



The Power of Visualization: Helping You “See” into the Future

By Joanne Ireland, President of Ireland Presentations

Trade shows and industry events are crucial parts of the marketing mix when it comes to building buzz around a company, product or brand. And one of the most common activities related to show planning is visualizing the booth. Unfortunately, most people are very inexperienced in what to look for, and as a consequence are often quite surprised to see how their booth performs in the actual trade show.

The normal approach is to work with show management to understand what space is available on the show floor— size and location – and then pick your idea of the most optimal space, based on budget. Once you have your booth location contracted, you either plan to use a booth you own, or rent or purchase one from a reputable vendor. You will look at renderings of the booth from the front, the side, and perhaps in 3-D. This gives you an idea of what the booth will look like when it is completed. You’re happy, since your booth looks really good, and you are confident that when your customers, prospects and execs walk onto the trade show floor, they will definitely notice you.

But on opening day you realize that the sterile view you saw in your office is nothing like the actual experience at the event. Mobs of people stream past cluttered booths with too much information, garish colors and way too many people. Your beautiful booth is caught in the crossfire, and no one seems to even notice you are there.

This is where the experience of seasoned tradeshow managers comes in – they have the power of visualization. They can walk you through anticipated traffic flow based on the location of the show entrance, and where meal service or a lounge might be placed. They can help you visualize what the venue will actually look like when it is filled with booths, some two stories high; when the hall is hung with giant signs vying for attention; when the visitors are elbowing their way through throngs of people and the decibel level is a dull roar. They can help you visualize what it will be like for an attendee walking onto the show floor, armed with the floor plan, but completely disoriented by the music, speakers, bright colors, busy carpet, and crowds.

Experienced show managers know the pitfalls and can help you avoid them. From the actual booth layout, to the signage in your booth, placement of equipment, and even where to situate your booth staff, seasoned managers can “show” you how the booth will come across in the real world. They can alert you to potential problems with your proposed signage: will the architecture of the venue make your signs difficult to see? Is your reception counter easily accessible? Are nearby competitors likely to try to overpower your efforts, rendering them useless? Are you utilizing your expensive real estate most efficiently?

They help you anticipate how easy or difficult it will be to read your messaging or branding, view your demos or product, or even just find your booth on the show floor. Their advice on how many staff will comfortably fit in the booth, where and how they should work, is based on years of actually experiencing booths that work, and booths that don’t.

If you follow the advice of seasoned show managers, you maximize the probability that your booth and your trade show experience will be optimal, and the money spent for participating will be money well spent.

About the Author:

Joanne Ireland, a 20 year veteran of the meeting and event planning industry, is Founder and President of Ireland Presentations, a meeting, conference and event planning company based in San Francisco. Joanne is one of San Francisco's leading consultants in planning, coordination & management of conferences, meetings & events. Her expertise is design, project standards/content, conceptualization & design of project strategy, and contract negotiations. Joanne and her team continue to produce successful events and meetings for a wide range of corporate and non-profit clients both large and small, domestically and abroad. More about Joanne and Ireland Presentations can be found at www.irelandpresentations.com.

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