

# TRADE SHOW

## EXHIBITING

| 2023

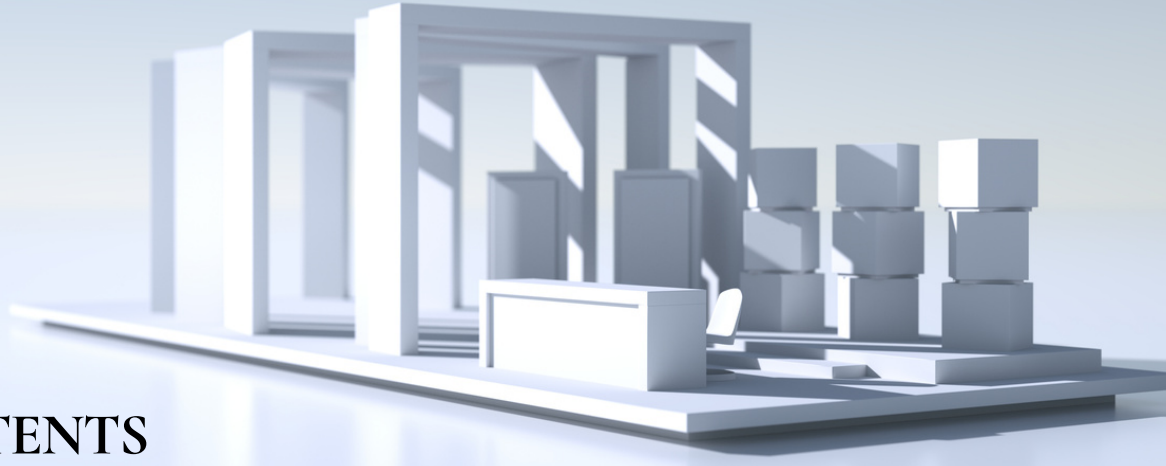


**YOUR GUIDE TO  
CREATING A  
MASTERFUL  
FACE-TO-FACE  
MARKETING  
PROGRAM**

Brought to you by:



**STRATEGY / EXHIBIT DESIGN & PRODUCTION  
STAFFING TO CONNECT / BEYOND THE BOOTH**



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# WELCOME

## | WHERE THINGS STAND



**STRATEGY, EXPERTISE AND  
INTENTIONALITY ARE KEY TO  
CREATING AN AUTHENTIC  
CONNECTION WITH ATTENDEES.**

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As we found out during the pandemic, meeting virtually isn't the same as making a connection in person. Face-to-face marketing is extremely effective. But to connect, you need to get people to stop and talk to your team.

Forward-thinking companies need to review their approach to get the most out of their experiential marketing program. Strategy, expertise and intentionality are key to creating an authentic connection with attendees.

You also need your trade show booth to stand out if you want people to spend time getting to know your brand on the show floor. Half-hearted exhibiting at a trade show isn't enough if you truly want to move the needle.

There are a few things pros know about how to make your trade show program successful. The WRA is excited to share some exclusive expert tips and tricks from the team at exhibiteur with you here.



WISCONSIN  
**Food &  
Hospitality  
EXPO**

It's Worth  
Your Time  
Any Way  
You Slice It.

Produced by



**MARCH 12, 2025**  
**9AM – 3PM**

**STATE FAIR PARK**  
**WEST ALLIS, WI**

The Wisconsin Food & Hospitality Expo is an all-new industry event that you have been waiting for! This Expo is focused on bringing the food, beverage, hospitality and bakery industries together to source products and services, network and discovering trending ideas to take your business to the next level!

WF&HE is jam packed with value and top-notch takeaways! Some highlights include:

- Nearly 200 exhibits covering all key food, beverage, equipment, services and technology
- Over a dozen 15-minute Quick Bite training sessions on trending topics
- Bakery competitions & hands-on demonstrations in the Pastry Studio
- Something Special *from* Wisconsin Pavilion highlighting local suppliers
- Mixology demonstrations in the Spirits, Wine & Beer Zone
- And so much more – we're just getting started!

Join us March 12th to see the latest products, trends and solutions to make 2025 great!

REGISTER TO  
EXHIBIT



[www.wifoodexpo.com](http://www.wifoodexpo.com)





## STRATEGY | START WITH WHY

Zero in on your goals and start with the end in mind. Take some time to discuss what exactly success looks like when you are sitting together again after the show. Ask questions. Here are a few samples to get the conversation started:

- Do you have a goal number of new quality leads?
- Are you looking to develop key vendor and industry relationships? What are they?
- Is the goal to raise brand awareness? (And how are you measuring that?)
- Are you launching a new product? What part does this show play in that overall strategy?

QUESTIONS

To be most effective, this "why" conversation needs come from a place of strength in knowing your mission and brand and where you fit into the landscape of your industry. If you aren't sure about these key concepts, we recommend getting some help from a team of branding experts.

When you are authentic in who you are,  
it helps people to connect in a real way with your brand.



# STRATEGY

## | FIND YOUR FIT



It's time to shoot your sacred cows. Nothing should be off the table. Don't go (or not go) because it's what you've "always done." That's a great way to waste a bunch of money.

Start by reviewing shows you have gone to in the past and evaluating the success you've had and why you felt it was (or wasn't) a good experience.

Research shows. Things have changed drastically and looking up show format, attendance, expected experience, and discussing what objectives fit which shows is crucial.

Talk to other exhibitors. Check out exhibitor lists and pick up the phone. You'll be surprised what you can learn from others about what you can expect at a show.

Look at what you have found through the lens of the why you created in step 1. Which shows are going to drive you toward those goals? Why do you think so?

Only commit to a show if it reinforces your why. Those are the shows that fit. The ones where you can authentically connect with your audience.





## THE BOOTH | WHAT AND HOW

Now you have the why and the where, it's time to drill down to the what and how of your program.

If you are like most marketing professionals, this is where you find an exhibit team to partner with to build your booth and make sure all the details are handled. Let's be real, you have other things to do. Or maybe you are considering a DIY design...keep reading, we talk about that too.

# THE BOOTH

## | EXHIBIT DESIGN

### CLEAN, MODERN EXHIBIT DESIGN IS KEY.

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It used to be that pop up displays with velcro-applied graphics with carpet covered panels were popular. Man, we have come a long way!

Trade show attendees now want to be wowed with exhibit spaces that are inviting.

Exhibitors win when they incorporate design elements and accent pieces with their brand messaging and technology.

Modular systems are perfect for doing just that. These systems are gaining in popularity. And it's no wonder.

Metal frames are lightweight and allow for easy reuse and reconfiguration. Fabric graphics apply seamlessly and can be updated for a whole new look without breaking the bank.

It's a no brainer. Great for design. Great for the company bottom line.



Design Your Trade Show Booth with Modern  
Materials and Professional Graphics

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People will want to come in to see you.



# THE BOOTH

## | GRAPHIC DESIGN



*Light box backwall.*

MAKE SURE YOUR GRAPHIC DESIGN IS ON POINT.

Even the exhibitor with the best designed booth at the show will lose if their graphics are not designed with a trade show experience in mind.

Make sure you are working with a designer who understands best practices for trade show graphics (or consult with industry pros to make sure your internal designer knows the best way to proceed).

## DESIGNING GRAPHICS FOR YOUR EXHIBIT

### Keep text to a minimum

Less is more. No one should be standing there reading your booth wall. They should be talking to your people!

### Logos - think placement

Get it up high and at eye level. People across the show floor should be able to spot you. And the people who are standing next to your booth should not be confused, straining to look to the top of your booth for your name.

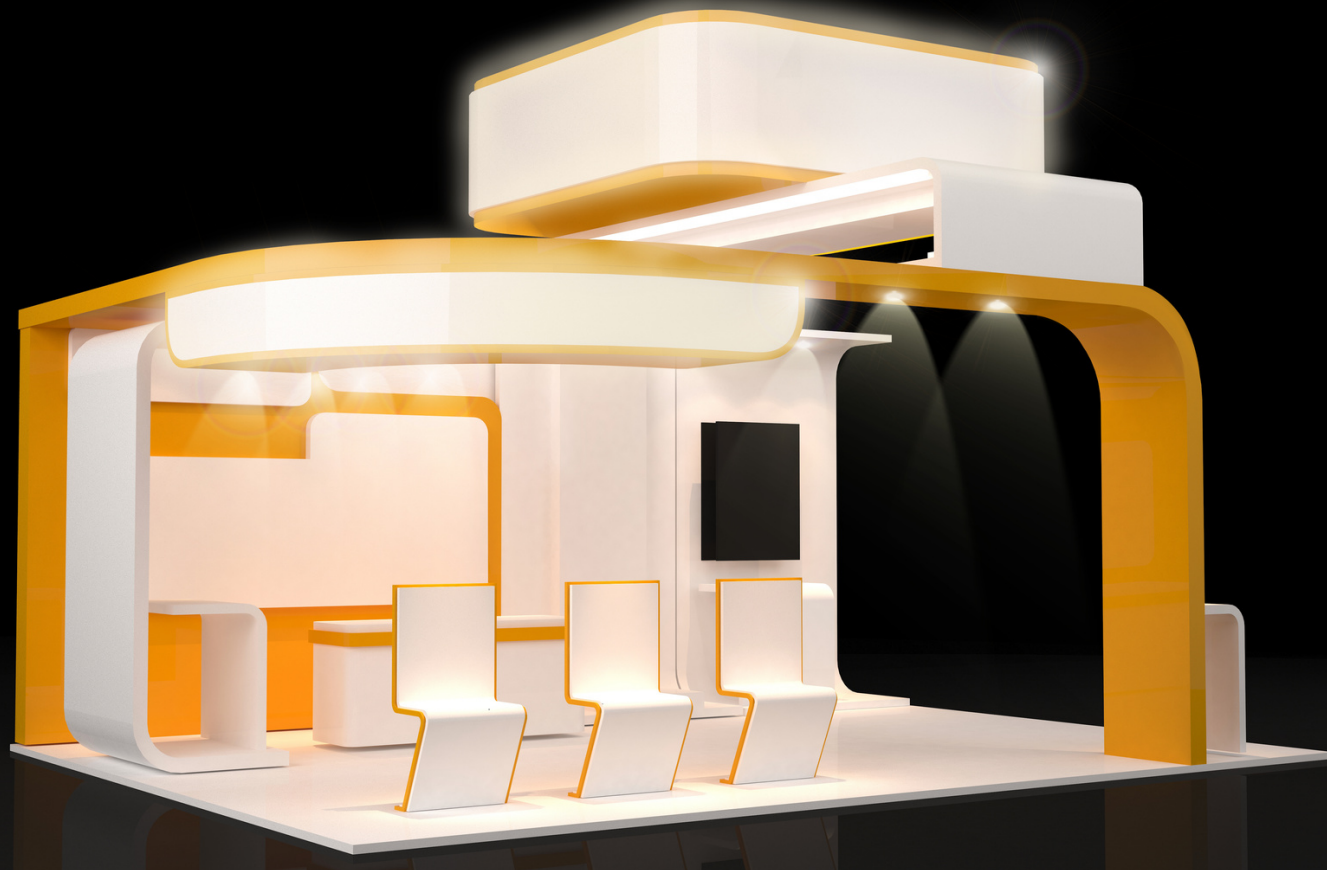
### Professional photos and video

If you are going to use photos or video in your booth, hire a professional to custom-make content for your company. Show off your product, your process, your people.

### Spice it up

Use brand-matching colors, patterns and graphic elements to add interest to your booth and reinforce your brand. Remember, think big. You don't want a small pattern that is going to be too busy or an element that is too small to see from a distance. And get creative. Dimension. Different substrates. Get inspiration anywhere and everywhere!

PRO TIPS



## THE BOOTH | LIGHTING MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

AMBIENT LIGHTING ISN'T ENOUGH.  
DON'T RELY ON IT.

Yes, the exhibit hall will be well lit enough for people to walk around. But the ambient light in the hall is used equally by everyone. And you want your trade show booth to stand out.

Enter lighting into your booth. Don't skip (or skimp) on this crucial piece of the exhibiting puzzle.

You can get really creative with spotlights, pin lights or color lighting for greater impact and separation of your booth space. Or you can get an easy pop of light with some simple arm lights on the top of your display.

This is a place where something will always beat nothing. So make sure to account for it. (And remember, adding light to your booth means you need an electrical show service order too or you won't have any power!)

LIGHT BOXES HELP YOU  
OUTSHINE THE COMPETITION.

Light boxes allow an entire graphic to be backlit. Bringing a show stopping element to your booth. Both light and color. This is particularly compelling if you have some amazing graphics that you want to pop.

It's a perfect application for something you want to prominently feature.

With exhibit technology being what it is now, you can do a light box as part of a hanging sign or even in a small booth space. Talk about standing out from your neighbors!



LED lighting on  
the back of a  
simple back wall  
light box

# THE BOOTH

## | LIGHTING CONTINUED

### ACCENTS: CHANDELIERS, PENDANTS AND MORE!

Remember how show attendees want environments that are inviting? A booth where people want to hang out is a place your team can engage more comfortably, for longer periods of time.

Adding lighting elements that are pretty, modern and enhance the design of your booth is a great way to help your trade show booth stand out in the crowd.

### RECESSED LIGHTING, NOT JUST FOR HOMES ANYMORE.

Home owners have long loved the look and control of recessed lighting. So it's not surprising at all that this high-end look has made it's way to the show floor too.

If you have the budget to do it, recessed lighting is a understated way to introduce lighting that suggests quality, stability and a high-end experience. (Yes, this can be accomplished even in small booth spaces.)

Recessed lighting allows for clean line design and introduces light to the booth that will help showcase product.

That's a win-win in our book.



### HIRE A TRADE SHOW LIGHTING EXPERT TO MAKE A SPLASH.

#### PRO TIP

*There are lighting companies that specialize in exhibit lighting. They know how to make light do their bidding, adding pops and cascades to perfectly complement graphics, products and design elements.*

*(Note: Expertise like this doesn't come cheap. But for those who want a big showing, it's a guaranteed way to stand out!)*

DON'T CUT CORNERS ON  
FINISHING



TOUCHES  
LIKE EVER



# THE BOOTH

## | FINISHING TOUCHES

There is nothing worse than a wrinkly or poor-fitting fabric in a trade show booth. Attendees notice little details like that and it reflects on the impression your brand makes.

Ensure their first impression of you isn't that you are sloppy and unprepared.

If you have a table throw, make sure it is pressed or bring a steamer.

Everyone will know if you pulled it out of your gym bag and tossed it on the table 10 minutes before the show opened.

You may have to be on-site (or have someone from your exhibit house on site) to help ensure these details are handled to your satisfaction. It's okay to be picky here! Little things make a big difference.



WRINKLES ARE ONLY COOL ON GRANDMA.



## REPLACE OLD, BEAT UP OR DATED LOOKING GRAPHICS.

Fabrics have come a long way in the last decade. Steaming graphics is a thing of the past (unless you have a supplier using low quality materials). Thank goodness.

But fit is now paramount in ensuring your booth has a clean, polished look. Ensure your partners are test-fitting your graphics and adjusting before the show opens to avoid baggy-ness, lines or awkward looking graphics.

The beauty of fabric graphics is that they are easily replaceable. So when you find that one is still looking dirty, stained or gross, don't hesitate to get it reprinted or updated.

Same with dated design. If a graphic is using old logo, tagline, colors or just "old" looking elements, get that switched out for some new show-stopping graphics! Don't wait. Your show ROI depends on these little finish details.





AND NOW  
THOUGHTS ON

DIY



# THE BOOTH

## | DIY

People will spot a DIY booth and draw conclusions (consciously or subconsciously) about the quality of your company. And all that time and money spent on polishing your brand... wasted if the execution on show floor doesn't have the same level of professionalism.

Especially if you end up with a neighbor who had experts in their corner. (Ouch!)

Not to mention DIY means you have to DIY...likely stressing out and overextending your team by expecting them to suddenly know construction methods, graphic design and staging,

Yes, going to a show is an investment and an expense. We strongly recommend doing research and having clear internal discussions before beginning a trade show program. (What do we want to get out of the show? What shows are best to attend? etc.)

If you do it just because other people are doing it, you won't know what to spend on the program and that will hurt your ROI.

As with most things in life, do it the right way or don't do it at all. (Or wait until you are ready to do it right.)

### **BUT THE BUDGET...**

If your budget is small, don't worry! There are options for you.

A sleek printed table throw with your logo and a banner stand looks more polished than a homemade sign.

Better yet, if you have a little more to throw at your booth - a single light box with a compelling image will be an attention grabbing conversation starter.





# THE BOOTH

## | EXHIBIT HOUSE - FINDING THE RIGHT PARTNER

### PERSONALITY FIT

#### DO YOU LIKE THEM?

Exhibiting can be stressful, so the people you work with should be people you like and who instill you with confidence that they can do the job right. Ask yourself - do you like their core values and mission? What is their brand and what do they stand for? If you match up, it's more likely your relationship will flourish.



### EXPERIENCE MATTERS

#### IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

Covid was hard on face-to-face marketing. The industry lost a lot of veteran talent as a result. Fresh faces are starting to come into the fold now that shows are back, but make sure your exhibit house has the expertise to handle your program. There's a learning curve that can cost you big if you are working with a rookie.



### NETWORK OF PROS

#### WHO DO THEY WORK WITH?

The vendors your exhibit house works with directly impact the quality of your exhibit properties. Anyone can order a cheap banner stand off the internet. A good exhibit partner will have knowledge of best pro-level suppliers that will fit the needs of your booth and budget.



### CONSTRUCTION METHODS

#### MODERN DESIGN MEETS FUNCTION

Your partner should understand how to use modern methods of construction that will enhance your brand and reduce costs. They should also guide you to design that can be feasibly produced in the real world - not just a rendering that looks nice on screen. After all, safety is a priority for every exhibitor.





# STAFFING

## | HOW YOUR TEAM WORKS A BOOTH MATTERS, A LOT.

### NEVER SIT. STAND AND INVITE PEOPLE IN.

---

Ever walk into a store where the clerk is sitting behind the counter, hunched over and kind of grunts at you as you come in?  
Not the best way to start a shopping experience.

Contrast that with the experience when you walk into a high-end boutique or tech store. A smiling person greets you, asks your name and leans in as they ask "how can I help you today?".

Night and day difference. Right?

Don't let your booth be that first store.

Yes, we know. Working a show is hard on the sales people. It's a lot. Their feet are going to hurt! You can help without becoming that first store. Make sure you staff with enough people that they can rotate taking breaks out of the booth.

Do not. I repeat. Do not. Have ugly folding chairs in the booth for your staff to sit on.

Have meeting rooms. Or lounge furniture. Seating areas for more detailed conversations with attendees. Yes.

But your team should never be sitting there unless they are having a conversation with a prospect.

Be ready. Greet warmly. Stand to stand out.



# STAFFING

## | HOW YOUR TEAM WORKS A BOOTH MATTERS, A LOT.



### ASK OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS, ENGAGE & LISTEN

---

It might be tempting for your sales staff to launch into their elevator pitch about why your company or new product is best. But you aren't pitching. You are relationship building.

Have your team ask open ended questions that get a person stopping by your booth to share their pain points. You'll be surprised how much people will tell you if you just ask and shut up.

- What are you hoping to get out of the show this year?
- Why are you stopping by our booth today?
- What has been your biggest challenge recently?

The answers you receive will tell you everything you need to know about how to serve this particular person.

Take notes during or after the conversation. Enter into your CRM for personalized follow ups in the future.

## STAFFING | CONNECT WITH ATTENDEES

### SKIP THE COLLATERAL. EVEN (GASP) THE BUSINESS CARDS

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Okay, hear me out. I know it sounds sacrilege to forego the long-standing staples of brochures, info sheets and business cards.

You are going to the show to connect with new people. To serve new clients or make new partnerships.

People who are attending a show are likely traveling light and don't want to schlep a bunch of stuff home to sort through later. Also, people are busy. So don't give them another thing to add to their to-do list. Be different.

You could hand a new prospect a stack of collateral with your business card on top.

Or you could say, "Hey, I've really enjoyed our chat. I don't have any business cards on me.

Would it be okay if I connect with you on LinkedIn?"

Depending on your industry and what would be appropriate, you could ask for a connection on Facebook or Instagram. Feeling bold? Simply ask to text a quick hello so you have their contact info and can continue chatting later.

And BOOM! Just like that, you are not a business card on the stack of junk for them to throw away. You are a connection, a friend, a follower.

Then you can initiate future communication. Meaning they don't have to do a thing to keep this relationship going.

You'll move it forward because you are ready to serve them.



| BEYOND THE BOOTH

# EXHIBITING

THE BOOTH IS JUST ONE PART.

Build a marketing strategy that goes beyond your booth. Be strategic and build an experience that will wow your audience.





# WHAT WINNING EXHIBITORS KNOW



## MARKETING

### | CRAFTING AN EXPERIENCE

#### PRE-SHOW HYPE

Generate buzz with your audience ahead before the show. Send out teasers to your subscriber list, post to social media. Make personalized contacts with anyone special.

#### INCENTIVIZE PEOPLE TO STOP BY

Encourage attendees to visit your booth with special offers, food or product sampling (everyone loves to eat!) drawings, prizes or giveaways. But don't waste your money on the cheap stuff. Today's audience values quality over quantity. Your incentives should match the brand quality you want to project.

#### INCORPORATE INTERACTIVITY

Don't be afraid to include interactive technology in your booth. Touch screens, AI or even a compelling video can be tools to get people to stay in your space longer, getting to know your brand while you gain their trust. And that is what face-to-face marketing is all about!

#### CREATIVE CONNECTIONS

Take advantage of other opportunities a show may provide to connect with attendees outside of your booth. Media, sponsorships, special events.

#### POST-SHOW FOLLOW UP

This is so important it needs it's own page!

# MARKETING

## | POST-SHOW FOLLOW UP

### CUSTOMIZE YOUR COMMUNICATION

#### TOUCHING BASE WITH NEW FRIENDS

If you follow the advice we've given so far, after a show you don't have a generic list of leads to blast with a standard "post show follow up".

You have new friends.

And notes about those friends - notes about what their needs, pain points and other personal details to customize your follow up.

Because you were listening.

You'll stand out to prospects when your customized message pops up in their messages when everyone else is doing an e-blast.

In your message, re-establish a personal connection. Engage with their content. Like their posts.

Provide value. "Hey, I found this video and thought of that thing we talked about."

Share info about your product/service that will solve a problem they told you about. Address specifically how it can help them, make their life easier or make them look great to their boss.

This kind of customized and personal approach will make you stand out in a crowd.



# BEYOND THE BOOTH

## | OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

### LOGISTICS & SET UP

#### POINT A TO POINT B

As you envision and budget for your exhibit, don't forget that getting it to the show and then to your booth space is an important part of the equation.

If forgotten, it can cost you big bucks.

Understand what kind of shipping ballpark you will be in for the size and type of booth and product you will be bringing. Keep in mind this will vary.

Other things to keep in mind:

- Ship to advanced warehouse if possible.
- Prepare for drayage fees.
- Know who can do what kinds of work on the show floor. (Every venue is a little different.)



### SHOW SERVICES

#### EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO RUN YOUR BOOTH

Don't forget to order your show services early to take advantage of the best prices. You or your exhibit house partner can take care of these orders. There are a wide array of services to consider.

Here are the most common options:

- Installation & Dismantle
- Electricity
- Flooring
- Furniture
- On-site storage
- Rigging/Hanging Sign
- Hospitality/Catering
- Porter service (empty trash)





# BEYOND THE BOOTH

## | POST-SHOW ANALYSIS

EASY TO SKIP  
IMPORTANT TO DO

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If you are a creative, business owner, marketing pro or business development guru, data analysis and post-mortem are probably not your favorite way to spend time.

But it's incredibly important to meet as a team post-show and discuss while the experience is fresh in your minds.

What worked? What didn't? What would you do the same and differently if you were to start it all again right now?

Keep this info and review it before beginning plans for your next show.





# TRADE SHOW

## EXHIBITING



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