

ROOKIES WANT TO KNOW

How many days should a facility allow for move-in for 300 booths? 150 booths?

MOVE IN/OUT depends on the complexity of show. A simple booth package with no freight and no carpet can be done in 8-12 hours. Cut the hours in half for half the booths. If it is a complex show with heavy freight and heavy installation and dismantling, it may take as long as 48 hours or longer.

How many days should a facility give on tear-down for 300 booths? 150 booths?

Tear down is usually half the time of set up. Be sure to allow time for the general service contractor to clean and move out after the exhibitors have left.

Who should handle food and beverage in the hall?

The facility should handle all food and beverage.

Do all floor plans need clearance from the fire marshal?

Most cities require fire marshal approval at least two weeks out. It is essential to safety procedures for facility personnel, exhibitors and attendees. It will also help to defend the facility if there is ever a fire.

When there are two different shows moving in at the same time with two different contractors, how can one ensure a smooth set-up and tear-down?

Typically the two service contractors are brought together to discuss prior to the event and discuss any challenges that they foresee. Each contractor should be assigned a dock. They will work it out between themselves for access to the other docks.

Give us your insight into the handling of the freight. Most of the time the contractor will store it, but when if ever, is it okay to keep it on property?

Freight should be left to the contractor exclusively. Facilities are not set up to properly handle freight. The reason facilities end up doing so is so that the exhibitor/guest can avoid material handling charges. ESCA has seen this backfire too many times. As to post show storage, absolutely unequivocally, NO. If it is a guest, they should be required to clear the floor same as all other exhibitors. Responsibility for liability is assumed when receiving freight, additional space is required and manpower as well as possible equipment-like dollies, two-wheel carts, fork lifts, personnel, etc.

How involved are service contractors during the site inspections?

General service contractors are invaluable in the site selection process. No one knows the property quirks and issues better than the general service contractors. The general service contractors also have a history of successful events that have been held in the property and as much as the general service contractors know, the general service contractors are extremely intimate, with the clients' needs and can serve as a valuable conduit between client and property to make sure those needs and expectations are fulfilled. It should be a three-way partnership: General Service Contractors - Client - Facility. Too often clients do not involve their general service contractors in the site selection and do not have a satisfactory experience.

What kind of forms does the facility need to have in addition to the kit exhibitors received from contractors, i.e. electrical forms, etc.?

Supply forms for the kits for any services that the hotel supplies directly and any rules and regulations that the hotel wants conveyed to the exhibitor.

With three separate docks with only one leveler, how do we manage shows setting up and tearing down?

Three docks may be fine for a simple show, if you are not allowing anyone to drive into the hall. The freight contractor will handle arrangements, but the limited number of docks affects the move-in and move-out time. Often a way to manage this is to work with the show management and the service contractor to handle a “targeted” move in schedule.

How does a facility handle the electrical hook-up internally? How many electricians will be needed for a 300 booth show?

The electrical contractor will handle the hook ups and distribution. The hook ups should be 208 3-phase connectors. Depending on the show, it will take four electricians approximately two days to set up a 300 booth show.

How should a facility charge for the electrical hook ups? How much?

The facility should charge a usage fee of 20-25 percent of the outlet charge and the material charges. Be aware of the market in your area and what they charge. Typically this charge is made to the electrical company, who passes it on in their fees to exhibitors and show management.

Who is responsible for the cleaning of the halls during show days and tear-down?

Responsibility and accountability varies greatly in exclusive facilities. Sometimes the facility is responsible, but typically the service contractor is responsible for the hall both pre-show, and during show days. Post show, the contractor should return the facility to a clean position. Some hotel facilities say that if the hall is carpeted, the hotel will handle the cleaning to have control. If the exhibition is a food show or has heavy freight, it may require additional clauses in the agreement. If there are catered functions in the exhibit hall, typically the facility handles the clean up.

How should a facility handle the marshalling of trucks when there is no onsite parking?

The general service contractor handles the marshalling of trucks in a yard located off-site. They will work with the facility to get access to the building docks as needed. The rental of a marshalling yard is figured into the material handling cost charged to exhibitors.

How is trash handled?

As part of the negotiation, the facility typically provides dumpsters and usually figures in one free tipping fee. If the space for a compactor is a problem, you should determine a schedule that would least impact the activity of your clients, the building staff and local traffic. Costs may be increased by additional tipping fees or corrugated compactors. If it is handled by an outside cleaning contractor, they will bill it to the client.

How is security handled?

It depends on the location. Some locations have in-house security contractors that they use, while others allow outside firms which are usually locked in at night. No matter which type of security is used, show managers pay. If using an outside firm, use a reliable outside contractor and let your show manager provide a copy of the security schedule to the facility to interface with your own security staff.

What is the best way for the hotel to work with service contractors?

- Have monthly production meetings with contractors coming in.
- Have a clear set of guidelines and expectations for all general service contractors to follow.

- Set-up a meeting with ESCA member general service contractors.
- Determine win/win/win scenarios for the show organizer/the general contractor/the facility.

When two different shows are moving in simultaneously, but have two different contractors, how can a smooth set-up and tear-down be achieved?

- The two service contractors should meet to discuss details and challenges prior to the event. Each contractor should be assigned to a dock and work together regarding access to the other docks.

What does a facility need to understand about Fire Marshal restrictions?

The Fire Marshal has the final word about what is acceptable and what is not when it comes to:

- Aisle widths and exits
- Flammable items (that you might see at a food show)
- Use of flame and retardant materials
- Location of registration - typically it is in a pre-function space, but that area may be reserved as an emergency exit

How should freight be handled? Is it okay to keep it on property?

- Freight should be left exclusively to the contractor as facilities are not set up to properly handle freight. The reason facilities might end up handling freight is so that the exhibitor/guest can avoid material handling charges.
- As for post show storage, the answer is no. As a guest, one should be required to clear the floor just like the other exhibitors. Liability is assumed when receiving freight because additional space and manpower is required, as well as dollies, two-wheel carts, fork lifts, personnel, etc.

What is the best way to handle shipping from exhibitors? Could exhibitors' shipping be overwhelming for the facility's shipping and receiving department?

All shipping needs should go through the general service contractor. A good rule of thumb is anything that should be delivered to the exhibit hall should be handled by the service contractor. The facility/hotel should only receive items that are to be delivered to a guest's room.

What are some of the pitfalls a facility should be concerned about when working with service contractors?

It is important for the hotel and their general service contractor partners to work together to develop a clear and concise set of policies. A major pitfall is a hotel that does not fully recognize the extent of work associated with the time needed to accomplish that work. Hotels are known for double-booking space and forcing the contractors to absorb costs that were not anticipated (moving in after midnight as opposed to normal hours, floor plans that do not work, etc.). Double-booking occurs because there is a lack of understanding of the work required or simple miscommunications. Make sure everyone understands the rules of the hotel and ask your contractor for advice. Also, ensure that the service contractor is conscientious about damage to the building and safety issues.

What are the key attributes/experience a facility should look for when looking for a Hall Manager?

A facility should look for someone with strong skills in the following areas:

- Director of catering - must be successful in running a hotel's convention hall.
- Project manager - needs to be able to see the entire scope of work.

- Communication - must be able to communicate to other departments within the property.
- Customer driven - dedicated to helping all customers, this includes the contractor, exhibitors and show organizer.

What are the most important tools that the facility can provide to planners and show managers to make their jobs easier?

- Accurate floor plans, specs, room diagrams and utilities for each room
- Rules and regulations
- Adequate move-in and move-out times
- Excellent hospitality service
- Great food

A contact person must be empowered to take care of the client. Most importantly the facility needs to understand the clients' needs in advance of booking them.

Is additional insurance required to accept freight/packaging?

Yes, the facility should check with the insurance carrier plus liability disclaimer that are on the forms. It is important to have a dedicated employee and dedicated space to receive, store and ship packages and freight.

What should be done about groups that are looking to save money on shipping, but do not want to utilize a service contractor or freight company?

Handling freight is a core competency of a General Service Contractor. If a show manager removes the freight from the General Service Contractor's responsibility, they may save their exhibitors some money on the surface; However, General Service Contractors look at the overall "revenue pie." If the pie shrinks too much, the group themselves would probably have to make up the difference. Some contractors have established policies with hotel partners to receive exhibitor guest packages under 50 pounds for a small fee. All shipments weighing more than 50 pounds must go through the General Service Contractor.

Since the hall will be carpeted, how should the facility protect itself and hold the service contractor and exhibitors responsible for damages?

Just the movement of contractor equipment will place wear and tear on the carpet and it can slow the move-in/move-out process. Wood planking works best in protecting the carpet. Walk boards or surface shield (a visqueen type product that has a static charge and it clings to the carpet) for the "move in aisles" or heavy traffic or forklift aisles can also protect the carpet. Because so many people use the facility that it can be difficult to pinpoint who is responsible. Conduct a walk through inspection before and after the show. The easiest method for charging damages is to figure in maintenance and replacement into your prices.

Who should you be targeting with your surveys?

Do not survey attendees that DO attend your show ... Survey those that did not attend your show. Very few trade shows do this. Imagine the usable and valuable information you will gain by asking those non-attendees why they did not participate. Design and administer a 4-5 question survey and then e-blast it to a few hundred of those "non-attendees" in your database and learn the truth as to why they did not make it to your show this year. Follow up with changes, tune-up your database, show promotions and incentive programs from those responses.

How should you dress at an exhibition?

Dress To Create A Winning Image

Take a cue from your customer - you should be dressed the same or slightly better. The blue "power suit" may not always be appropriate, and trends indicate it is being replaced by more casual attire or even a company uniform.

In certain situations, a more relaxed dress code is in order, especially if most attendees are attired casually. You do not want to appear intimidating - as an army of starched-shirt salespeople - and scare-off potential customers looking to avoid a sales pitch. A casual appearance can make you much more approachable.

If you choose to create a uniform look for your booth staff, be specific. If you decide to use matching sweaters or colorful shirts imprinted with your company's logo, make sure you are also specific about the color and type of pants, skirts and shoes your staff must wear to complete the look. Give careful consideration to the colors and styles of clothing you use. Keeping in mind the makeup of the individuals who staff your booth - make the clothing age and sex appropriate. For example, choosing pants as part of your uniform could promote an attitude of equality between men and women staffers among your customers.

Casual attire is certainly not appropriate for every exhibition, but in the correct situation, you can use it to your benefit and have a more productive exhibition experience.

What is proper etiquette at an exhibition?

Etiquette mistakes can cost your company business, hurt its reputation, and result in the money and time you spent on your exhibit being wasted. Listed below are some tips on exhibitor etiquette for you to share with your booth personnel. By putting these tips into practice, you can help make the show a success, both for your company and for other exhibitors.

- **Stay out of other companies' booths.** Not only is your presence in your company's booth absolutely vital to serving your customers and potential customers, but you help set an example for others. Wandering into other booths disrupts exhibitors who are with clients. If you do this, you can expect others to do the same to you.
- **Stay out of your competitors' booths.** Even worse than wandering into "friendly territory" is going into competitors' booths to take information or to crowd out legitimate clients. This is unprofessional and reflects badly on your company and on you personally.
- **Do not solicit in the aisles (known as "suitcasing").** Exhibitions are designed to encourage a free flow of traffic through the aisles. And, they are designed to enable exhibitors to do business in their booths. Show management usually has rules against solicitation in the aisles, with good reason. Companies that choose not to pay for exhibit booths sometimes attempt to solicit in the aisles. They are taking advantage of the money your company spends to make the exhibition happen! They are, in effect, letting legitimate exhibitors pick up their show costs. Be sure to inform show management if you see this happening. Your company deserves to get what it pays for.
- **Do not disrupt other exhibitors or visitors.** Disruptions such as loud music or announcements, shining lights at other booths, using laser pointers across aisles and the like are annoying to others. Visitors to exhibits are there for business purposes, just like you. But if you engage in disruptive behaviors, visitors will perceive you and your company not as professionals in business, but as people to avoid. So you lose business and the respect of your peers and your customers.

It is just good business to use good etiquette when staffing your company's exhibit booth. You and your company can be highly successful, but you have to be careful not to break the rules of good exhibitor etiquette!

What do I need to know about going global?

Before The Show

- Develop multilingual literature. Don't forget the metric measurements.
- Convert electrical devices (video, VCR, TV) to local standards.

- Contact local trade associations and business groups.
- Work with your local government, trade officials, CVB's.
- Send press release to business and consumer press (include photos).
- Schedule one-on-one appointments.
- Send invitations and announcements of the show to clients.
- Plan a reception for clients.
- Ship show samples, remembering customs declarations, FDA Guidelines, etc., far in advance.
- Advertise in show mailings.

At The Show

- Bring or hire a translator.
- Arrange interviews.
- Put press releases in press area.
- Arrange to sell your show samples, if appropriate.
- Get trade show directories and lists of participants/attendees.
- Get your company listed on databases and in directories.
- Check on-line database services for leads and contacts.
- Collect competitor's information.
- Log all sales contacts.
- After the show, stay an extra day or two to visit potential customers.

Back Home: Follow-up

- Analyze collected information.
- Focus on strengths of competitors and oversights.
- Call the media to give interviews on show experience.
- Send follow-up letters; call all sales leads..
- Send samples, point of purchase materials, etc.
- Send courtesy letters to all non-sales contacts.
- Plan follow-up actions, ads, contacts, additional show, etc.