

Freeman¹

Your Ultimate Guide for Exhibiting

Designing a booth for today's audiences

Visit us at freeman.com



© 2023 Freeman. All Rights Reserved.

One of the most significant trends impacting events is that **audiences are getting younger**. Which means your exhibit is now targeting attendees 45 and older, and a hybrid of Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z.

How are these two groups different?

Attendees over 45

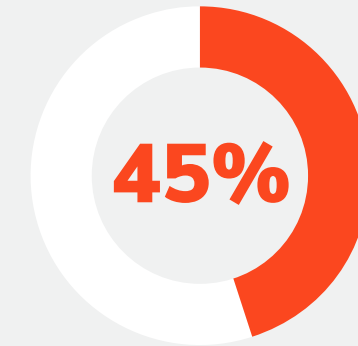
- See event-going as a professional obligation
- Less focused on a personalized experience (but appreciate it)

Next generation attendees (under 45)

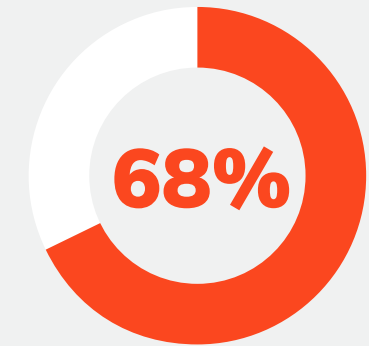
- Want a clear understanding of why an event is in their best interests
- Must see the value and opportunities for connection and professional growth

Because the number of next-generation attendees is increasing, the result is an exhibiting mind shift: It's not about what brands want to show, it's about what your attendees want to experience.

Designing an engaging exhibit experience is essential to break through the clutter and deliver business.



Of decision makers purchase services after attending a live event.



Of consumers purchase services after attending a live event.

So does that mean you need a bigger booth? Bigger budget?
Not really.



**You don't need a
big booth to catch
attendee interest.**



The right size booth is the one that engages attendee interest.

The truth is, you can create engagement with any size booth or budget. The secret is taking a strategic approach where all your fundamentals align: goals, budget, design, and showcasing the right content to engage attendees.

Sound like a lot? Not sure where to start? We've got you.

This ultimate guide curates the best and smartest exhibit solutions so you can maximize your engagement and deliver real business results — on time and on budget.

Let's take it step by step.

Step 1: Set your goals

Your first step in preparing for a successful trade show exhibition is to clearly identify your goals for the event.

Corporate
goals



Marketing
goals



Exhibit
goals

Here are some examples of goals that can help guide your exhibit plan:

- Raise brand awareness
- Launch new initiatives or enhance brand perception
- Generate leads or grow your pipeline
- Launch new products
- Educate clients on new products and features
- Maintain (and defend) key client relationships
- Make more connections within your industry

Check each exhibit activity and experience that you plan, and ensure it's working to help achieve the goals you set.



Tip: Connect with your community!

Talk to your customers (and send out surveys) to find out their pain points and what they expect when attending an industry event.

Also, be sure to utilize those attendee demographics that show managers provide — they're a great supplement to your research.

Speaking of stats, find out what our research pros discovered in this new trend report.

[View data](#)



Get engaged.

If you don't put a ring on your prospects, someone else will.

Step 2: Turn goals into engagement

Once you've set your goals, determine how those can translate into experiences.

For example, instead of traditional product demos or presentations where visitors simply watch, create opportunities for them to be part of the action, to experience how they'll feel using your product (or service).

Bonus: This will help you connect to the growing number of next-generation attendees who are changing the rules of events.





Audiences today are 5 years younger

These consumers are driven by their values — and are engaging with brands that align with them.



Understand audiences to uncover engagement opportunities

Use these thought starters for getting to know your attendees. (Things change quickly, so poll your community a few times a year.)

- Who is your target audience at the show?
- What are their values?
- What drives them and gets them excited?
- How can your exhibit stand out against others and drive traffic?
- How can you showcase your key messages in a way that excites your attendees?

Attract. Hold. Close.

Once you've gotten to know your audiences, attract them with excitement that can be spotted across the show floor.

- 1 Use trendy activations, cool accent lighting, and find unique ways to incorporate your products.
- 2 Tap into the senses: Adding sound, smell, and taste is always a hit!
- 3 Keep visitors engaged with messages that align their values to your value proposition.
- 4 Pair demos and experiential activations with punchy messaging that captures attention.
- 5 Listen to attendees' needs and offer real-world, affordable solutions that make sense for them.



Focusing on engagement will allow you to:

- Attract people from your target audiences to your exhibit
- Design environments that generate productive conversations
- Create experiences that associate positive feelings with your brand

Want some guidance finding the best experiential activation for your brand — or even just some ideas to kick start to a good brainstorm?

Jump-in



Coming to industry terms: Experiential vs. Experience

The use of experiential as an engagement tool has skyrocketed in the past few years. So what exactly is the difference between experiential and experience?

Experiential is the act or means of providing the experience. Think of it as how you immerse attendees in your brand messaging within the space.

Experience is the effect of participating or observing. Envision this as what attendees think or feel when being immersed in the activation.

Including experiential activities (they don't have to be product related) will encourage visitors to stop, interact with you, and remember your organization.

Step 3: Create a design that attracts your audience

Your mission is to create an exhibit so memorable that people will connect with your brand and stay connected long after the show ends. This is a powerful way to build trust and brand loyalty — and trust is foundational to purchase.

Start with your space.

The physical layout of your exhibit and how your brand shows up kicks off that relationship by attracting attendees (and future prospects) visually.

No matter the size or scope of your exhibit, there are many quick-win opportunities to capture attention, generate attention, and help achieve goals.





Even in a small space, you can make a big impact.

Consider a bold, even provocative exhibit structure that grabs attention and creates buzz. But make sure it has meaning that makes sense for your brand and is firmly tied to your business goals.

Buzzworthy examples:

- **Launching an eco-friendly product?**
Add over-sized trees or wrap your counter in moss.
- **Need a private space for conversations?**
Create little nooks with dimmer lighting and fun seating.
- **Showcasing a city or new location?**
Offer samples of locally sourced foods, drinks, or add a food truck.
- **Launching a new product?**
Provide samples packaged in a unique way or create an interesting photo op that encourages visitors to showcase the product in fun ways.

Best practices for graphics that grab

Effective graphics draw attendees into your exhibit and provide an eye-catching, engaging introduction to your brand. But just as important as what you say is how you say it (or show it).

Keep it short:

You have five seconds to grab attention, so make those seconds count. Think simple and clear for value propositions that audiences can grasp quickly. Replace lengthy copy with captivating images, artwork, and bold type.

Target the top:

Present important messages and images high enough to be above the crowds but not so high attendees strain to look. 6-9 feet is a good range.

Encourage action:

Create messages that motivate your visitors to do something: interact with your product, answer a question, or share an experience.

Best practices for putting your exhibit on display

LEDs, touchscreens, and other digital displays offer eye-catching and fun opportunities to interact with your brand. Content can include slideshows, sizzle videos, animations, and more.

Catch attention:

Identify the best locations that showcase your brand and booth layout. And make sure your in-booth content is available digitally so attendees can watch on their phone and remote audiences can view on-demand even after the show ends.

Sound off:

Including sound can be compelling. But before you pump up the volume, check with show management about restrictions and any other approvals needed. (More audio best practices coming up!)

Update on the fly:

Revise your messages in real time. Whether you want to make a change due to attendee feedback, provide on-site updates about the show, or simply edit a mistake, you have flexibility.

Got a new event coming up soon? Graphics and digital displays are a great way to make an immediate impact.

Dig in deeper with our exclusive lookbook!

Get started





It's not so hard being green

Audiences today choose brands that align with their own values — like sustainability.

And it's easier than you may realize. There are plenty of ways to make your exhibit more environmentally friendly, and every step, big or small, counts.

Here are three exhibit ideas to support your green goals:

- 1 Cut back on swag**
Save the cost on totes and other plastic giveaways and use that budget to boost your booth experience.
- 2 Go for land no-fill**
Opt for 100% recyclable, reusable structures and rental furniture to reduce landfill impact.
- 3 Go green as a team**
Work with eco-aware vendors and offer ways to get your audiences involved, too — such as offering recyclable rental structure options.

[Check out our sustainability checklist for more quick and easy tips to accomplish your company's green goals.](#)

Go eco

Step 4: Design an exhibit experience

You've successfully attracted attendees to your exhibit.

With your goals and ideal audience in mind, you'll want to create an experience that will increase time-in-booth and deliver results.

Many solutions work across any size booth and budget. Go to the next page for ideas to help get your creative juices flowing.



Immerse attendees in awesomeness



Immersive, digitally driven experiences can create “You have to try this!” moments that draw attendees in droves.

But remember, it’s essential that your immersive experience aligns to your goals.

With that in mind, you can create incredible experiential moments at any budget — just keep these tips and tricks in mind.

Anticipate crowds: Plan for large groups by also creating fun moments as they wait — give them something to do if lines start to form or have entertainment ready. This is also your chance to connect with a captive audience or the perfect sponsorship opportunity (“Coffee or snack in recyclable, branded packaging while you wait, anyone?”).

Get tactile: Take a VR hang gliding experience for example — something as simple as a fan that blows the user’s hair back can add an extra layer of sensory feedback to the experience, turning it from “pretend” to “real.”

Don’t neglect testing: Any errors or hiccups in the experience can take away from true immersion.

Go interactive: Letting users make choices helps them personalize the experience and feel more connected to your brand story — because you let them be a part of it!



Digital tech that sticks

How to marvel attendees and achieve goals

Your goal	Create this experience
Raise brand awareness	Include a digital installation to create an Insta-worthy moment (i.e. light-up floor or wall that changes colors with your movement). And hashtag it!
Demo large or expensive products	Implement an augmented reality experience to let prospects get their hands on it... digitally.
Tell your brand story	Try a digital showcase that lets attendees explore engaging and rich content in your booth, and that can live on after the show ends.
Highlight product and service offerings	Use spatial VR to immerse attendees in your value propositions — literally.

Draw them in with digital

Use digital marketing to attract your target audience online — not just around the show, but all year long.

Learn how with our exclusive digital marketing worksheet.

Stay connected



Go for the glow

Want to stand out on a busy trade show floor? Use audio visual solutions to light up your exhibit — and capture your prospects' attention.



Lighting (Turn it up or down)

No matter the size of your booth, lighting can help you outshine the competition.

Choose variation: Contrast between light and dark to draw attention to key elements or areas.

Vary it up with flair: Use accent lighting to showcase products and key messages — or shine a spotlight on your logo.

Vary it up with dimness: Think warm to soothe and cool to energize.

Stand in the shade: Try shades of blue or purple to evoke feelings of calm and green for an eco-tone.

Get moving: Use motion to direct traffic and draw prospects in.

Listen up (Sound on)

Set your brand tone with audio, and as long as it's not just noise, people will take note.

So be strategic and apply these tips for a soundproof booth:

Aim: Use directional speakers to point audio waves at a specific area.

Buffer: Use sound buffers (e.g., fabrics and carpeting — bonus points for recycled versions) to improve sound quality inside your space.

Coordinate: Align sound with lighting for a more immersive experience.

Ready to get glowing? We've got more tips and tricks in our audio visual workbook.

Get your copy

Show & tell (For presentations)

An in-booth presentation area is a great way to let attendees learn about products or services without committing to a demo or sales interaction.

Try out these tips to present like a pro:

Double duty:

Design your demo station to double as a mini presentation area. This can save costs and gives attendees a new reason to come back. Be mindful of volume levels.

Make it short and varied:

Create 2-3 minute videos that pack a punch. Provide several choices to highlight different products, services, or options. If your exhibit has a stage, design interactive presentations that involve the audience. And keep them short — 7-10 minutes max..

Tell attendees where to go:

Think about what you want attendees to do after the presentation and design your exhibit to lead them there.

Scale up (With multimedia)

Large-scale multimedia is a dynamic way to attract and engage attendees. However, simply projecting your existing content onto a big screen can throw off the quality of your visuals, such as lowering resolution and image quality. Here's how to deliver the **wow** in big, be-seen fashion:

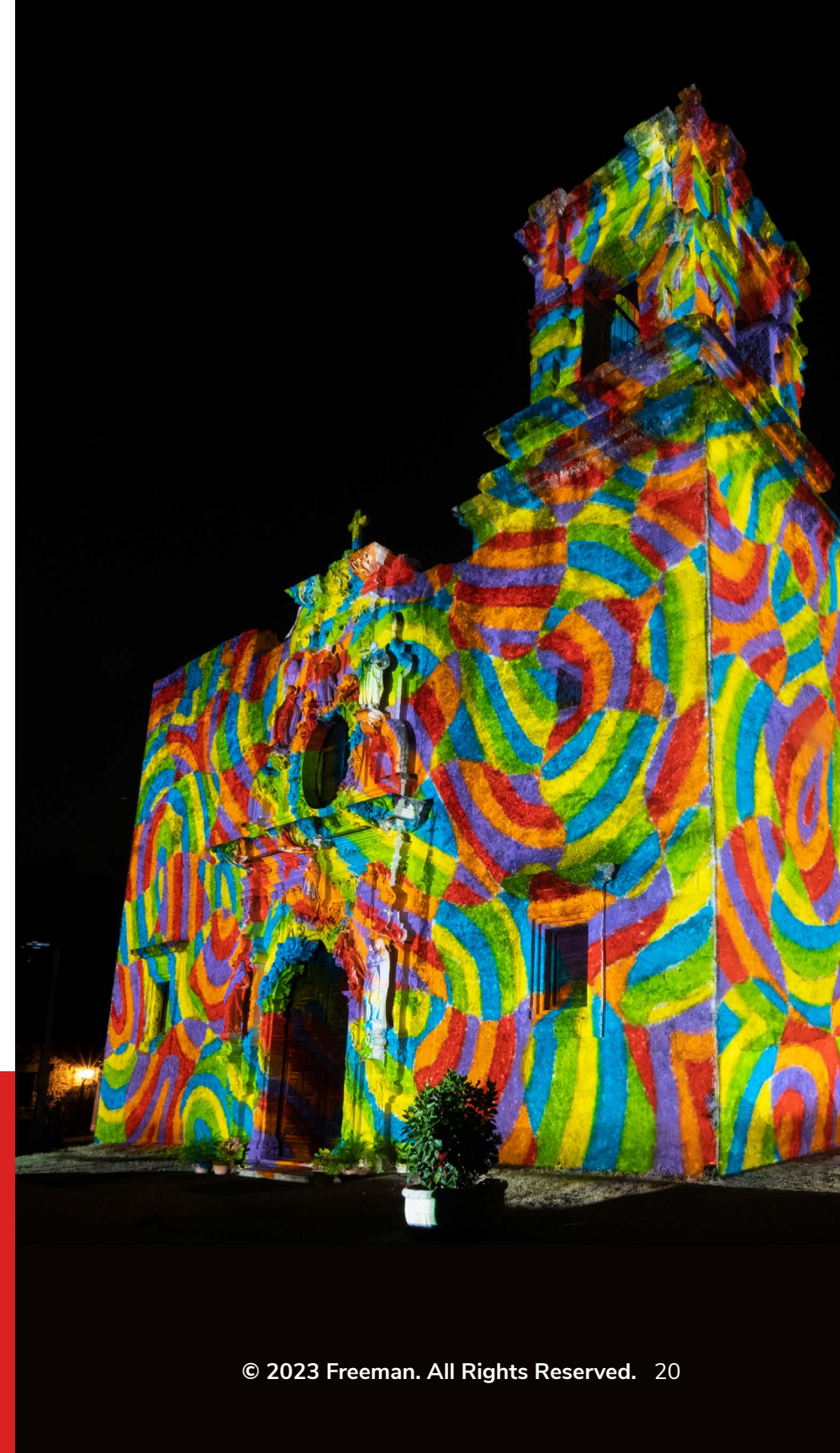
Be bold:

Contrasting colors add interest and pop. Watch out for pastels and similar shades that can blend together muting the visuals.

Projection mapping:

One big way to be bold is projection mapping, where your exhibit walls become screens. This technology turns structures into animated, bold, show-stopping scenes that captivate attendees near and far.

- Find smooth surfaces to project on and use bold, simple images and font.
- Make sure to project at the right angle so your visuals aren't distorted.



Ready to immerse yourself in best practices?

Check out our complete guide to immersive exhibit experiences as well as a bonus tip sheet and worksheet!

Immerse me



Experiential setup

Take immersive from buzzword to experience

Your goal

Create this experience

Raise brand awareness

Create FOMO with non-traditional seating formations (think amphitheater) and hosted thought leadership sessions delivered by your C-suite. Another way to educate attendees about your brand is through interactive gamification.

Generate leads or grow your pipeline

Create different moments throughout the day (a Q&A in the morning, demos in the afternoon) to keep people coming back.

Launch new products or features

Include frosted walls around your demos or workshops to create intrigue. Attendees will be motivated to enter and see what's going on.

Maintain (and enrich) key client relationships

Use customizable booth solutions, soft seating, and creative lighting to make your space open for connection. Think breakouts, conversational networking spaces, and unplug/recharge areas.

Step 5: Design your results

Don't hesitate... collaborate!

Inspired by the ideas in this guide but not sure how to get started? Find a partner that will use design principles to develop creative solutions for your exhibit-space challenges while also ensuring your booth achieves its goals and objectives.

Great ideas are the key to becoming the talk of the show. It only takes one brilliant idea or experience to make a difference. Keep brainstorming — and don't settle for the first idea.

Build your booth crew

Now that your exhibit plan is in full swing, it's time to think about who stands behind your brand and in front of your space! Our best practices guide provides a deeper dive and helpful hints to build a winning team.

Go team





Step 6: Make your exhibit work for you

You can engage attendees and meet your business goals — without breaking the bank.

The key is to be strategic.

Ask your booth designer for alternative/creative ideas that align with your business goals, make your exhibit stand out, and are within your budget. And don't be afraid to try something new!

By following these steps, you can make the most of your efforts and budget with a booth that not only looks great but also boosts your business.

Exhibit inspiration

Learn how these brands designed successful exhibits and connected with attendees.

Visit Orlando

Raised engagement by bringing real theme-park thrills for attendees, and helped create jobs in the local community.

Take a ride



OwnBackup

Used gamification that encouraged attendees to visit all four of its activations, increasing engagement from 6.86% to 17.75%.

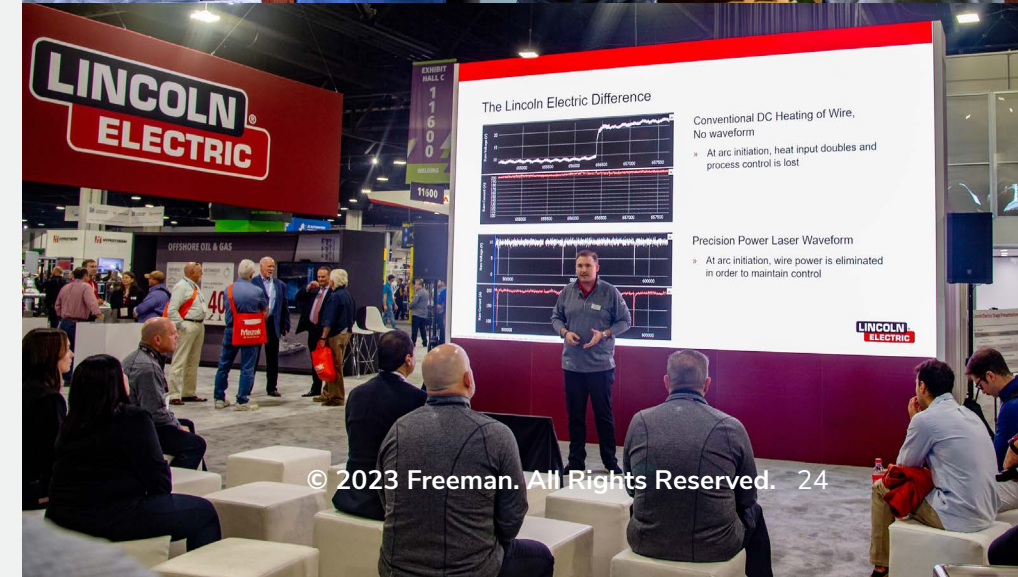
Go four it



Lincoln Electric

Surprised visitors by not including any equipment in its exhibit and engaged prospects and customers with a listen-more, show-less approach.

Plug in



Freeman¹

Step into our office

Need help solving an exhibit design challenge?

Let's talk

Freeman is a global leader in events, on a mission to redefine live for a new era. With a data-driven approach and the industry's largest network of experts, Freeman's insights shape exhibitions, exhibits, and events that drive audiences to action. These integrated full-service solutions leverage a 96-year legacy in event management as well as new technologies to deliver moments that matter.

Visit us at freeman.com or contact us at freeman.com/contact

© 2023 Freeman. All Rights Reserved.

