

The success or failure of your exhibition plans can sometimes be linked to something as simple as colour. Colour appears everywhere from your web-site homepage to your brochure but at a show the place colour makes its greatest impact is in your trade show display. Yet without some forethought a small miscalculation in choosing the right colour can spell disaster. It used to be so simple. The discussion of colour came down to cool or warm colours. Cool colours being blues, greens and whites, the warm colours, red, orange and yellow. But, there is so much more to this!

### Which Colour Should Dominate

Colour ties your display to your product. When it is well done, colour creates a visual image that sparks the imagination of the visitor. Your ultimate goal is to focus attention on your product with the display as background. While this is the general rule, some products in themselves are rather uninspiring visually and need the help that the display can offer. If your products fall into this category-for example, products such as small automotive parts, some hardware items, software, certain packaged goods, etc.-then you must create a display that compensates visually for what your

# ADD COLOUR

## Impact Trade Show Display Design



product lacks. For these examples, a strong colour for the display will draw attention to the product, yet not overshadow it. You can select contrasting colours on the colour wheel.

If, however, your product easily lends itself to colour-such as giftware, linens, clothing, etc.-then highlight the colour in the product and let the display blend into the background with subtle tones.

Another scenario is where the product colour and display colour work in harmony. For example, an upscale line of clothing might be well displayed in an exhibit that has colours that reflect the quality of the product.

### Corporate (Brand) Colours

Part of your brand is colour. But in an increasingly competitive world there are few brands (and their colors) that are powerful enough to achieve universal recognition.

If you have strong, identifiable corporate colours, use them in your display; think about Starbucks' green, Coca-Cola's red and DeWalt Power Tool's yellow. Every



brand, large and small, is attempting to build a level of awareness. These recognized colours become a crucial part of your display. Consumers get familiar with the logo and colour. If they attend a show and don't see corporate images, they might simply walk-by the display without recognizing the exhibitor.

### Colour and Culture

Various cultures have their unique interpretation of colours. For example:

**Yellow** - In Japan the colour yellow represents grace; in the United States it represents caution and in China the imperial colour is yellow.

**Red**- In France red represents aristocracy, while in Britain it is purple. In China red symbolizes good luck and in South Africa red is the colour of mourning.

**White** - White is the predominant colour in North American bridal shows yet in Japan it's the colour of mourning.

If you are creating a display for a particular culture,

it's important to pay attention to its colour sensitivities. However, if you are creating a display for a global, multicultural audience, then consider using an array of colours found in nature. If you conduct a Google search for "colour and culture," you will find information that focuses on cultural interpretation of colour. When you are developing your display it is well-worth having a discussion with your display builder about colour. The discussion should include, in addition to a description of your product and brand, a detailed list of the countries where you plan to exhibit.

But what if your trade show plans are limited to a domestic market; does the discussion of culture become irrelevant? The simple answer is that it is highly unlikely that a domestic marketplace is one homogeneous mass of people; Populations are a mixture of cultures and ethnic backgrounds. If you have identified your customer profile properly it will give you strong clues that need to be incorporated into your exhibition plans. Colour can make or break an exhibit so plan carefully. ■

*Source: The Trade Show Network*

## Designing Trade Show Displays for a Great Customer Experience

Your display design is the first impression that your company makes, so it needs to offer your prospects the promise of a positive experience. It also needs to reflect well on your brand to everyone who passes by, especially to your target market. When designing your display with customer experience in mind, consider these questions.

### 1. *Who are our customers and what do they want?*

The question may seem obvious, but designing your display with your customer in mind is fundamental. A business-to-business exhibit at a manufacturing show will look very different than a retail display at a videogame show geared to teenagers. Design to appeal to your customer demographics. Does your customer want to be treated as a professional, an adventurer, or a fashionista? Your booth needs to create an

atmosphere that makes your customer feel that your company recognizes who they are, understands their needs, and treats them well.

### 2. *How can we interact with customers at the show?*

How do you engage attendees and provide a positive experience? Make them feel welcome. For a company that markets sports nutrition products to body-builders, our display design made it easy for large crowds of attendees to sample their products. The design also incorporated a "muscular" framework that immediately conveyed an image of strength.

### 3. *What messages do our customers want to hear?*

Notice that the emphasis is not on what you want to tell your customers but on what they want to hear. Of course, you have a message that you want to convey, but you need to translate your message into customer needs.