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Floor Plan Development



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ABOUT THE CEM LEARNING PROGRAM

This workbook is intended to serve as the student's guide for the CEM Learning Program on Floor Plan Development. It is based upon the Curriculum Blueprint approved by the CEM Commission and much of the content is based on Chapter 15 of *The Art of the Show, 5th Edition* (AOS). While the AOS is not an obligatory CEM Learning Program textbook, it is an additional resource and optional reference for this and other CEM Learning Program courses.

The CEM Learning Program is not a basic introductory course of study. It is designed for adult learners who have accrued at least three years of full-time work experience in the exhibitions and events industry. Its goal is to provide students with enhanced knowledge, skills and insights derived from their interactions with peers who are also learners, from CEM faculty who serve as subject matter experts, and from the readings and exercises that are assigned.

CEM Learning Program courses are available for in-person, virtual and on-demand classes. The content and final exams for each course are the same for all learning options. In-person and virtual students are expected to read the CEM workbook prior to class. Students taking a CEM on-demand course will read the workbook throughout the length of the course. Students will be tested on the knowledge they acquire from this course. It is important to understand that the information provided in this workbook may differ from the practices and experiences of each student.

The examination is made up of 40 multiple-choice and true/false questions. To pass the examination, a student must achieve a score of at least 30 out of 40. CEM faculty do not have access to the CEM exams, nor are they aware of any questions that may appear on each examination. Exam questions are based only on information contained in this course workbook (Appendix is not included).

Throughout this workbook, the terms "exhibition manager" and "show organizer" are used interchangeably. Their meanings are the same - the individual who is responsible for overseeing the planning, management and execution of an exhibition.

Since general business fundamentals apply to multiple aspects of exhibition management, core concepts relevant to more than one course topic may appear in several learning courses. Students with little or no foundation in marketing and finance are encouraged to take the Event Marketing and/or Finance, Budgeting and Contracts courses early in their CEM Learning Program studies.

Key terms are identified in this module by bold face type and accompanied by a definition. Those noted with an asterisk (*) are from the *Events Industry Glossary* developed by the Events Industry Council (<https://insights.eventscouncil.org/Industry-glossary>).

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this course, the student should be able to:

- Define elements of a successful floor plan
- Analyze an exhibition's target market and industry segment to develop a floor plan that meets both exhibitor and attendee needs
- Identify factors that impact traffic flow on a floor plan to accommodate all populations of attendees
- Identify the most common booths/stands used in a typical floor plan
- Gain an understanding of safety protocols and procedures as they relate to floor plan development
- Create a floor plan that incorporates the unique features of a venue or facility
- Understand and evaluate technology options and tools to maximize, traffic flow, sales, and sponsorships
- Identify various space assignment systems and how they affect the design of a floor plan
- Analyze and evaluate past and current floor plans to identify sources of improvement and enhancements to future floor plans



INTRODUCTION

A well-designed **floor plan**, or layout, is critical to the success of an exhibition or event. The floor plan is a schematic drawing of the exhibit hall or event venue that includes the **booths/stands** available for rent to the exhibitors, facility physical features, official areas such as registration, and other feature areas that become the exhibition marketplace.

In a rapidly changing business environment, a floor plan must meet the logistical needs of exhibitors and sponsors, and the shopping and learning habits of **attendees**, with enough flexibility to adjust for growth or consolidation.

The layout of the floor plan can facilitate the efficiency with which exhibit booths/stands are set up and dismantled. Providing attendees with convenient access not only to the booths/stands themselves, but also to restrooms, lounges, and food and beverage facilities, is an important function of the space. The floor plan is created months or years before the event and must also provide the potential to expand or contract space according to economic circumstances during exhibit space sales. The floor plan is a primary selling tool for show management.

During this course, students will learn how to create a floor plan that will facilitate and encourage engagement among exhibitors, sponsors, and attendees throughout the exhibition. Because the physical characteristics of each venue are unique, a properly designed floor plan considers both the requirements of its key stakeholders and the distinctive structure of the venue itself.

There are several ways in which the best design of the exhibition can be determined, including conducting surveys, taking various measurements, and conducting traffic studies that reveal how attendees typically move through the exhibit hall.

Thanks to advanced technologies, traffic studies, based upon electronic attendee tracking and overhead videography, can reveal new insights into the different ways that people negotiate their way through exhibit halls.

MEASURING THE METRICS OF EXHIBIT SPACE

Not all nations use a common system of measurement. The U.S. system of measurement is called the **U.S. customary or standard system**. Based on the former British **imperial system**, length is measured in inches, feet, yards, and miles. As of January 2023, only the U.S., Liberia and Myanmar use this system, while all other countries in the world have adopted the **International System of Units (SI)**, also known as the **metric system**, as their official system of weights and measures.

For the purpose of this module, and recognizing that other countries use the metric system in calculating space for exhibitions, the conversion of feet to **meters** will be as follows:

To convert from feet to meters: Divide the number of feet by 3.2808

To convert from meters to feet: Multiply the number of meters by 3.2808

In the United States, exhibit space is based upon units that measure 10 feet x 10 feet (3 meters x 3 meters) and is referred to as one booth space. In most other nations, booth space is referred to as an exhibit stand. The total space of a 10 feet x 10 feet exhibit booth is 100 net square feet (NSF), the



industry standard conversion for the total space of an exhibit stand is roughly 9 net square meters (NSM). **NSF/NSM** indicate **Net Square Feet/Meters**, the actual amount of saleable space used by exhibition booths/stands.

To convert NSF to NSM: Multiply NSF by 0.0929

To convert NSM to NSF: Divide NSF by 0.0929

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is U.S. legislation that requires places of public accommodation to meet minimum standards to make their facilities accessible to individuals with disabilities. This includes buildings such as offices, hotels, convention centers, and restaurants.

While other countries may not have similar regulations, the ADA has served as a model for other nations, many of whom have adopted similar legislative requirements. Regardless of their home country, organizers who implement meetings, events, and exhibitions in the U.S. should be aware of ADA requirements and comply accordingly.

Developing a floor plan to adequately accommodate attendees who may have mobility, sight, hearing, or other challenges affecting their ability to participate as fully as possible in all aspects of an exhibition requires planning and forethought.

The ADA provides important requirements defining how planners and others can make their events accessible to the broadest and most diverse audiences possible. Meeting and event managers must comply in all respects with the provisions of the ADA while also viewing the act as an opportunity to extend the reach of their events to all audiences.



MAKING A FLOOR PLAN WORK

A successful floor plan design considers the needs of all key stakeholders and the venue's unique features. From initial design to the event production, the floor plan provides a road map for connecting exhibitors, sponsors, and attendees in a temporary marketplace. Determining whether a floor plan meets the exhibition organizer's goals may require surveys, various types of measurement, traffic studies (evaluation of how attendees move throughout the exhibit hall), and other analyses.

ATTENDEE, EXHIBITOR, AND INDUSTRY CONSIDERATIONS

A successful event reflects the current understanding of the industry, the attendee, exhibitors, sponsors, and other users of the space, such as presenters. The exhibition organizer needs to know not only how exhibitors showcase their products and services, but how much time attendees will have to spend on the exhibition floor, given their other time spent at educational programs, outside activities or other event functions.

ISSUES INFLUENCING FLOOR PLAN DESIGN

An exhibition is created to meet the needs of industries, industry segments, or special interest groups. Rapidly changing social and business trends, the introduction of new products and services, and changes within an industry all influence how floor plans should be designed. Some issues and trends that have altered floor plans in many industries include:

- Mergers and consolidations among exhibiting companies
- Introduction of new products or services into a marketplace
- Maturation, penetration, or saturation of existing markets
- Policies that discourage or prohibit government agencies or employees from participating in conferences and exhibitions
- Acts of terrorism and other safety/security issues

The mix of exhibitors also impacts the overall design of an exhibition. A **horizontal exhibition** is large in scope and includes many aspects of one industry. A large horizontal exhibition may need to be sold by designated product zones (an area focusing on selected products or services) to minimize attendee frustration while searching through aisles for comparison shopping.

A **vertical exhibition** limits participation to a targeted segment of the industry.

As training and learning methodologies change, exhibitions are incorporating learning areas into the show floor, both to offer expanded programs and to enhance show traffic. There also are many types of hybrid events, for example, exhibitions that add a consumer element to a traditional trade event.

Demographics drive changes in the design of exhibitions, such as the incorporation of social media activities, gamification, attendee matchmaking, and appointment-driven or hosted-buyer audiences.

An in-depth understanding of all stakeholders and the industries or interests they represent will assist in the design of a flexible, contemporary, and user-friendly floor plan.



SELECTING A VENUE

REASONS A VENUE MIGHT BE CHOSEN

A facility may be chosen for many reasons, including a geographic rotation required by an organization, availability, cost structure, potential attendee draw, local base of potential attendees, size of space and/or hotel block needed, modes of transportation available, and general accessibility and meeting room requirements.

An event may be booked in a facility that draws quality attendees and meets other needs but poses logistical challenges for an exhibition of its profile. It is important to identify all the features unique to the facility that will minimize any challenges.

When the floor plan is complete and sent to exhibitors, it is important that the final plan includes facility information such as location of entrances and utilities, for the exhibitor to make an informed booth/stand selection that meets the unique needs of the company.

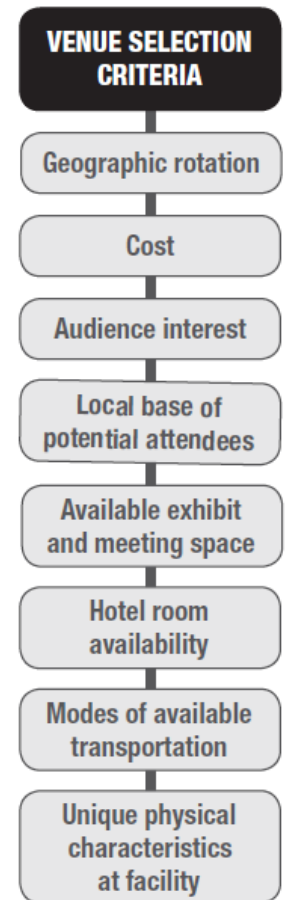
If the exhibition moves to a different venue and/or city for each occurrence, it will be necessary to determine what aspects of the plan need to be adjusted to meet the changes dictated by the facility.

SITE INSPECTION

A crucial first step in creating a floor plan is the **site inspection**, where the exhibition organizer learns firsthand how the architecture of the building and other factors, such as its proximity to housing and parking, can be used to create the best possible floor plan.

There are many factors that a show organizer should address during a site inspection. Knowing this information will influence how the floor plan should be created. This information includes:

- What are the gross square feet/meters of the exhibit hall and/or areas that will be utilized for exhibits?
- What are the best entry points for the facility, exhibit hall, and/or meeting space?
- What is the location of registration area(s) and information kiosks for maximum efficiency and proximity to exhibit floor and conference rooms?
- What is the location of the loading dock(s)?
- Is the freight entry through the freight doors or freight elevators? What are the dimensions?
- Are columns present in the exhibit hall or meeting spaces and if so, where are they? What are the dimensions?
- What are the minimum requirements for aisle width?
- What other events are sharing the facility?
- Are renovations planned? What changes to public areas need to be investigated and noted?
- Who are the exclusive/preferred service contractors? Are there any changes anticipated that might impact the event?



- Are there variations in ceiling height? What is the effect on hanging signs in island and peninsula booths/stands?
- Are there variations in lighting levels, particularly under areas with lower ceilings or overhangs? Is supplemental lighting required?
- What are the locations of fire hose cabinets, fire alarms, and fire extinguishers?
- Can the entire space be utilized to accommodate the needed booths/stands, including the space in front of the freight doors? If so, a move-in, move-out system will need to be established for the **LIFO** (last-in, first-out) exhibit booths/stands and they need to be specifically designated on the floor plan.
- Where are the utilities located?

The site inspection should be conducted with the **official service contractor (OSC)** and the facility event manager. Exhibition organizers and OSCs tend to view a site from differing perspectives based on their different needs and biases. A joint inspection helps to identify any variances, clarify points of confusion, and identify areas of mutual concern regarding the site.

All representatives of operations likely to affect one or more elements of the event should participate in the site inspection(s), including:

- Show management's registration, housing, audiovisual or production teams
- Telecommunications, including Internet
- Food and beverage partners
- Parking experts
- Meeting planners and education planners
- Exhibit space sales professionals
- **Bellwether** exhibitors (a company that regularly exhibits in a trade show and is expected to be a repeat exhibitor)
- Utilities providers such as air, water, drains, and electricity

The OSC can also provide an initial **maximum floor plan**, also referred to as a maxed-out floor plan, a standard exhibit space plan demonstrating the maximum number of booths/stands available for sale. Most exhibition organizers start the floor plan design for a new location using a maxed-out plan or adapting the configurations from a recent exhibition floor plan to the new space.

Facility event managers are familiar with the facility and know what can and cannot be done based on building rules, requirements, guidelines, safety concerns, fire codes, and electrical codes.

Exhibit halls and built-in components, such as doors, utility ports, ventilation systems, service corridors, emergency exits, fire cabinets and alarm systems, columns, and other non-movable structural elements, are called **permanent fixtures**. In floor plan design, permanent fixtures are features of the facility that cannot be altered and need to be considered when developing the floor plan.

When designing the layout, flexibility will be key. The following **temporary fixtures** should be taken into consideration and incorporated into the floor plan design:

- Basic booth/stand configurations (e.g., standard booth/stand locations vs. island booth/stand or raw space for stand locations)
- Aisles (main aisles and **cross aisles** which allow attendees to move freely through the show)



floor)

- Lounges
- Food service areas
- Special presentation areas
- Any other elements included in the plan over which the exhibition manager has direct control over design



ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL FLOOR PLAN

The successful floor plan is built on a series of several careful steps that must be executed well before the exhibition's opening. The exhibition organizer reviews existing, or historical, plans as one of the first steps in developing a new one. As the plan comes together, the flow of traffic will be visualized, making the flow effective and efficient, meeting the needs of the attendees and exhibitors. The number, size and shape of exhibits must be considered, and decisions made at this time will influence how the exhibit space is marketed.

The floor plan will also dictate a numbering system for exhibit space, which is a critical factor for large exhibitions. The size, shape, and placement of aisles must be planned, as these decisions will impact traffic flow, exhibit placement, and the number of available exhibit spaces. If the program calls for unique features and/or presentation areas, these must be incorporated as the floor plan is developed.

Entrances and exits must be carefully considered and clearly marked on the floor plan based on the placement of aisles and the direction of traffic flow. Other critical elements include safety issues for all participants, security for exhibitors, and the contents of exhibits, as well as other areas on the floor.

The location of entrances and exits are key drivers to the traffic patterns and the designation of prime space. Clearly identify entrances on the floor plan used in the exhibitor prospectus, online plan, and in other selling tools. At the exhibition site, identify entrances with customized combinations of directional signs, banners, and other entrance treatments such as digital information kiosks, billboards, and signs. For safety and traffic purposes, exits should be easily located with illuminated exit signs.

FOCUS ON AESTHETIC AND VISUAL APPEAL

Aesthetic and visual appeal rely on more than graphics and décor. A floor plan should make attendees feel comfortable while they are moving through the exhibition, without having to dodge obstacles or take circuitous routes around large exhibits or other focal points. Designing a floor plan often involves working with a one-dimensional drawing on a desk or screen. Designing functional and attractive flow requires envisioning how the areas will be viewed when the attendee walks around.

The organizer should consider the following components in the design:

- Entrances should invite attendees to explore the marketplace
- Pedestrian traffic should flow logically to all spaces, there should be no impediments
- Sponsorship elements and décor should complement, rather than impede, traffic flow

Strategic placement of exhibitors will enhance the exhibition's visual appeal. The placement of various sizes and types of displays must be carefully controlled, even with a priority placement program. Most exhibitions will have exhibits of varying size. Close attention must be given to **booth/stand size** and placement and how exhibitors typically decorate within their booth/stand spaces.

REVIEW OF EXISTING PLANS

The exhibition organizer could become complacent about an existing plan, particularly if it seems to be working, or if the event or exhibition stays in the same facility year after year. But, a plan may no longer meet the needs of changing audiences or emerging industry trends that affect exhibitors. An industry



undergoing change through consolidations or new product rollouts needs a fresh approach.

There are several methods that help to determine the viability of an existing plan – they include walking the show floor and public areas, getting an overhead view, surveying exhibitors and attendees, and conducting a SWOT analysis.

WALK THE SHOW FLOOR

The show organizer should take the time to walk the exhibition floor once the exhibition is open and make note of areas with slow traffic, crowded areas, or any **line-of-sight** challenges. *IAEE's Guidelines for Display Rules and Regulations* identify two different styles of show display regulations with the first being line-of-sight rules. The line-of-sight rule provides restrictions on certain areas of booths/stands to allow attendees to view neighboring booths/stands in their line of sight as they walk the floor.

The line-of-sight rule does not apply to exhibitions that sell space by **cubic content**, which is the second style of show display regulations in *IAEE's Guidelines for Display Rules and Regulations*. Cubic content is more frequent outside the U.S. Cubic content is a unit of measurement allowing display materials and products to occupy 100 percent of the exhibit space purchased, regardless of sight lines, up to a height established by the exhibition's rules.

The exhibition organizer should communicate frequently with exhibitors to obtain feedback and look at how the exhibitors use their space and the impact on traffic patterns. They should analyze the effectiveness of entrance treatments, registration, signage, and other areas that drive or distract traffic patterns. This information is recorded for review when the next exhibition is in planning stages and a floor plan is developed.

GET AN OVERHEAD VIEW

Take advantage of the view from overhead show office windows or catwalks above the exhibition floor to observe how traffic flows from the entrance to the exits. These are some questions to consider:

- How do attendees turn or move forward when they enter the hall?
- Do they stop in the booths/stands in the front or move towards other features?
- Are they heading straight to food-service areas and then proceed to walk the floor, or do they proceed along an aisle and return to food service later in the show?
- Are areas of the floor avoided by attendees? What defines these unpopular areas?
- Are visual obstructions present?
- Does directional signage guide the attendee? What improvements are needed to make signage more effective?

SURVEY EXHIBITORS AND ATTENDEES

The exhibition organizer should gather information about the types of products or services attendees are seeking, as well as information about whether they are there to research or to purchase, the length of stay, and other goals. Survey exhibitors about their exhibition successes and challenges, future plans, competition, and ROI objectives and evaluations.





CONDUCT A SWOT ANALYSIS

The SWOT acronym stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This easily completed process helps to guide the exhibition organizer when taking a fresh look at the total exhibition layout. It is important to conduct such an analysis during and after every event to ensure that the show is positioned to meet the needs of the business sector, the exhibitors, and the attendees.

A guide for conducting a SWOT analysis of current, previous, and future floor plan designs follows:

Strengths: Identify the strengths of the floor plan and include points on how each might be made even more effective and efficient.

Example:

- Current floor plan allows for good traffic flow through the entire exhibit hall.
- Based on observations, reconfiguring or moving some booths/stands that have a high draw of attendees could promote traffic to other areas of the show floor.

Weaknesses: List the weaknesses and identify ways to improve each situation. Weaknesses may not be obvious or noticeable on a drawing, but they become obvious when the exhibition occurs, for example, traffic bottlenecks, visual barriers, etc.

Example:

- **Weaknesses:** The current floor plan has some aisles with islands toward the back that utilize the full cubic content, blocking booths/stands behind them and traffic does not flow beyond them to the end of those aisles.
- **Resolution:** Ask for renderings of exhibitors' proposed booths/stands to ensure that an exhibit utilizing full cubic content is not placed among linear booth/stands, which may appear to attendees to be the end of an aisle.

Opportunities: List the issues that may create beneficial outcomes.

Example:

- **Opportunity:** The facility has expansion plans that will increase the amount of space the organization can utilize and may provide the opportunity to increase the amount of salable exhibit space.
- **Resolution:** DMO will advertise to key markets based upon facility's expansion.

Threats: Note issues that may create new challenges to show management, the event, or participants.

Example:

- **Threat:** If construction is delayed for any reason, the space will not be available when the show is held.
- **Resolution:** If construction does not occur according to the current timeline, construction





could disrupt the event and a backup plan may need to be implemented.

TRAFFIC FLOW PATTERNS

Traffic flow refers to the way people move from place to place within a defined area. Traffic flow is influenced by several factors and should always be considered in the planning of the show floor design.

The following factors should be considered:

- Number, type, and size of exhibits
- Exhibit layouts and activity within the booths/stands
- Number of attendees
- Exhibit hours and competing events
- Shopping preferences of attendees
- Number and width of main and cross aisles
- Activity within exhibit spaces that stops, attracts, or diverts traffic, such as, demonstrations, learning areas, **activations**, or features
- Location of food service areas
- Placement and number of entrances and exits (**ingress** and **egress** points)
- Location of registration, meeting rooms, and other key areas
- Location of directional signs, barricades, product locators, booth numbers, and aisle signs

NUMBER, SIZE AND SHAPE OF EXHIBIT SPACES

Fundamental to floor plan development is the **gross square feet/meters (gsf/gsm)** available in the selected exhibit space and the net square feet/meters (nsf/nsm) needed for salable booths/stands (after aisles and other features and space uses are subtracted from the gross square feet/meters).

The *IAEE Guidelines for Display Rules and Regulations (2019)* have been established by the International Association of Exhibitions and Events® (IAEE) to assist in promoting continuity and consistency among North American exhibitions and events. This revised 2019 edition is offered as a resource for exhibition and event organizers to use in creating consistent and fair exhibiting standards for their events.

The *IAEE Guidelines for Display Rules and Regulations (2019)* define five booth/stand types and configurations that are used for most exhibitions and events. They are **linear**, **perimeter**, **end-cap**, **peninsula** and **island**.

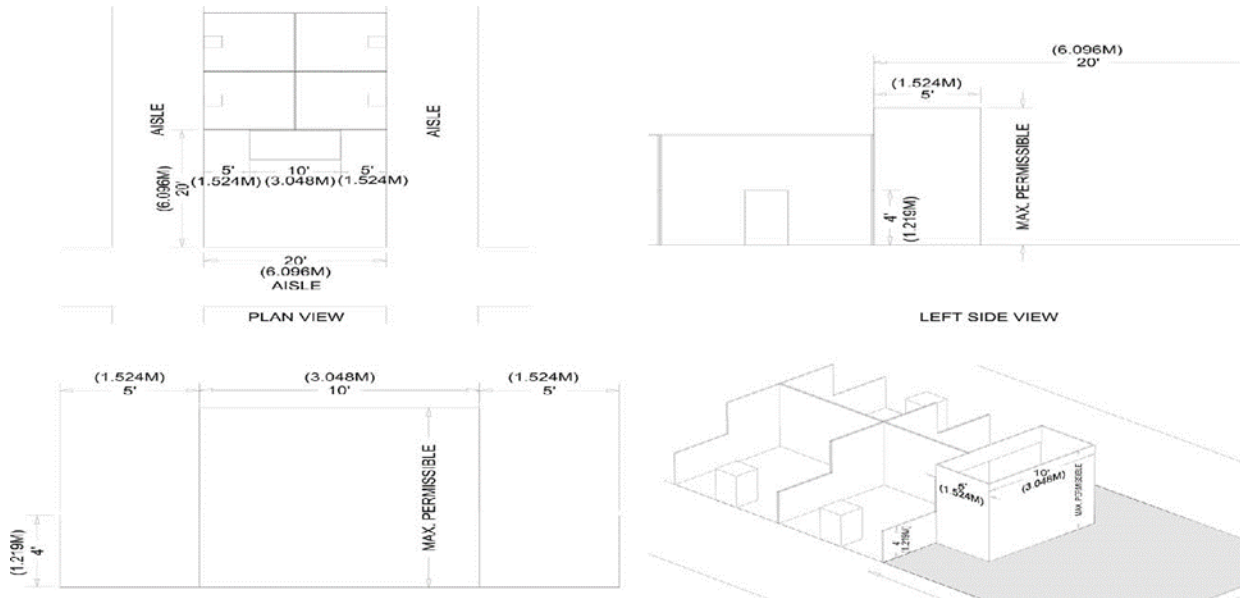
For the most part, the configurations defined in the *IAEE Guidelines for Display Rules and Regulations (2019)* apply to exhibit space in U.S. exhibitions and events. Most exhibitions offer floor plans that include a combination of exhibit space layouts.

U.S. MODEL

Most exhibition floor plans in the United States are based on a 10-foot x 10-foot (3 meters x 3 meters) booth/stand grid. A typical floor plan in a convention center would have rows of 10 feet x 10 feet (3 meters x 3 meters) booths/stands on either side of a 10-foot (3 meter) aisle. One reason for the 10 feet x 10 feet (3 meters x 3 meters) grid is the placement of utility ports. Utilities accessed through floor ports are often placed on 30 feet/9 meters centers, which means utility ports would be located on the backwall line, rather than in the center of a booth/stand or aisle, assuming that the aisle is also 10 feet/3 meters wide. Ideally, columns are also placed within the grid or exhibition hall footprint.



Exhibit booths/stands in a U.S.-based exhibition traditionally are laid out as standard (or linear) booths/stands, peninsula, and island (or bulk) spaces, as illustrated below:



Booths/stands can also be based on a grid that is 8 feet/2 meters deep and 10 feet/3 meters wide. This configuration is sometimes used in smaller areas such as hotel ballrooms to maximize the space, particularly if utility placement is not an issue, and aisles can be approved at 8 feet or 9 feet. However, the 10-foot width is standard to accommodate pre-fabricated booth/stand structures. Contractor equipment is also fabricated to work within these standard booth/stand grids.

Booths/stands laid out in 10-foot x 10-foot (3 meters x 3 meters) configurations are considered standard or linear booths/stands. Linear booths/stands have an aisle on one side (the front of the booth/stand), except for corner booths/stands, which have aisles on two sides. Note that 8-foot x 10-foot booths/stands are sometimes used in smaller spaces or to gain additional booths/stands – 8 feet is the depth of the booths/stands, maintaining the 10-foot width to accommodate existing booth/stand properties.

Selling and configuring a minimum of four spaces together for one exhibit, with aisles on all four sides, make island booths/stands. Islands can have one or more levels of display, depending upon the exhibition rules and the building regulations for two-story, or multi-storied, booths/stands. If island booths/stands are created within a linear layout (such as in a 20-foot x 20-foot or 20-foot x 30-foot), the amount of saleable space decreases, as more cross aisles are created. However, if island booths/stands are created by selling across existing aisles (conforming to fire regulations for the building), they can add to the amount of saleable space.

Peninsula booths/stands should be a minimum of 20 feet x 20 feet (or 16 feet x 20 feet if booths/stands are 8 feet x 10 feet), with aisles on three sides.

Occasionally, an exhibition organizer will permit a 10-foot x 20-foot configuration to be sold as a peninsula. This is called an end cap. Generally, it is not advisable to sell booths/stands in this





configuration because enforcing the line-of-site rules makes it difficult with this setup.

INTERNATIONAL MODEL

International exhibition booths are laid out in meters and often use hard wall, or shell scheme booth walls that may be permanently installed in exhibition halls or installed following individual client configurations. In the U.S. it is very common to use pipe and drape. Pipe and drape is made up of four basic components: bases, uprights, drape supports, and drape. All of these components, when put together, is what is known collectively as “pipe and drape.” It is the fastest and most economical way to divide, define or decorate a space. It is ultra-versatile and configurable, easy to set up, no tools required.

The hard wall booths of international exhibitions typically have side walls the same height as back walls (without line-of-site rules) and may be sold to include cubic content. The standard unit is 3 meters wide x 3 meters deep (or 9 square meters).

These booth configurations may be sold with standard packages of furnishings or fixtures or may be customized by the exhibitors.

LINEAR BOOTH/STAND

A linear booth/stand is generally arranged in a straight line and has neighboring exhibitors on their immediate right and left, leaving only one side exposed to the aisle. This configuration also is called an **inline booth/stand** (an exhibit space with exhibit booths/stands on either side and back) or a **corner booth/stand** (a linear booth/stand at the end of a series of inline booths/stands with exposure to intersecting aisles on two sides). Inline booths/stands can be made up of one or multiple units, so while they are generally 10 feet or 3 meters deep, they can be combined to create a booth/stand of almost any length.

PERIMETER BOOTH/STAND

A perimeter booth/stand is a linear booth/stand that backs to an outside wall of the exhibit hall rather than to another exhibit. All dimension guidelines for linear booths/stands apply to perimeter booths/stands. Linear and perimeter booths/stands in the United States and Canada are most commonly “units” made up of space that is 10 feet wide and 10 feet deep, with a maximum back wall height of 8 feet (linear booths/stands) or 12 feet (perimeters). Outside of the United States and Canada, the basic “unit” for inline stands is 3 meters wide and 3 meters deep. There generally is not a height limitation placed on space outside of the United States.

Booth/stand depth can vary to accommodate a need for additional space and therefore inline booths/stands that are 9 feet or 8 feet deep by 10 feet wide may be utilized in the United States and Canada or in other meter multiples outside of the United States and Canada. These configurations are sometimes in smaller exhibit areas such as hotel ballrooms to maximize space, particularly if utility placement is not an issue and aisles that are only 8 or 9 feet are approved by the facility and fire and safety authorities to further maximize available space.

END-CAP BOOTH/STAND

An end-cap booth/stand is a linear booth/stand that is exposed to aisles on three sides and is composed of two booths. In the United States and Canada, end-cap booths/stands are generally 10 feet deep by 20 feet wide. The maximum back wall height of eight feet is allowed only in the rear half of the booth/stand space and within 5 feet of the two side aisles with a 4-foot height restriction imposed on all materials in the remaining space forward to the aisle.





Stand configurations outside of the United States and Canada commonly will back stand units up to one another without the sightline restrictions used in the United States and Canada. Again, stand sizes outside of the United States for end-caps would be in meter increments.

PENINSULA BOOTH/STAND

A peninsula booth/stand is exposed to aisles on three sides and is composed of a minimum of four booths/stands.

ISLAND BOOTH/STAND

An **island booth/stand** (referred to as raw space outside of the United States and Canada) is any size booth/stand that is exposed to an aisle on all four sides. Island space is typically 20 feet x 20 feet or larger although it may be configured differently. The entire cubic content of the space may be used up to the maximum allowable height, which is usually 16 feet, including signage. Outside of the United States, the stand designed with raw space may be in various configurations based on meter increments.

Island booth/stand spaces are created by grouping single units into standardized blocks; for instance, (4) 10-ft x 10-ft booths make a 20-ft x 20-ft island; (9) 10-ft x 10-ft booths in a square would create a 30-ft x 30-ft island. Island booths may have more than one display level, depending on the show rules. When adding island booths to a floor plan, they often will require the elimination of adjacent booths to create cross aisles. This is an important consideration when designing a floor plan that must maximize the overall gross square feet available.

Since shows outside the U.S. are sold based on the 3 meter x 3 meter increments, converting into islands is not as exact. This is an issue for groups who rely on custom built or U.S. pop up booths that were designed based on the 10-ft x 10ft model. The impact is an issue for U.S. companies who exhibit outside the U.S. more so that exhibitors who are actually coming in the U.S.

CUBIC CONTENT

According to the *IAEE White Paper: Evaluating and Implementing Cubic Content into Linear Exhibit Space (2011)*, cubic content, as it pertains to exhibition booths, is a unit of measurement allowing display materials and products to occupy 100 percent of the exhibit space purchased, regardless of sightlines, up to a height established by the exhibition's rules (usually 16 feet/5 meters in the U.S.). This white paper can be found in the IAEE Member Dashboard available to both members and non-members at <https://members.iaee.com/>.

Cubic content for linear booths/stands in the U.S. is not as popular as it is in other countries, but more and more U.S. organizers are finding it necessary to allow cubic content in linear booths/stands for the sake of attracting and accommodating international exhibitors. Many U.S. exhibitions have government-sponsored international pavilions that typically are island spaces, back-to-back booths/stands or booths/stands facing each other with an aisle in between. Depending on the type of space, these pavilions often are allowed to utilize full cubic content in the United States.

The primary reasons for allowing cubic content for linear booths/stands includes the perceived value to exhibitors of providing more value for their money, and permitting its use provides consistency for international exhibitors from around the world.

However, exhibition organizers may not like the reduced sightlines, and it may create a disadvantage for





small exhibitors that depend on a fair sightline of their booth/stand.

FLOOR PLAN NUMBERING

The goal of assigning booth/stand numbers is to devise a system that is logical, intuitive, and easy to follow. Attendees should be able to locate a booth/stand with minimal effort and few aids since booth/stand numbers are not always visible once carpet and booth/stand displays are installed. Convention center exhibitions generally will have aisle signs or booth/stand signs displaying the booth/stand number, while those in a hotel or other facility may depend more on floor-based graphics.

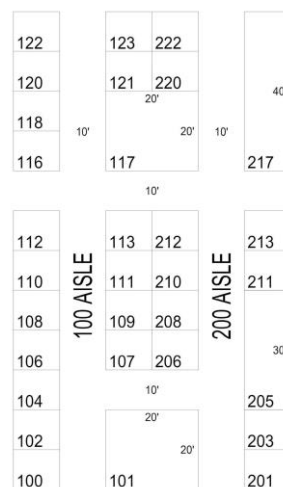
Several numbering methods are used in floor plan designs. The most common is **street-style numbering**, like buildings on a city street, with even numbers on one side of the aisle and odd numbers on the other (see figure).

Sequential numbering occasionally is used for smaller events in hotel ballrooms where booths/stands may be placed and numbered consecutively around the perimeter wall. It also may be used in a particularly long convention center aisle to avoid using four-digit booth/stand numbers. For example, the 100 series would fall on the left side of the aisle and the 200 series on the right.

A small floor plan may infrequently use **serpentine numbering**, with numbers winding up one aisle and back down the next, rather than starting a new sequence in the front of each aisle.

Following are some general tips about numbering:

- Skip numbers in the sequence when numbering across a cross aisle or other open areas that could be used for exhibits. This allows for reconfiguration of the plan without creating odd numbers, for example 103a.
- Use the lowest number in the booth/stand grouping when reconfiguring an island or peninsula, which will give numerical consistency.
- When island and peninsula spaces are included in the original plan, reserve the remaining numbers associated with the individual booths/stands that make up the island. If the island or peninsula exhibitor cancels, the booth/stand can be broken down, renumbered, and sold as linear booths/stands.



Example of street-style numbering



AISLE/GANGWAY SIZES

Aisles are also known as gangways outside of the U.S./Canada. Aisle widths vary depending upon the applicable fire codes, the facility, and the exhibition needs, but typically are 8 feet to 10 feet wide in the U.S. and 2.5 meters to 3 meters outside the U.S. and Canada. Other factors that impact aisle width include anticipated attendance, special activities, move-in and move-out logistics, and aesthetics.

Local ordinances, fire codes, and facility rules also set standards for total number of aisles, determine the length and width of cross aisles (aisles perpendicular to main aisles) and the placement of aisles in conjunction with exits, and determine the **no-freight aisles**. No-freight aisles must be kept clear even during move-in and move-out for access during emergencies, for delivery of freight, and removal of empty containers, and for other safety reasons.

Wider or additional aisles may be required depending on the volume and type of exhibit materials and freight, the exhibition schedule, and the type of equipment used in the set-up, such as forklifts, boom or scissor lifts, or cranes.

Other factors impacting aisle sizes may include:

- Amount of overall net space needed
- Maximum estimated number of attendees
- Special activities that may take place during the show
- Aesthetics of the show
- Location of floor-based utilities and columns
- Other logistical requirements of the show

An approved layout is essential before beginning to sell booth/stand space. Any major reconfigurations impacting aisles require re-approval by the fire inspector or **fire marshal** and facility. The parties responsible for safety approvals will vary by country and venue.



FEATURE AND PRESENTATION AREAS





Feature areas draw traffic and maximize the time attendees spend on the exhibition floor, but it is important to note, that they can be distracting and pull attendees away from the business being conducted by exhibitors. Be sure to create a balance.

Strategic placement of feature areas can draw traffic to traditionally slow traffic areas. The availability of food and beverages can keep attendees from leaving the exhibition for meals or refreshments and can be sponsored or for purchase.

Prize drawings and new products can draw interest to an exhibit. However, noise and other activities should not interfere with the business environment of the exhibition.

The floor plan may include elements featured within the exhibition. The requirements to showcase the industry's products and services should be given consideration such as in a heavy equipment show, where the need for many island booths/stands will be required, versus a small event where most exhibitors may utilize only linear booths/stands.

An exhibition also may include other features including, but not limited to, the following:

- **Registration** – Will it be located on the show floor or elsewhere? Placing it on the exhibition floor may be a good idea if there is enough room and registration is open during exhibition hours. Doing so can help draw traffic to the show floor, create excitement for attendees coming into the hall to register and provide a convenient entry to the exhibition. Noise and temperature concerns should be considered if registration will be open during the show's move-in or move-out and it is located within the hall.
- **Show management or association exhibit** – Where will it be located? How large does it need to be? What about bookstores, gift shops or other elements? Will these be on the floor, in the registration area or somewhere else? Is this area a traffic draw that can be placed in an area of the floor that needs traffic?
- **Poster sessions, table clinics, or scientific exhibits** – These are traffic builders for medical and scientific events, especially. Where will these be located?
- **New product showcases** – Will these be on or off the show floor, placed to draw traffic, etc.?
- **Demonstration (live or static) areas or hands-on demonstration areas** – Where will these be located, and will there be a noise factor?
- **Education theaters** – Typically located within the exhibit hall, these offer exhibitors the opportunity to showcase products and services beyond the booth/stand. Consider potential noise issues when placing demonstration and theater areas.
- **Exits to meeting rooms and general sessions** – Showing these on floor plan, if in addition to the main entrances, creates more desirable booth/stand locations.
- **Restaurant areas** – Will they be in existing locations, portables, or a combination of both? The location on the show floor needs to be coordinated with the building's official caterer before the floor plan is laid out. If food and beverage areas are present, space for tables and chairs should also be included in a floor plan design.
- **Lounges** – If adequate space is available, lounges should be planned in the early stages rather than adding them later.
- **Special interest and/or international pavilions** – How should these be designated and decorated so they stand out?



- 
- **Other areas** – These might include competitions, job placement services, health screenings, massage stations, and restrooms.

All these elements and perhaps others need to be taken into consideration before the floor plan is completed. Apportioning adequate and varied space for these features makes an improved marketplace for exhibitors and attendees and will help to create traffic flow throughout all areas of the hall.

ENTRANCES AND EXITS

The location of entrances and exits are key drivers to the traffic patterns and the designation of prime space. Clearly identify entrances on the floor plan used in the exhibitor prospectus, online, and other selling tools. At the exhibition site, identify entrances with customized combinations of directional signs, banners, and other entrance treatments. Exits should be easy to locate, with illuminated signs for safety and traffic purposes.



SAFETY AND SECURITY

The exhibition organizer is responsible for ensuring the floor plan meets all applicable safety and fire codes and for enforcing codes and regulations on-site. From the initial plan design through all phases of reconfiguration, the goal is a workable plan that will receive local fire inspector/fire marshal approval. The rules change by country, from city to city, and facility to facility. Current information and guidance can be provided from the facility's event coordinator, the convention bureau staff and local service contractors.

In addition to starting the sales process with a plan that is approvable, an exhibition organizer must know when the plan is to be submitted for approval and the types of changes requiring resubmission. While the OSC can be of assistance in this process, it is the exhibition organizer who is responsible for ensuring a final, stamped, and approved plan that is available at the exhibition site the first day of move-in.

Traffic flow patterns, the placement of exhibit spaces and special features on the floor plan may impact the security and safety of people on the exhibition floor. Directions of traffic flow dictated by the floor plan should not impose additional security requirements by blocking sight lines to emergency exits and service corridors. In addition, dictated traffic patterns should not create physical barriers or hazards of any kind. Aisles must be wide enough for safety and emergency exit doors must be readily visible and available.

Exhibits must not block emergency equipment, fire extinguishers, fire alarm systems, fire hose cabinets, etc. In addition, ventilation and lighting systems must not be obstructed in any manner. Utility hook-ups must be clearly visible, marked, and with ready access to emergency shut-off systems. Exhibit walls must not be so high as to impede sight lines for emergency exit lighting systems. Hanging signs must not cover exit lights nor should they block sight lines to the lighting system.

Another area where safety may be of concern deals with special presentations and product demonstrations within an exhibitor's booth/stand. All product demonstrations involving any moving and potentially hazardous machines, displays, or parts must have hazard barriers to prevent accidental injury to spectators. Demonstrations that could present a potential hazard may require review by the local fire prevention and safety authorities prior to being conducted on the show floor.

Compliance with local ordinances is mandatory to ensure the safety and security of all exhibition participants. Show organizers should consider requiring exhibitors who will be conducting demonstrations in their booths/stands or in specific demonstration areas to submit an official form in advance, with details of the demonstration, to be shared with the facility and fire marshal for advance approval.

FIRE MARSHAL

Fire marshal regulations for public safety in the U.S. may impact the useable square footage of a floor plan, may vary somewhat throughout the country, and will be different for overseas exhibitions. The fire marshal will review and require adherence to several specific areas that will require consideration during floor plan development, and will pay most attention to:

- Aisle width
- Number of feet needed for unobstructed access to doors, fire hydrants/extinguishers and columns

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- Safety of operational equipment
 - Restroom and drinking fountain access
 - Flammable materials in booth/stand construction or décor
 - Proper precautions for vehicles for contractors or on display in exhibitors' booths/stands
 - Double-decker or covered booths/stands
 - Emergency exits in drape or hard wall
 - Clear sight lines to exit signs, restrooms and other safety-related signs
 - Lobby infringement and obstruction, such as registration counters, signs, etc.
 - Queue lines, crowd control and possible infringement

To ensure compliance with safety guidelines and ensure that all exhibitors adhere to the same rules and regulations, the adoption and publication of *IAEE's Guidelines for Display Rules and Regulations* in the show's exhibitor guidelines and service manuals is recommended.

FLOOR PLAN LEGEND

It is important to include the utility grid, column grid, and location of any other facility structures on the floor plan so that exhibitors are fully informed of their whereabouts and show management can plan for these areas accordingly during the sales process. An example might be to notify an exhibitor of a low ceiling overhang above a booth/stand space. It is also a good idea to include a **legend** of all service areas on the show floor as well as include the locations of restaurants, restrooms, lounges, etc.

In general, systems maintained by OSCs are more robust than those used by exhibition organizers and contain more detailed information, such as "layers" showing **rigging** (hanging points in the ceiling) and **utility grids** (the sources of electrical, air and plumbing).



FLOOR PLAN COMMUNICATION

Floor plans may be subject to a complex approval process, moving from the exhibition organizer to the OSC, from the OSC to the facility representatives, from the facility to the fire marshal, from the fire marshal to the event organizer, and on to exhibitors. Automating floor plan design makes this process more efficient. When the floor plan has been approved, the technology makes conveying the plan to the exhibition sales team relatively easy, and updates received through sales efforts can be detailed on the computer-based file.

How spaces are assigned and sold must be determined after the floor plan has been through the approval process; the exhibition organizer also will have a process for recording sales and updating the floor plan information for all key stakeholders such as the OSC, the facility, and the sales team. Some facilities provide floor plan guidance as do many OSCs. Floor plan design software may be purchased for one-time use, generally through an application service provider, or multi-use software programs may be a more prudent purchase.

FLOOR PLAN CONTROL TECHNOLOGY

Floor plans produced by the OSC or selected venue are maintained using computer aided design, such as **AutoCAD** software. Software systems and third-party providers are available to help the exhibition organizer control and update floor plans. Many exhibition organizers offer exhibitors the opportunity to select exhibit space online, and a web-based program allows for live reconfiguration and other plan updates. Application service providers may be the most efficient resource for these added-value online options.

All elements of the floor plan should be visible and available for sharing in both printed and virtual formats. Exhibitors should be able to visualize columns, entrances, aisle widths, and other information key to their booth/stand selection and construction, including a legend with abbreviations and dimensions.

Whether the exhibition organizer or a third party maintains the plan, regular updates must be provided to the OSC to avoid confusion, especially when the OSC is responsible for obtaining fire and safety approvals. Some available systems allow exhibition organizers to build in exhibition-specific rules, which are automatically considered, and eliminate errors when changes are made. The OSC can identify changes that create problems, and the facility representative may also be an invaluable resource as changes are made. As stated earlier, systems maintained by OSCs are more robust than those used by exhibition organizers and contain more detailed information, such as layers showing rigging or hanging points in the ceiling and utility grids, which are the sources of electrical, air, and plumbing.

The exhibitor list requires frequent updating and communication to the OSC. Booth/stand assignments, with dimensions to cross-reference against the floor plan for accuracy, must be communicated to the OSC, the entire sales team, and other exhibition management team members.

FLOOR PLAN NAVIGATION TECHNOLOGY

In addition to **RFID (or Radio Frequency Identification)**, which is technology used to automatically identify and track attendees, a variety of mobile applications are available to share information such as floor plans, exhibitor lists, and other exhibition-specific information. Mobile guides and event information



can be easily and rapidly changed to ensure that attendees have instant access to the most current changes, updates, and alerts. Strategic placement of touch-screen floor plan directories will aid attendees as they navigate the exhibition floor. Attendee-exhibitor connection services can help attendees plan their time and meetings.

Heat maps, used by exhibit managers, measure crowd flow through an exhibit hall to see where the hot spots are and are not. Beacon technology can measure **dwelt time**, which is the time an attendee stands in front of a booth/stand. If an attendee spends 15 minutes in a booth/stand, they are likely more interested in the product than if they were just walking by. This list of interested booth/stand visitors is very valuable to the exhibitor, and a list of the exhibitors and the time spent at their booths/stands would be useful to attendees as well.

Wayfinding, or **indoor mapping**, is used by exhibition organizers, attendees, and exhibitors. This technology provides a variety of benefits:

- Allows for personal navigation through a venue or exhibition hall
- Optimizes routing
- Locates friends, finds contacts, and establishes networking
- Delivers content by location, such as exhibit discounts and video
- Optimizes exhibition hall viewing by product category
- Provides exhibition hall hot spots
- Offers traffic flow analytics

ALTERNATIVE DESIGN CONCEPTS AND NON-TRADITIONAL FLOOR PLANS

There may be occasions when alternative designs and non-traditional floor plans may be useful. The OSC should be consulted when the design differs from the traditional straight aisle format as additional costs may be incurred. Fire marshal approval also may be more difficult to obtain for floor plans laid out in alternative configurations.

Two examples of common alternative arrangements are for shows held in facilities with permanent showrooms within market centers, or for exhibitions held on fairgrounds, where there may be an assortment of booths/stands and special interest or demonstration areas.

INTERNATIONAL SHOWS AND FLOOR PLAN DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

There are many differences between U.S. and Canadian guidelines for display, and terminology compared with guidelines used in other countries. Examples include the terms “stand” versus “booth,” and measurements in meters rather than feet. When U.S. and Canadian exhibition managers manage an event outside of North America, the manager should work with the venue and decorator in the host nation of the event to ascertain what other issues may be encountered.

Additionally, developed countries, like those in the European Union, use the same floor planning materials as those used in the U.S. and Canada; however, hard wall or **octanorm** construction is universally used instead of pipe and drape. Octanorm is an internationally recognized modular construction system for exhibition stands that uses eight-sided poles. It is a system that holds the hard wall, or in some instances stands alone, to make a more “open” display.

Since most of the *IAEE Guidelines for Display Rules and Regulations* utilized in the U.S. and Canada do





not apply in other countries, and all booth/stand space is considered to be cubic, sight-lines are not as important a consideration as they are in North America.

In some emerging countries, the floor plan design is like a snake or maze similar to the **lazy S pattern**, where attendees move up and down the aisles, one aisle at a time, moving from the right to the left side of the floor or from the left to the right side, with one entrance and one exit at the opposite end of the show floor. There are no cross aisles or island booths/stands.



OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

There are several other things to consider when developing floor plans, listed below.

EDUCATING THE SALES TEAM

Many organizations have separate sales and operations teams. Both teams must be aligned with the goals of the exhibition plan. Operational understanding of the facility is important for the sales team to prevent placing an exhibitor with special logistical needs or booth/stand features in the wrong space when selling space.

For example:

- A hanging sign requires an area with enough ceiling height and rigging points
- A complex booth/stand should not be placed in front of a freight door, since set-up and teardown of such a booth/stand could inhibit use of the door
- A booth/stand requiring electricity should be in appropriate proximity to electrical outlets
- A booth/stand with a large vehicle as part of its display should be in proximity to doors that can accommodate the width and height of the vehicle

Knowledge of the facility features gives the exhibition organizer an opportunity to maximize revenue, drive visual impact, manage logistics effectively, and drive greater interaction between exhibitors, attendees, sponsors, and the organization.

SPACE ASSIGNMENT SYSTEMS

Many established exhibitions use space assignment systems when selling and assigning space. Such systems may be based on the years an exhibiting company has participated in the exhibition or event, the amount of space purchased, or sponsorship and advertising dollars spent.

Overall, the floor plan design must be flexible enough to ensure that established exhibitors are not compromised in their space assignments, traffic flow is not impeded, and move-in and move-out will not be adversely affected.

When designing a plan to work within a point system, the floor plan must:

- Accommodate the space requirements of the established exhibitors who typically take the same amount of space each year
- Meet the needs of new exhibitors or established exhibitors who wish to grow their space
- Adjust to the fluctuations of the market
- Adapt to different facilities or halls

Exhibitor information should include how space will be assigned. Show managers utilize several systems for assigning booth/stand space, including:

- **Priority Point System** – This system assigns points to exhibiting companies to determine which will be allowed to select booth/stand space first for the next event.
- **First Come/First Assigned** – The assigning space happens in the order of the date applications are received.

- 
- **Lottery System** – Exhibitors are grouped and given a booth through a lottery system, i.e. a random system of assigning space. If, for example, there are 20 available spaces and 50 exhibitors, a lottery is held to determine which exhibitors are given those 20 spaces.
 - **On-Site Space Draw** –Space is assigned on-site via some type of priority system so that exhibitors are assigned space in a certain order so there is a real-time system of assigning booths/stands.

Regardless of the system used, consistent communication is necessary, along with easy-to-understand instructions and floor plan adaptability.

SUPPORTING SUSTAINABILITY SHOW INITIATIVES

It is important to mention that IAEE proudly partners with the **Events Industry Council** to raise awareness and promote more sustainable exhibitions, and reduce the carbon footprint of our industry.

In collaboration with the **Centre for Sustainability and Social Impact**, an initiative of the Events Industry Council, IAEE is following the guiding principles for sustainable exhibitions:

- Minimize carbon emissions with a sustainable freight, shipping and transportation strategy
- Focus on materials resource management
- Select suppliers and partners with sustainable practices, policies and infrastructure
- Develop policies for exhibitors and vendors
- Ensure that the exhibition is accessible
- Adopt a sustainable food & beverage policy and
- Measure, report, and share stories

It is key to contract with the proper partners who will assist the show organizer in carrying out any sustainability initiatives. All such initiatives should be built into the RFP (Request for Proposal) process in selecting service contractors. This is addressed in detail in another CEM course.

CREATING INCLUSIVE EXPERIENCES

In planning exhibitions and events, it is also important to value diversity and inclusiveness. An experience should provide opportunities for all persons who wish to participate without regard, including but not limited to age, color, disability, family responsibility, gender, gender identity, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, or sexual orientation.

Working hand in hand with partners and vendors who share similar visions can ensure the experience is a success for all.

POST-EVENT EVALUATION

It is important to analyze and evaluate all aspects of the floor plan design after the event to identify areas that may need to be changed or kept in the future. Feedback from all key stakeholders - the OSC, exhibitors, attendees, facility, and floor managers - should be consulted to provide a complete and thorough evaluation of how the floor plan worked for the event.

While on-site, explore creative ways to solve problems, avoid traffic bottlenecks or promote traffic to other areas for the following year or next upcoming event. Take the opportunity to observe, prioritize,



and analyze. All of this data then becomes part of the SWOT analysis in planning for the next event.



SUMMARY

None of the elements crucial to the success of an exhibition is as basic as the floor plan. Without a workable floor plan that has been tailored to meet the needs of exhibitors and the functions that will take place within the exhibit hall, the chances for a successful show are limited.

When developing a floor plan, remember the following:

- Visit other exhibitions and events for ideas
- Follow industry developments
- Survey exhibitors and attendees
- Design with options for reconfiguration
- Plan traffic flow
- Research and plan for security, safety, and other applicable codes
- Build in features to enhance traffic
- Work closely with the official service contractor
- Review space assignment systems
- Highlight key details for the approval process
- Make notes at the current event to influence development of future exhibition floor plans

The strategy for developing a successful floor plan demands an in-depth understanding of the needs of exhibitors, attendees, and sponsors, as well as the logistical opportunities and limitations of selected venues. After analyzing the needs and setting goals for the exhibition, the exhibition organizer and the OSC should work closely together to develop the initial plan to begin booth/stand sales. Many changes take place before the doors open on the first exhibition day. The resulting floor plan should be interesting, flexible, safe, and workable for all parties.

When developing the floor plan, it is very important to review the requirements of the fire marshal and other local officials. The official service contractor should be able to assist.

Build in special features on the show floor to enhance traffic when possible and review space assignment systems to ensure success. It is also important for the show organizer to continue to partner with the official service contractor through the approval process.



KEY TERMS

The following key terms are identified in this workbook by bold face type and accompanied by a definition. Those noted with an asterisk (*) are from the *Events Industry Glossary* developed by the Events Industry Council (<https://insights.eventscouncil.org/Industry-glossary>).

Access Point – Refers to the entrance of a facility.

Activations – Formally set up an activity within an event to encourage attendee participation.

AutoCAD – Automated computer-aided design software.

Aisle/Gangway* – 1) Area between a booth/stand for attendee traffic movement. 2) Space between tables or chairs to allow passage of an audience.

Booth/Stand* – Specific exhibit display area assigned by show management to an exhibitor under contractual agreement. Internationally, the term STAND is used.

Bellwether Exhibitor – A company that regularly participates in an industry trade show and is expected to be a repeat exhibitor.

Booth/Stand Size – The dimension of assigned exhibit space.

Corner Booth/Stand – A linear booth/stand at the end of a series of inline booths/stands with exposure to intersecting aisles on two sides.

Cross Aisle* – A smaller aisle perpendicular to a main aisle.

Cubic Content – A unit of measurement allowing display materials to occupy 100 percent of the exhibit space purchased, regardless of sightlines, up to a height established by the exhibition's rules.

Dwell Time – Time spent in the same position, area, or stage of a process.

Egress Point – An exit.

End-Cap Booth/Stand* - An exhibit space with aisles on three sides.

Fire Marshal* – 1) In the United States and Canada, the fire marshal is typically a member of the fire department whose duties include fire code enforcement. 2) In the United Kingdom, fire marshals are civilians trained to assist with fire evacuation procedures.

Floor Plan* – *1) Scale drawing indicating the placement of exhibit booths and all other features in an exhibit hall. 2) Scale drawing of the floor area of a hotel's event space. 3) Scale drawing of a function room with specific set-up requirements (tables, chairs, etc.).

Gross Square Feet/Meters (GSF/GSM)* – 1) Total amount of available function space in exhibit hall or other facility. 2) Total amount of space used for a specific show or event.

Hard Wall - Includes fittings, fixtures, and walls that are a part of a booth, made of posts and panels.



Heat map - A representation of data in the form of a map or diagram in which data values are represented as colors.

Horizontal Exhibition* – An exhibition that appeals to representatives of one or more industries through many types of products and services on display.

Imperial System – A system of weights and measures originally developed in England. Similar but not always the same as US standard units. Example of Imperial measures: Length: inches, feet, yards; Area: square feet, acres; Weight: pounds, ounces; Volume: fluid ounces, gallons; The Imperial System has been replaced by the Metric System in most countries (including England).

Inline Booth/Stand (also known as a Linear Booth/Stand) – An exhibit space with exhibit booths on either side and behind.

Ingress – Entry point.

Indoor Mapping – Concept that visualizes an indoor venue and spatial data on a digital 2D or 3D map.

International System of Units (SI) – Modern form of the metric system and most widely used system of measurement.

Island Booth/Stand* - Booth/stand space with aisles on all four sides.

Lazy S Pattern – Traffic pattern where attendees move up and down the aisles, one aisle at a time, moving from the right to the left side of the floor or from the left to the right side.

Legend – A reference containing symbols or indicators designed to mark the meaning and location of certain items on a map, graphic or illustration.

LIFO – Last-in and first-out exhibit booths/stands.

Linear Booth/Stand (also known as an **Inline Booth/Stand**) – A booth space generally arranged in a straight line with neighboring exhibitors on their immediate right and left, leaving only one side exposed to the aisle.

Line-of-Sight – Term used to define the unobstructed view of an exhibitor's booth/stand, usually in connection with the construction of a neighboring exhibitor's booth/stand in ways that do not intrude into an attendee's line of sight to an adjacent exhibit.

Maximum Floor Plan – "Maxed out plan" – drawing illustrating the maximum number of booths/ stands that would be available for sale if all space were to be used.

Meter/Metre – A basic unit of length measurement in the metric system, equivalent to 39.37 U.S. inches.

Metric System – An internationally recognized decimalized system of measurement. Also known as the International System of Units.

Net Square Feet/Meters (NSF/NSM)* – Actual amount of salable space used by exhibit booths/stands which excludes aisles, lounges, registration areas, etc.





No-Freight Aisle – An aisle on the exhibit floor used as a thoroughfare, which must remain completely clear of all freight.

Octanorm – Aluminum stand construction system utilizing eight-sided poles commonly used at events outside of North America.

Official Service Contractor/OSC (General Service Contractor/GSC)* - An organization that provides event management and exhibitors with a wide range of services, sometimes including, but not limited to, distributing the exhibitor manual, installation and dismantle, creating and hanging signage and banners, laying carpet, material handling, and providing booth/stand furniture.

Peninsula Booth/Stand* – An exhibit with aisles on three sides.

Perimeter Booth/Stand* – Exhibit space located on an outside wall.

Permanent Fixtures - Features of a facility that cannot be altered.

Priority Point System* – System of assigning points to exhibiting companies to determine the order in which firms will be allowed to select booth/stand space first for the next event. Primarily used in North America.

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) – A tracking system that uses bar codes to track attendees.

Rigging* – 1) The process of attaching the cable on a crane to a piece of machinery or equipment. 2) The process for hanging materials or signs. 3) The structure to which hanging materials are attached.

Sequential Numbering – Booths/stands are numbered sequentially down each side (100 series down the left side, 200 series down the right side).

Serpentine Numbering – Booth/stand numbers wind up one side of the aisle and wind down the other.

Shell Scheme* - European booth/stand system that usually includes a raised floor, back and side walls, plus fascia.

Site Inspection* – In-person, on-site review and evaluation of a venue or location for an event.

Stand* – Specific exhibit display area assigned by show management to an exhibitor under contractual agreement. Term used outside the United States for a booth or exhibit.

Street-Style Numbering – A numbering method patterned after a city street, with even numbers on one side, odd numbers on the other.

Temporary Fixtures – Elements of the floor plan that can be changed, such as the location of food and beverage service, the width of aisles/gangways, or the location of presentation areas on the exhibition floor, that can have impact on the ultimate design of the exhibition floor plan.

Traffic Flow* – 1) Movement of people through an area. 2) A supposed or directed path that attendees will take through an exhibition.

U.S. Customary or Standard System* - System of measurement used in U.S. in which length is measures in inches, feet, yards and miles.





Utility Grid - The sources of electrical, air and plumbing.

Vertical Exhibition* – An exhibition at which the products or services being displayed represent one element of an industry or profession.

Wayfinding – The ways in which people orient themselves in physical space and navigate from place to place.

