

Freeman[®]

Exhibit like an expert

Use this step-by-step guide — loaded with insider tips — to help make your exhibit experience successful.

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Travel and planning

Strategy / Budget / Travel

Tip: Renting can be more cost-effective because the smaller investment doesn't depreciate and it offers flexibility.

Strategy

- Begin planning 45-180 days from the show's move-in date.
- Review all show guidelines and protocols for health and safety and develop a health and safety plan for your exhibit.
- Align event and organizational goals.

[Learn more](#)

Set your budget

- Exhibit space rental, booth rental (and/or costs for custom), shipping, and material handling
- Health and safety supplies
- Show services (audio visual, electrical, internet, cleaning, labor, sign hanging, carpet, booth furniture)
- Travel expenses (book travel early to avoid sellout and get lower rates)
- Marketing activations and giveaways
- Sales training
- [Lead retrieval and measurement](#)



The booth

Your brand in 3D

Tip: Order carpet padding for extra comfort during the show.

Determine your booth plan

- Will you rent, build, or use existing materials?
- Consider booth rental options.
- Envision a [custom build](#)? Work with designers to create a booth that embodies your brand.
- Allow space for social distancing to create a comfortable booth experience.
- Remember: A small exhibit space can still make a big impact!

Design a memorable in-booth experience

- No matter the size, your booth should tell a seamless brand story.
- Create an interactive experience that circles back to your brand and event objectives.
- Design the attendee journey and in-booth activations with your target audience in mind.

Build and train the right team

- Align the booth staff (and their expertise) with the goals of your event.
- Choose team members who best represent your vision and have a knack for engaging visitors.
- Mix it up: Include sales, technical, customer service, and management reps.
- Ditch the hard sell: Focus on solving attendee challenges and creating opportunities.
- Designate roles and responsibilities among your team for the event.



Get techy

Explore the latest [production and audio visual services](#) to drive attendee traffic and electrify engagement.

- Energize your space with interactive touch screens, lighting, video screens, and digital signage. Talk to your audio visual partner about options for your booth and budget.

Socialize

- Keep the conversation going year-round with active social media feeds.
- Post highlights, offer insights, and encourage visitor interaction and feedback.

Contact Freeman for more information on the benefits of exhibit booth rental, including shipping, storage, and more.





Show services

Pre-show



Tip: Show security isn't responsible for guarding freight, so wait for your carrier to arrive, or hire a security guard.

Read the exhibitor service communications from the official services contractor producing the event.

Exhibitor services kit / show manual

- A manual listing of the show's official contractors will be located in your exhibitor services kit.
- Quick Facts, including all deadlines, are available [here](#).

Order by discount deadlines

- Tip: Save costs on orders made through [our online tool](#).

Shipping and material handling

- Delivery options: Advance warehouse delivery or on-site delivery. Learn the difference [here](#).
- Material handling cost: Freight is weighed and billed at the dock or advance warehouse.

- Consolidate shipments; ship in crates or shrink-wrap to skids.
- Ship to the advance warehouse up to 30 days before move-in to avoid additional charges.



Tip: Exhibiting at multiple shows? Talk to your carrier about potential volume discounts. Freeman offers round-trip bundle rates on most shows.

Specialized transportation providers

- Use carriers that specialize in trade show logistics.
- Bring a list of tracking numbers to the show.
- Ask Freeman for help. Our team specializes in transportation, including multi-event ordering, storing, and shipping solutions.



Show services

At-show



Tip: Air conditioning and heating may not be turned on during move-in; be sure to dress accordingly.

Pre-show prep

- Log in to our [online resource](#) to view information, orders, and show site services.

Setup and move-in day

- Align your setup with the show's move-in hours — many events set specific times for booth installation.

Upon arrival at your booth space

- Inventory what was shipped and delivered.
- Get in touch with Freeman if you have questions about your services.
- Empty and label your containers; they aren't accessible during the show. (Avoid sending valuables to empty storage during the show).
- If you ordered labor to set up and dismantle your booth, check in at the labor desk.

Reminders for each day of event

- Collect all leads, business cards, notes, and other materials you gathered during each day of the show.
- Do not leave anything valuable in the booth at any time (including overnight) unless you plan to hire booth security.



Reduce labor costs by

- Ordering labor in advance to secure discount rates.
- Diagramming your setup and numbering crates accordingly. Include electrical needs and repacking instructions.
- Prewiring equipment and organizing/color-coding all wires.
- Providing a mobile contact number for any questions that arise during setup.

Invoicing and payment

- Outbound shipping information and labels are available the day after the show opens.
- Be prepared — take care of all invoices prior to the end of the event.
- Remember to submit your invoices and expenses from the event.



Show services

Post-show



Tip: Have a post-show email ready to send that welcomes visitors home and recaps key info with an enticing call to action.

When the event closes, remember to

- Confirm your dismantle labor order.
- Be patient. Depending on show size, it could take several hours for your empty containers to be returned.
- When all shipments are packed, complete the material handling agreement(s) for each separate destination.
- Label every container being shipped and notify your outbound carrier for pickup.

Visit our [online tool](#) to create, save, edit, and submit MHAs from any device.

- Check the show information online for move-out process details.

Don't forget to debrief!

- As soon as the show closes, follow up with leads to keep the conversation going.
- Gather feedback from booth staff and attendees to improve your next show.
- Consider an on-site survey to get immediate feedback from visitors.



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Checklist

Pre-show

- ☐ Define your company's business goals for this event and how you will measure them to ensure you maximize your ROI:
 - Are you trying to collect qualified leads? Drive sales? Increase your brand awareness? Increase social media engagement? Suggested measurement points include surveys, lead retrieval, number of meetings set, and more.
- ☐ Designate roles and responsibilities among your team for the event:
 - Who will handle inbound and outbound shipments? Booking travel and accommodation? Securing badges and registration? Booth setup and teardown? Booth sales? Managing the booth at show site? What about booth activations and giveaways?
- ☐ Review the show's deadlines, move-in dates and times, rules, and regulations to ensure you're prepared for the event. And don't forget about the discount deadline! It's a great way to save money.
- ☐ Build your budget for the event, including:
 - Booth registration and badges
 - Health and safety
 - Booth design and equipment (carpet, furniture, audio visual, banners)
 - Show services (electrical, cleaning, sign installation, general labor)
 - Shipping and material handling, travel, accommodations, and meals
 - Marketing material and giveaways
 - Brand sponsorship opportunities
 - Lead retrieval
 - Design your booth around your goals and budget. There are multiple options whether you want to setup yourself or have it ready to go when you arrive!
- ☐ Order via our [online resource](#) before the discount deadline to ensure you pay the lowest price on Freeman products and services! This varies from show to show, but you are safe if you order around three months prior.

Pre-show checklist continued

- ☐ Book travel and accommodation as soon as you know the team that will be attending. Accommodations at larger shows can sell out as far as six months in advance! Check your show website for hotel discounts.
 - Make sure you plan arrival and departure times to allow enough time to get to and from the show site for setup and teardown. Depending on the size of the show, it may take up to eight hours for your empty containers to be returned to your booth during teardown.
- ☐ Set up a pre-show marketing plan across all of your channels to ensure your audience knows when and where to find your booth.
 - Start setting up meetings with existing clients and prospects. This will help you organize each day and control in-booth traffic.
- ☐ Confirm your inbound and outbound shipping provider, shipping dates, and shipping addresses for the event, around two months prior to the show.
 - Freeman offers roundtrip discounts on select shows.
 - Visit our [online tool](#) to view the specific shipping details for your show.
- ☐ If you will be selling products from your booth, you may also need to:
 - Ensure you have all of the relevant federal, state, and international sales tax licenses and forms needed to sell at the event.
 - Exhibiting outside of your home country often requires additional import paperwork, so check with your shipping provider to ensure you have all the correct documentation for importing products.
 - Document and double-check your inventory numbers for all products.
 - Ensure your booth staff knows your refund, discount, and giveaway policies and how you plan to document all of them.
 - Decide who will oversee the booth. Designate booth staff expectations — what schedules look like, scripts, meetings, etc.



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Checklist Move-in

- ☐ Have a daily team meeting to prep for the day and debrief from the current day — share leads, best practices, etc.
- ☐ Check in at the exhibitor registration desk for badges or check the app for touchless registration and digital badges.
- ☐ As soon as you get to your booth during exhibitor move-in, check your space to ensure your shipment and orders are correct.
- ☐ If you hired labor for your event, including tear-down, check in at the labor service desk to make sure all labor is scheduled or completed.
- ☐ Check, recheck, and test all technology, electrical, and any other items required to run your booth. Remember all your phone, tablet, and laptop chargers!
- ☐ Make sure you've removed everything you need for your exhibit from your empty shipping containers before they're taken to the warehouse.
- ☐ Label all empty boxes, containers, pallets, crates, or other shipping containers with your company name and booth number to ensure you get it back at the end of the show.
- ☐ At the end of each day, remove or secure any valuables at your booth before leaving the show.
- ☐ If you hired labor for your event, including tear-down, check in at the labor service desk to ensure it's returned to your booth at the end of the show.
- ☐ Stay hydrated and take breaks when you can. A successful show is a marathon, not a sprint!



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Checklist

Post-show

- ☐ Collect all leads, business cards, notes, and other materials you gathered during the show.
 - Designate who is following up with each.
- ☐ Take inventory of all your equipment, booth material, and assets.
- ☐ Complete a material handling agreement (also called outbound paperwork) for your exhibit and return to the exhibitor service center. Pro tip: You can start this paperwork prior to move-out using our [online resource](#).
- ☐ After your empty containers are returned and your exhibit is packed, label every container you plan to ship. You can pick up additional labels at the exhibitor service center if needed.
- ☐ As a best practice, follow up with your leads and contacts within a week of the event ending. Keep up the momentum!
- ☐ If you plan to exhibit at this show next year, check with show management to see if pre-registration for next year is available at show site.
- ☐ Meet with your team and document everything they learned from the show.
 - What worked and what didn't?
 - Were there any takeaways that could make an impact?
 - How did your show perform according to your goals?
 - How can we improve for next year?
- ☐ Write out your key takeaways and compare them to your goals — ROI, number of meetings, etc. Use these to set your benchmarks for next year.
- ☐ Remember to submit your invoices and expenses from the event.



Trade show lingo

Glossary

Exhibit like an expert

Advance order An order for show services sent to the general contractor by the advance order (discount) deadline. Usually less expensive than orders placed on-site.

Advance warehouse/receiving Location set by show management to receive freight before start of show. Freight is stored at this location and then moved to the show at the designated time.

Boneyard A specific area used to store extra furniture and any equipment not being used during show hours.

Dark day Terminology for a day during move-in or move-out of the facility when show site services are shut down.

Decorating Dressing up exhibit booths with carpet, furniture, foliage, etc.

Double time Refers to a pay rate for work performed that is double the normal hourly rate.

Exhibitor service center A centralized area where representatives of various show services can be contacted or located.

Exhibitor service manual Manual containing general information, labor/service order forms, rules and regulations, as well as other important information pertaining to exhibitor participation.

Floor manager Individual representing show management who is responsible for overseeing all or part of the exhibition area. He or she is also available to answer questions related to the show floor, show hours, and show services and acts as the liaison between exhibitors and the general contractor.

Freight desk The area where inbound and outbound exhibit materials are handled at a trade show.

General contractor A company providing services to a trade show and/or its exhibitors. The general contractor is the official contractor designated by show management for a given show (also called General Services Contractor, GSC, or Official Contractor).

Installation/dismantle Also referred to as I&D. The setup and teardown of exhibits.

Labor Refers to contracted workers who perform services for shows.

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

Material handling Unloading your shipment, transporting it to your booth, storing and returning your empty crates and cartons, and reloading your freight or shipment onto your selected carrier at the close of the show. The MHA is your material handling agreement.

Official contractor Show management-appointed company providing services to a trade show and/or its exhibitors.

On-site order Order for services placed by the exhibitor with the general contractor after exhibit setup begins and is usually more expensive than an advance order.

Overtime labor Work performed before 8:00 a.m. and after 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, and all hours on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays (varies by city).

Pipe and drape Pipe material with fabric draped from it to make up side rails and the back wall of an exhibit booth.

Privately owned vehicle A privately owned vehicle, such as a passenger car, van, or small company vehicle, as distinguished from trucks, tractor-trailers, and other over-the-road vehicles. Exhibitors with a POV should ask the general service contractor for unloading instructions.

Quick facts Essential show information at a glance, provided to exhibitors by Freeman.

Show management Company responsible for all aspects of the exhibition.

Show office The show management office at the event.

Straight time The hours considered normal business hours.

Target date The specified date and/or time to move a shipment into and/or out of an exhibit hall/show site.

Transportation/shipping The transport of your exhibit materials to and from the convention or event.

Union An organization of workers formed to protect the interests and rights of its members. Labor unions provide venues with a pool of workers who are experts in various areas.

Work time Paid time that begins as soon as the workers report to the exhibitor and stops when the exhibitor releases them from work.



Ready to make your exhibit a hit? Let's talk.

Your exhibit matters to you and your customers — that's why it matters to us. Our integrated, full-service solutions leverage a 100-year legacy in exhibit and event management to help you make moments that matter — here, there, and anywhere you are.

Get in touch

