

## Designing Effective Trade Show Graphics

Dramatic, “larger than life” display graphics are an effective way to get noticed in today’s visually competitive trade show environment. As shows get larger and splashier every year, the ability to draw potential customers to your booth becomes more difficult. Properly designed display graphics will increase your presence and recognition at a show, both of which are essential for successful exhibiting.

When first seeking the design services of a display company or experienced display designer, you may find the cost of producing quality display graphics to be slightly high. This is due to the complex nature of the printing process. Large-format printing is vastly different from other types of printing and requires the use of very specialized equipment, skills and services. For example, 90 percent of existing graphic elements designed for business cards, letterhead and brochures are unsuitable for large-format printing. They need digital preparation by a graphics technician who reworks and improves the graphic elements so that the final output achieves optimum resolution. Without this service, your images would lack clarity, quality and colour accuracy. You can be certain that without this service they wouldn’t draw a favorable response at a show.

If you carefully consider your expected sales return from exhibiting, the cost of well-designed graphics is easily justified. Your primary reason for exhibiting at a trade show is to find new customers amongst a well-targeted audience. Without well designed graphics to attract attendees, you may never have an opportunity to qualify them as potential customers. Your exhibiting endeavor could be over before it begins. The following are some helpful guidelines to designing graphics that get you noticed at a show:

### Be Consistent

Your display graphics should be an extension of your current marketing campaign. You should reflect similar style, colour and imagery used in your other marketing materials onto your display. This consistency and continuity will help potential customers identify you quickly as well as reinforce the image you are trying to project.

### Be Short, but be Clever

It is tempting to use your display to explain everything about who you are and what you do. It may make for interesting reading, but attendees don’t have the time or the patience to read through it. Instead, use a short, but clever message that appeals to your target audience. This will generate more interest and curiosity in your company. Remember: the sole purpose of your display is to peak the interest of attendees walking by. Once your display has their attention, your staff can begin to explain your products and services and qualify them as potential customers.

### About the Author

Brian Keobke, CME, is Senior Exhibit Marketing Specialist for The Portables, Canada’s largest exhibit and graphics company. Brian is a Certified Manager of Exhibits (CME) and a 17 year veteran of the tradeshow industry. Brian consults, develops and trains companies and their staff in the art of effective tradeshow marketing and exhibit design. Brian’s articles have appeared in newspapers and magazines across the country. To receive additional articles or to book an in-person seminar, please call 1.800.663.1737 or email [displays@theportables.com](mailto:displays@theportables.com). Articles also appear online at [www.theportables.com](http://www.theportables.com).

## Bigger is Better

When it comes to display graphics, bigger is better. Take advantage of the size of your display by creatively using "larger than life" images that enhance your company's presence while remaining consistent with your message. Always make sure your corporate logo is identifiable and placed where people can see it from the aisles.

## Light it Up!

Proper front-lighting can significantly improve the overall look of your display. Your graphics will appear bolder, brighter and more colorful. As a result, you'll draw more attention. A standard 10 foot display requires only two 150 watt wall washers to light up the entire display.

## Design your Graphics to Grow

Far too often, graphics are designed to work for only a single display configuration. However, most portable display systems today are modular and can be expanded. If you own or plan to purchase a portable display, you should seriously consider designing your graphics to expand along with your system. For example, if you have a 10 foot display that expands into a 20 foot display, a well-designed set of graphics can accommodate both needs and still retain the same imagery, style and message. This will also prove to be cost-effective in the long run.

**Follow these simple guidelines to produce effective tradeshow graphics. You will be able to raise your awareness at trade shows, attract attendees to your display, qualify potential customers and ultimately increase the return on your tradeshow investment.**