



Glossary of Terms: Deciphering the Trade Show Vernacular

A

Advance Mailer: Promotional literature sent to prospective attendees prior to an event's opening.

Advanced Order: An order for show services sent to the contractor before move-in.

Advance Rates: Fees associated with advance orders, which typically include discounts when paid early.

Advanced Receiving (or Advance Warehouse): Location to receive freight before the start of a show. Freight is stored at this location and then shipped to the trade show exhibit's venue.

Air Walls: Movable barriers that partition large areas. May be sound-resistant but not usually sound-proof.

Aisle Signs: Signs, usually suspended, that indicate aisle numbers or letters.

Audio/Visual (A/V): Equipment or materials that provide audio or visual media and can usually be rented by select vendors for each show.

B

Backloader: A truck which loads from a back opening door.

Badges: A form of identification; every exhibitor and attendee must wear a badge when on the show floor. Some attendees are very protective of their badges, which is why experiential marketing strategies can be useful for lead generation efforts.

Baffle: Partition to control light, air, sound or traffic flow. You may also seem a little baffled learning this brand new trade show language.

Bill of Lading (B/L): Transportation documentation issued to a carrier by a shipper. Documentation serves as the terms of where items are shipping and at what cost, so keep in a safe place. A clean bill of lading is a carrier-issued receipt depicting no damage, whereas a foul bill of lading indicates damage when received.

Blanket Wrap: Non-crated freight shipped via van line covered with protective blankets or padding. Enough to make you want to curl up and take a nap.

Blister Wrap: Vacuum formed transparent plastic cover.

Boneyard: Equipment storage area at show site. Or, a spooky place you visit on Halloween.

Booth Number: Number designated to each exhibitor's space.

Breakpoint: The level at which a discount is given for a volume order. For large discounts, you may also try breakdance.

C

C.O.B.: Close of business day, usually 5:00 p.m.

C.T.S.M.: Certified trade show marketer.

CAD: Computer-aided design, or CAM is computer-aided manufacturing.

Call for Presentations: Formal process of requesting and screening suitable presentation topics for use in conference sessions.

Canopy: Drapery, awning or other roof-life covering.

Capacity: Maximum number of people allowed in any given area.

Carnet: A customs document permitting the holder to carry or send merchandise temporarily into certain foreign countries for display, demonstration or similar purposes without paying duties or posting bonds.

Carpenter: Union that is responsible for uncrating of exhibits and display materials, installation and dismantle especially of larger/heavier fixtures, laying of floor covering and re-crating of exhibits and machinery.

Certificate of Insurance: Exhibitors are usually required to issue a certificate of insurance as evidence of financial capability.

Common Carrier: A transportation company that moves exhibit freight usually in crates or on pallets/skids.

Consignee: The receiving or delivery destination of a shipment.

Consignor: The sender of freight.

Consumer Show: An exposition that is open to the general public to show consumer products. Typically, trade shows are B2B environments, in which attendees must qualify to attend.

Contractor: One who contracts to supply certain services or materials.

Construction Drawing (or Construction Grid): Drawing which depicts diagrams and instructions for building an exhibit. You may be required to submit a construction drawing of your booth space – regardless of size or fancy – to show management prior to the show start.

Corkage: The charge placed on beer, liquor or wine brought into a facility but purchased elsewhere. Corkage charges may also include glassware, ice and mixers. With all the extra charges, you may feel like saying 'put a cork on it!'

Counter to Counter: A shipment that is made at the last minute, which requires delivery and pick-up from the counter of an airline or bus depot.

Crating List: An itemized list of the contents of a crate.

Cut & Lay: Installation of carpet other than normal booth or aisle size. These guys are not layin' in the cut.

CWT: Hundred weight, usually 100 pounds. Measurement of weight for your exhibit freight.

D

Damage Report: A report submitted by an exhibitor to a freight company or drayage contractor itemizing damage to shipped goods.

Dead Man: Temporary post used during installation to help support the weight of an overhead structure. Or, that guy who took the last of the coffee without brewing more.

Direct-to-Show-Site: Shipments sent directly to show location. An exhibitor who misses the advance receiving dates will be required to use direct-to-show shipping.

Dismantle: Take down and removal of exhibit.

Double-decker: A two-storied exhibit. Much like that bus you took to tour around London.

Drayage: Movement of a shipment from the receiving dock to a booth for exhibit set-up and back to the dock for return shipment at the close of the event.

Duplex Outlet: Double electrical outlet.

E

E.A.C.: Exhibitor appointed contractor who is typically used to provide installation and dismantle labor and/or to custom build booths.

Electrical Contractor: Company contracted by show management to provide electrical services to exhibitors.

Empty Crate: Reusable packing container in which exhibit materials were shipped. When properly marked with the “empty crate” labels with booth number and company name, the show staff will remove, store and return the crates during dismantle time. You will need to hunt down those empty crate labels when you’re ready for your packing materials to be taken to storage.

End Cap: An exhibit space at the end of a row, with aisles on three sides. This is a bit different than a nightcap.

Est. Wt.: Stands for estimated weight. This is used for freight purposes, not personnel purposes.

Exhibitor Prospectus: Promotional literature sent to prospective exhibitors by show management to encourage participation in a trade show. The prospectus usually includes estimated number of attendees, attendee profile information, positive testimonials from previous years and other key information you can use in the trade show selection process.

Exhibitor Service Manual: Physical or digital manual containing general information, labor/service order forms, key dates and deadlines, rules and regulations, as well as other important information pertaining to exhibitor participation.

F

F.O.B.: Stands for freight on board, a term establishing at what point the shipper releases their obligation of liability.

Floor Manager: Person retained by show management to supervise exhibit area and assist exhibitors.

Floor Marking: Method of marking booth space. But we don’t recommend you writing on the floors – or the walls. This will be done for you.

Floor Order: An order for goods and/or services placed on-site.

Floor Plan: A map showing layout of exhibit spaces. Some shows have digital maps within their mobile apps.

Floor Port: A utility box recessed in the floor containing electrical, telephone or plumbing connections.

Forced Freight: Materials left on the trade show floor past the designated time set by show management for carriers to check in for freight consigned to them by their exhibitors. These materials are redirected or 'forced' to a pre-assigned carrier for shipping.

Freight Desk: The area where material shipments are processed at a trade show.

Freight Forwarder: Fancy way of saying shipping company.

Full Booth Coverage: Carpet covering entire area of booth.

G

Gangway: Another term for aisle. It can also mean to get out of the way, so use those context clues.

General Service Contractor (GSC): Company which provides all services to exhibition management and exhibitors.

H

Hand-Carryable: Items that one person can carry unaided without the use of dollies or hand trucks.

Hardwall Booth: Booth constructed with plywood or another hard material, as opposed to a booth formed by drapery only.

Header: Fascia board or overhead display sign, which is typically illuminated.

High Jacker (Scissor Lifter, Cherry Picker): Equipment capable of lifting people or items to a given height, usually on a platform. Not a hijacker.

Hospitality Suite: Room or suite of rooms used to entertain guests. Exhibitors may reserve a hospitality suite for private meetings away from the trade show floor. Shows may also have designated hospitality suites as lounge areas for certain VIP attendees.

I

I & D: Install and dismantle.

Infringement: Use of floor space outside exclusive booth area (e.g., taking up aisle space).

Installation: Setting up exhibit booth and materials.

Island Booth: An exhibit space with aisles on all four sides. Maybe they serve fruity drinks with umbrellas here.

J

Jigged Crate: A specially designed crate with hardware to keep exhibit properties in place to prevent shifting during shipment.

Job Foreman: One who is in charge of specific projects.

K

Kiosk: Free-standing pavilion or light structure, can also be used to describe any small structure – digital or not – that is used to display product information or distribute information.

L

Labor Desk: On-site area from which service personnel are dispatched.

Lead Retrieval: As an exhibitor, you can purchase or rent a scanner or badge reader that collects contact or demographical information from show attendees. After the show, you'll be able to retrieve those leads for post-show marketing efforts.

Less Than Truckload (LTL): Rate charged for freight that weighs less than the minimum weight per truckload. LTL shipments are carried by tractor trailers and usually required the freight to be crated or on pallets/skids.

Light Box: Enclosure with lighting and translucent face of plastic or glass.

Linear Display: An in-line booth or exhibit that falls within a continuous line of booths along an aisle.

M

Mailing Lists: A list of contact names and addresses for marketing purposes. Many shows will provide mailing lists of attendees to paid sponsors; these lists typically do not include email or phone data.

Marshaling Yard: An area where trucks gather for orderly dispatch onto a trade show site.

Material Handling: The unloading of your shipment, transporting it to your booth, storing and returning empty crates and cartons and reloading your shipment after the show.

Modular Exhibit: Exhibit constructed with inter-changeable components.

Move-in: Date and timeframe given for installation.

Move-out: Date and timeframe given for dismantle.

Mylar: Often used to generically reference polyester film or plastic material, but it is a registered trademark name for a specific family of plastic sheet products.

N

Net Square Feet: The amount of space occupied by exhibits in a facility, not including aisles, columns, registration area, etc.

O

O.T. (Overtime) Labor: Work performed on overtime, usually before 8 a.m. and after 4:30 p.m. during the week, as well as all hours on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

One-time Spotting: The unloading of freight or machinery and placing it in a designated location. This service does not include unskidding, balancing or extended time. If you order one-time spotting, you will need to be present during this service.

P

P.O.C.: Stands for point of contact, the person that is on the show floor that show management can contact for questions or answers.

P.W.: Stands for packed weight.

Package Plan: Management providing furniture and/or services to exhibitors for a single fee.

Pallet or Skid: A low wooden frame that supports heavy objects or groups of materials for easier handling. Helpful for forklifts as a platform for objects being moved. Tip, you can find many cute ways to repurpose pallets on Pinterest!

Peninsula Booth: Exhibit space with aisles on three sides.

Perimeter Booth: Exhibit space located on an outside wall. Perimeter booths are often the last ones filled, as most exhibitors prefer to be closer to the entrances.

Pipe & Drape: An aluminum or steel piping that provides a drape support frame and removable drape fabric panels that partition the booth spaces and offer a backdrop within the booth space.

Planting: Floral décor to decorate the exhibit hall. Exhibitors are often contacted to see if they want to rent floral arrangements for their booth space, as well.

Press Room: Space reserved for media representatives. Most shows allow each exhibitor to drop off press materials before the start of the show. We recommend you ask for a list of registered press, so you can also reach out directly before, during and after the show for greater press opportunities.

POV (Privately Owned Vehicle) Line: Special loading dock reserved for privately owned vehicles – such as a passenger car, van or small company vehicle – where material is unloaded at prevailing drayage rates. Driver usually reports first to the marshaling yard.

Pro Forma Invoice: An invoice sent to a buyer prior to the shipment of merchandise which provides detailed information about the kinds and quantities of goods to be shipped.

Pro-number: Number designated by freight forwarders to a single shipment.

Q

Quad Box: Four electrical units in one box.

R

Registration: Process by which an individual reserves their admission ticket and/or checks-in upon arriving at the show. Attendees will be asked to give certain contact and demographical information in exchange for admission. An exhibitor will need to register all booth personnel in order to obtain exhibitor badges. Note, exhibitor badges do not typically allow for participation in all areas of the show, such as the conference sessions, are only used for the trade show floor.

Rigger: Union that is responsible for crating, unskidding, positioning and reskidding of all machinery.

S

S.T. (Standard Time) Labor: Work performed on straight time, usually 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Show Guide: Program book for attendees that lists exhibitors with booth location, conference and event details, names sponsors and provides other helpful resources to help navigate the trade show. Some shows have replaced show guides with a mobile app.

Show Manager: Person responsible for all aspects of exhibition.

Show Office: Location of on-site management office.

Show Producer: An individual or company which manages trade shows.

Side Rail: Low divider wall (usually 36" high) in exhibition area.

Smoker: While you may identify as one of these, in trade show lingo, it means an ash stand.

Space Rate: Cost per square foot for exhibit area.

Special Handling: Applies to shipments requiring extra labor equipment or time for delivery to a trade show exhibit.

Staging Area: Area adjacent to main event area for set-up, dismantling and temporary storage.

Stanchions: Decorative posts which hold markers or flags to define traffic areas. Ropes or chains may be attached.

Strike: Dismantle exhibits. Or, what it's called if the union workers refuse to work.

Stop Job: If an exhibitor is performing work that is required to be performed by union workers only, a union worker can force the exhibitor to stop.

T

T.L.: Stands for truckload.

T & M: Time and materials, a method for charging services on a cost-plus basis.

Target Date: Move-in date assigned to exhibitors with usually over a certain number of square feet of booth space by the show management agreement.

Transient Space: Short-term rental space.

U

Union: An organization of workers often used by show management to handle all material in and out of the hall, installation, dismantle and floor covering. You may be required to pay union workers to hang heavy/large signage in your exhibit space, for electrical needs, drape and cloth installation and other trade show needs.

Union Steward: On-site union official.

V

V.A.T.: Value-added tax, a tax that has been added to the overall price of a product reflecting the value added to the product by processing. Not as enjoyable as a vat of wine.

Visqueen: Plastic covering over carpet for protection.

W

Waybill (W/B): A document issued by a carrier giving details and instructions pertaining to shipment of a consignment of goods. While a Bill of Lading includes much of the same data, a waybill is not a contractual document.