space without a lot of weight, meaning a significant reduction in transportation costs.

There are many fabric options for printing, with different types of coated fabrics producing different results.



This Nimlok 20-by-20-foot island exhibit incorporated a distinctive central ground structure with impactful backlit graphics and vertical brand accents. TV mounts and a backlit modular counter added modern touches. (Image courtesy of Orbus Exhibit & Display Group®.)



# shapes speak. shapes sell.

SEE  
INSIGNIA  
LIVE AT  
Printing  
United  
DALLAS, TX  
OCT 23-25

### KISS-CUT AND DIE-CUT WITH INSIGNIA!

Transition your business into the growth sector of packaging with this flexible, affordable, high-quality, die-cutting machine. Insignia’s unique sheet-fed rotary design means easy operation and fast changeovers for short to long runs. Kiss-cut and die-cut PSA stickers or labels with easy depth-of-cut adjustments. Die-cut, score and emboss folded cartons, retail packaging, tags, nameplates and more!

*Affordable, endless die-cut possibilities—the shape of things to come.*

Which model best meets your needs?  
Find out here: [rollemusa.com/production-match](http://rollemusa.com/production-match) | 800-272-4381 x11



DIE CUTTING | KISS CUTTING | SCORING | EMBOSING | WASTE REMOVAL | PERFORATING | IN-LINE GLUE/FOLD

PRINTINGUNITED BOOTH #10351

“When you get into coated fabrics that are print-receptive, light-diffusing and have fire retardant, there’s a lot of coating to penetrate,” said Michael Compton, Product Marketing Manager, Top Value Fabrics. “To ensure you get the colors you want and to produce graphics that are free of defects, it’s important to be precise in the printing process, including the use of RGB profiles.”

Today’s newer knit fabrics offer advantages over woven fabrics. Knit fabrics are more stable, offer better stretch qualities and are less likely to fray. They are also more forgiving when folded, less likely to show creases, wrinkles and other irregularities with the ink.

### Technological Features

Technology can be used in various ways to increase traffic and attendee interaction. Video monitors with digital messaging can introduce a brand or product being promoted at the show. Touch screen and RFID technology can be used to engage prospects while they’re in a booth. Touch screen displays and tablets can be used to produce interactive product demonstrations and individualized presentations.

RFID technology can also allow exhibitors to obtain metrics about what works well in the design of their booths. For example, different areas of the booth could be geofenced to determine how much time attendees spent at an actual printer, in front of a special video or looking at certain substrates. The information could also be tied to lead generation if attendee badges are scanned. “I think the technology side of what’s possible is going to drive the future of the industry,” said Hite.

A trade show booth provides a unique opportunity to showcase products and capabilities and engage face-to-face with prospects. With technological advancements in printers, fabrics and substrates, today’s capabilities have never been better. With proper planning, thoughtful and attention-getting design, the ability to create an immersive and interactive experience, and some good old-fashioned creativity, you can create a booth that can wow the audience, become the talk of the show and, ultimately, generate more customers.

*Bill Stein is a freelance writer and communications consultant. He’s written on a variety of topics for industries ranging from healthcare to imaging to finance and insurance.*



Backlit graphics utilizing fabrics such as Top Value Fabrics' Microlux 240 are an increasing trend in exhibitions. (Images courtesy of Top Value Fabrics.)