

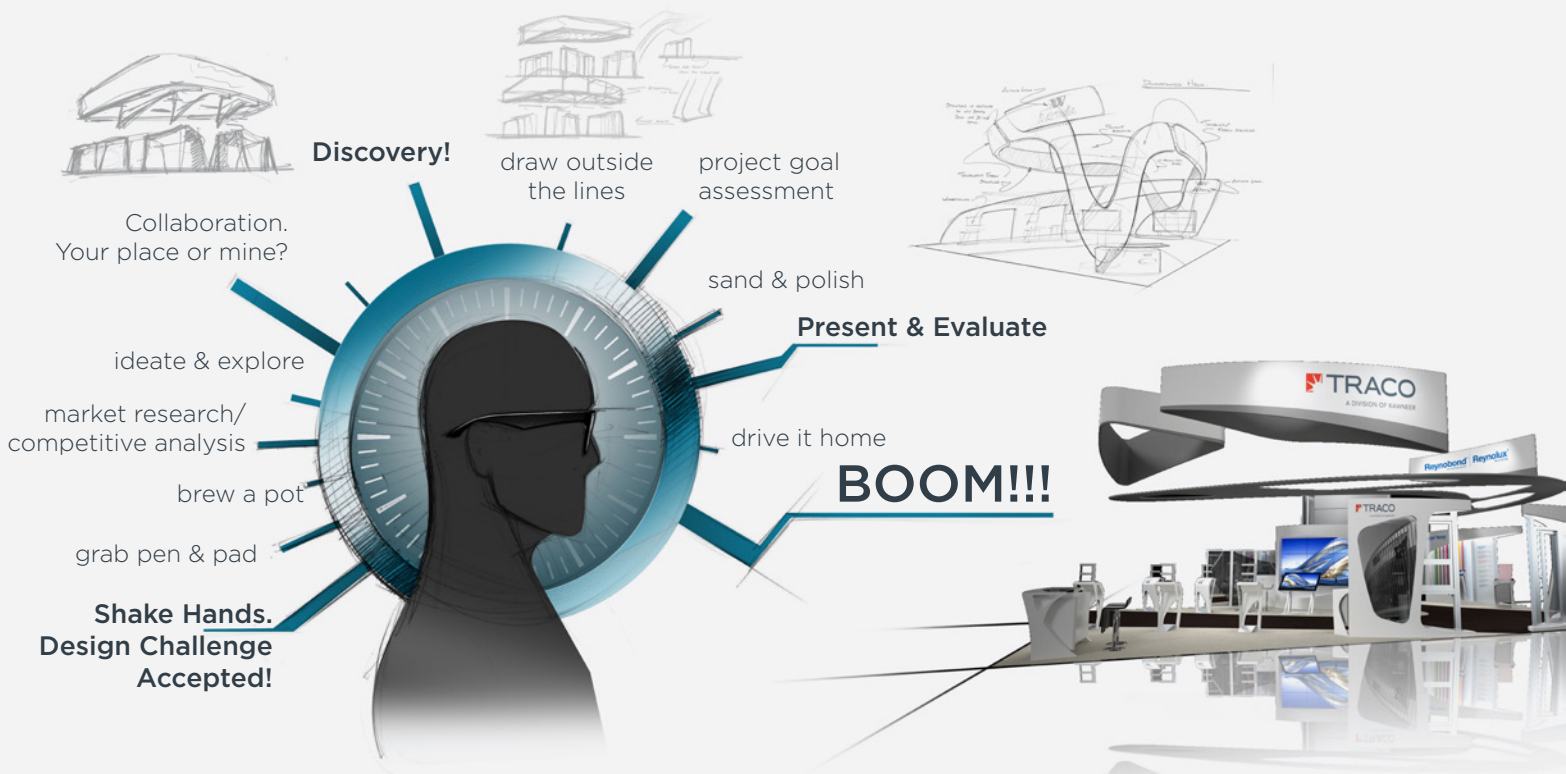
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CRAFTING BRAND EXPERIENCES

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Why Design Matters

by Exhibitus



WHY DESIGN MATTERS

In the crowded world of modern marketing, there is one approach that cuts through the noise with its power to forge real relationships: experiential marketing events. This strategy, at its core, is designed to engage attendees in live, branded experiences. It's more than just an event—it's an opportunity to immerse customers and prospects in a brand's story, build trust and gain loyalty in our increasingly digital age.

At Exhibitus, we believe that a core foundation for any experiential marketing program is DESIGN—design that captures attention and facilitates the engagement of all target audiences. Corporate goals, event goals and your professional goals are all within reach with a strategically-designed program that includes the best in environmental, structural and engagement design.

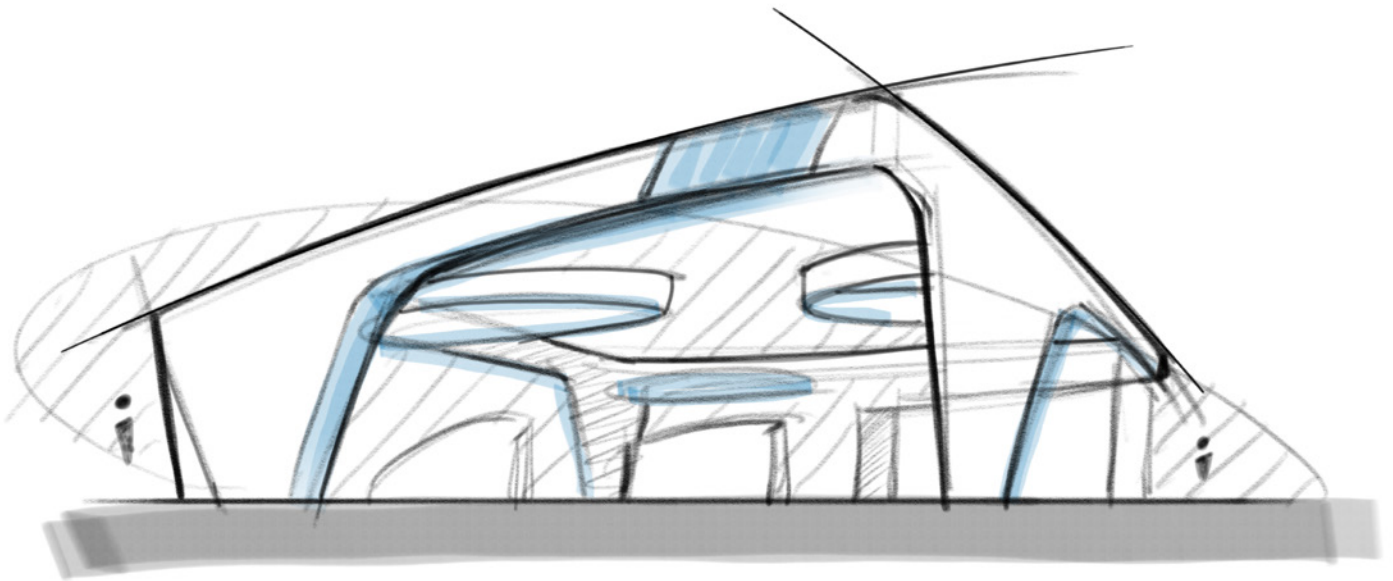


In a universal sense, design is a roadmap to achieve desired outcomes. The process starts with the imagined future based on goals and objectives and then works toward audience expectations with intelligence and creativity.

Design quality for physical components in an experiential marketing environment is often thought of as subjective and can be confused with art. Art primarily serves as the artists' expressive purpose, whereas design is uniquely different. Design is strategic in nature, servicing a specific objective—a craft of dynamic storytelling, meaningful audience engagement and purposeful function, not self-expression.

“Good design speaks. Good design tells your visitors that you care about your product. Good design at the front-end suggests that everything is in order at the back-end, whether or not that is the case. Good design is what separates the best from the ‘good enough.’”

- Dmitry Fadeyev, fadeyev.net



Design-oriented organizations invest in thinking about the components of a strategic design approach. They put design at the heart of their company to guide innovation, to improve offerings and to enhance experiential marketing efforts. Customers see these brands as both progressive and customer-centric, leading to differentiation, brand loyalty and financial success.

For companies exhibiting at experiential marketing events, the goals are many but they typically lead to one overarching objective—getting attendees to act in a desired manner. To evoke action and movement, positive emotion along with genuine excitement are required. Good design can be the stimulus needed to inspire event attendees to consider and, ultimately take, the desired action.

Using certain principles of design—balance, proportion, emphasis, unity—to create an exhibit structure is the critical first step. Then applying these principles so that the message of the environment is expressed to appeal to the target audience must follow.



Award-winning architectural design by Zaha Hadid; Heydar Aleyev Center

THE STATE OF DESIGN

Research shows that all businesses, no matter what they make or sell and no matter how they market those products or services, should recognize the power and financial value of design in all processes.

This link was first confirmed by the UK Design Council in 2005. This research group looked at the impact of design used on a number of key business measures such as competitiveness, market share, sales and employment. They also tracked the number of design and innovation awards received and the level of training offered to staff. The research conducted from over a 10-year period indicated that these companies outperformed the S&P by 211% on average.

To be valuable, good design must encompass all aspects of a company's brand and marketing activity. But nowhere is it more fundamental, and visible, than in the experiential marketing arena where customers are face-to-face and emotionally engaged with a brand's message.

THE BACK STORY

Every company has a brand and a story to convey. An experiential marketing event, whether an industry trade show, user conference or brand activation event, is meant to showcase the brand in a 3-dimensional, experience-oriented setting.

A well-designed, engaging environment is a communication vehicle. It is the bridge that gets the attendee into the company's world. It provides the opportunity to develop an emotional relationship with a brand. The confluence of color, shape, negative space, lighting, materials, product and messaging all help to tell the brand story and to reinforce a belief and feeling that a prospect or customer has with the brand. Good design for a brand is recognizable even without the company's name on the environment.

But often at first glance, an experiential marketing event can appear chaotic. It is easy to be overwhelmed which quickly overpowers a person's ability to think rationally and take action in an efficient manner.

Relying on a design approach that balances form and function with the right story provides a sense of control to the environment. It allows attendees to think, to feel and to tap into their own imagination and positive emotions, to be amazed or enlightened, creating in their mind the why and how a company's offerings can be of value to their own world.



THE BEHOLDER'S EYE

It is generally accepted that *Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder*. And that is indeed the case at experiential marketing events. Attendees will have their own preference as to what appeals to them at first glance. But well-considered design takes over after the initial impression and delivers on the promise of engagement and relationship-building.

Design as a deliberately applied discipline aims to create a simpler, more meaningful and rewarding experience for customers. Using the following concepts, a designer strives to keep form, function and the aesthetic quality in balance.

Good design:

- Makes the brand story understandable. It provides the platform for the messages to communicate to target audiences.
- Is in the details. Each element is intentionally created to support the brand story, showcase the products and promote interaction.
- Provides for effective execution of program goals, event objectives and brand initiatives.
- Is environmentally-friendly. Minimizing waste requires innovative thought and assures that the exhibit is not burdened with non-essential elements.

INTERNATIONAL HISTORICAL FACTS

In 1944, Winston Churchill's government established the UK Design Council to help develop a peacetime economy. The Council worked with industry and championed great design to boost consumer spending.

The Council has, overtime, worked to understand and quantify the value of design to business and society in general. Recently they measured the economic impact of design on a range of small and medium-size businesses that went from limited use of design to a fuller appreciation for its value. The conclusion was that for £1 these businesses spent on design, there was a direct attribution to the return on investment of more than £20 in increased revenues and more than a £4 increase in net operating profit.

COLLABORATION IS THE KEY

To ensure that requirements of good design are met, designing an experiential marketing strategy and environment requires close collaboration with a creative team. Designs produced only from a list of written criteria with very little input and direction are typically more costly and less successful at meeting event objectives.

Working side by side through each design stage produces a dynamic environment that encompasses intent, creativity, communication and purpose. For the few seconds an exhibitor has on the trade show floor to capture the interest and hopefully the imagination and emotions of an attendee, good design based on productive collaboration as described in our Five Stage Approach is the key.



4DM PROCESS

Discover

Listening to understand.

The initial meeting should consist of client representatives and the Experiential Agency's team of industry professionals, including department executives, an account executive, designers and project managers. The client should come prepared to discuss and answer questions about corporate strategy and direction, product development, realistic brand goals and marketing strategies. Prior to the meeting, the design team will conduct in-depth research to gain essential background knowledge of the company's industry, markets and competitors.

Define

Application of knowledge gained in discovery.

The Experiential Agency's team will work to understand the company's brand, its history, its values and what it means in the marketplace. They will define how the client's goals, both strategic and tactical, can be realized through their experiential marketing program. From the creation of product and brand messaging to logistical considerations, the team works in collaboration with the client to cover and clarify all considerations. Relying on the Experiential Agency's broad expertise, situations that could potentially impact the success of the program will be identified and minimized.

Develop

Creative development through continuous collaboration.

The develop process requires both internal and external collaboration. It begins with the Experiential Agency holding an internal brainstorming session. Team members include representatives from all relevant departments. This session allows input into the creative process from all the disciplines involved in the creation and production of the final environment, particularly physical structures, and engagement technology to be included. Concepts and direction from this brainstorming session and each of the following design revisions are communicated to the client through drawings and detailed descriptions for feedback, validation and approval.

Deliver

Thought, ideation and planning come together.

The complete design concept is turned over to project management, experiential technologists, engineering, production and show services groups in a series of Experiential Agency meetings that communicate the scope and intent of the project. The client is constantly updated as to schedules and progress of the project. Drawings from the engineering group for the purposes of production, installation and dismantle will be approved by the client. In addition to the drawings, in-progress viewings of structural components and testing of technology are scheduled to ensure satisfaction with the quality of the work and the faithful execution of the project's concept. Once the project is completed, the Experiential Agency continues to collaborate with the client to manage all future activities.

Measure

What gets measured, gets funded.

The final stage starts in the develop phase, where the Experiential Agency crafts a measurement strategy based on the brand goals for the project. A plan with the appropriate metrics is delivered to the the client's team. Once the event is over, data collected based on the measurement plan will be compiled and analyzed by the Experiential Agency. Results that highlight the success of a program as well as opportunities for improvement will be shared with the client.



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Exhibitus is an award-winning experiential marketing agency offering strategy, creative, digital, activation, exhibit design and fabrication. We partner with clients to produce innovative engagements and event measurement programs that are brand and audience centric. Driven by our philosophy that “Design Matters,” our marketing programs connect, engage, and inspire audiences to help drive your business forward.

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