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(800) 252-3625 | (512) 476-6346

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TRADE SHOW EXHIBITOR BEST OF SHOW

Rules and Criteria

The Best of Show offers exhibitors a way to elevate the overall effectiveness of their exhibit, product/service presentation and staff performance and generates excitement and branding with attendees on the Show floor. It serves to reward and recognize exhibitors for producing the best thought-out exhibit displays and materials and providing engaging, knowledgeable booth staff. Exhibitors are automatically entered in the Best of Show contests. Winners receive Show recognition and a variety of valuable prizes!

Awards Categories

Best of Show Overall Booth

Best of Show Engagement

Best of Show First Time Exhibitor (*cumulative score*)

Best of Show Legacy Exhibitor (*cumulative score*)

How/When Will Booths Be Judged?

Exhibitors are automatically entered into all applicable categories. Judging will be conducted by a team of exhibit and event professionals during Show hours on Tuesday, July 29. The winners will be announced at the Keynote Session Wednesday, July 30.

Will I Know Who the Judges Are?

No, the judges will remain anonymous, meaning you could be observed one time or several times throughout Thursday!

What Will I Win?

Winners in each category will be announced at the Keynote Session Wednesday, July 30 in front of all Show attendees, receive recognition:

- at their booth
- on the onsite You Are Here floor plan stands
- on Sunbelt social media
- a complimentary half-page advertisement in the 2026 Sunbelt Onsite Show Guide (\$750 value) (*pending your 2026 booth commitment*)

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JUDGING CRITERIA FOR:

- Best of Show Overall Booth
- Best of Show Engagement

JUDGES WILL EVALUATE:

Booth Attraction and Display

- Hierarchy of Graphics: Tells who the company is, what they do and what they're offering at each vantage point for the visitor to see.
- Exhibit Flow: The degree of ease with which visitors can enter and move around the space
- Exhibit Design: How easily the exhibit attracts attention, how well the space is laid out, uniqueness of design's effectiveness at communicating who they are and what they do.
- Overall Exhibit Appeal: How welcoming and inviting the space is to attendees

Products & Messaging

- Display: Color, size, location and uniqueness.
- Eye Appeal: Ability to draw the visitor's attention visually.
- Benefit Messaging: How effectively the brand/product communicates product benefits.
- Integrated Brand Messaging: How well brand messaging has been integrated in graphics, signage, themes, literature, etc.

Staff Performance

- Proactive Engagement: How well the staff engages attendees off the aisle rather than waiting for an attendee to approach them.
- Adequate Staffing: Evaluates if there are too many or too few staff for the exhibit space. Can visitors find a staffer with ease when they enter the exhibit?
- Positions/Placement: For larger exhibits, looks at if does the staff has fixed positions, if all areas are staffed, if some staff float to ensure proper coverage and if staff stand behind or next to counters.
- Professionalism/Appearance: Are staff professional and dressed appropriately for the audience and environment?
- Non-verbal Communications: Do staff exhibit negative non-verbal behavior, such as arms crossed, or sitting, talking with each other or on the phone?

CRITERIA FOR:

- Best of Show First Time Exhibitor
- Best of Show Legacy Exhibitor

SELECTION PROCESS:

These two categories will be awarded by combining the scores from the other two categories:

- Best of Show Overall Booth
- Best of Show Engagement

See the above criteria for the other categories.

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Tips and Recommendations

Incorporating Product As Much As Possible

It's important to incorporate samples of your products into your exhibit, when possible. Make it interactive by allowing attendees to see, touch, smell and taste your products. Have a company representative near the hired staff or chefs to engage with visitors and start a more in-depth conversation.

No products? No problem. Use benefit statements in your signage that will make attendees want to stop and chat with you. Have easily readable copy that says how you can help your customers fix a common problem, save money, time or increase sales or profits. Putting it in terms of what is important to them is what will draw visitors to your exhibit.

Strong Messaging

Don't forget to communicate who you are and what you do. Even if you already have a strong brand identity, don't miss out on the opportunity to remind current and potential customers why you're the best at what you offer. This is still a competitive environment, so you should constantly be communicating the benefits and features of your company, products, or services to help attendees better understand what makes you different and how you can help them.

Staffing 101

Since 85% of your success is dependent staff performance, it's important they have the knowledge and tools they need to be successful. Standout exhibits included staffers who were excited to be there, well rested, on the aisle, and ready to greet and engage visitors headed their way.

Make sure your staffers are easy to identify. Company name tags and/or matching attire make you more approachable and give a polished look to the exhibit. Staffers that had unique "uniform" type clothing that matched the exhibit or theme stood out, as it helped to brand them and identify them to others. Staff uniforms that included black or dark shirts didn't stand out quite as well unless the company logo was bright or large enough to "pop off" the dark background.

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Actively engage visitors. Encourage staffers to stand out toward the aisle in an open and inviting stance. Staffers who stand with their backs to the aisle, with their arms crossed or with their hands in their pockets send a negative non-verbal message. Additionally, staffers who spend their time talking to each other or who are busy on their phones or iPads give off an unwelcoming “don’t bother” me signal to visitors.

There's no need to over-staff. Two to three staffers per 100 square feet of space is more than enough, unless you have a special promotion or activity in your exhibit that requires additional staff. Also, be sure to have an onsite contact list available at all times, in case you need to get a hold of a specific staff member during the show.

Get Creative with your Booth Display

Dress it Up! Standout exhibits used designs that presented a unique booth environment such as a café, beach, store front, living room, or other inviting setting. Others found creative ways to showcase their products, such as produce bouquets, products carved into interesting shapes, or other fun arrangements. A little creativity can take even a 10 x 10 space to the next level.

Lighten Up! Lighting really does help to not only to make your booth stand out, but can effectively highlight important messages, displays, or activities taking place in the exhibit.

Open Up! Creating an open, warm and inviting space is key. Give visitors the opportunity to come in to your space (particularly with inline exhibits) so they can engage with your staff, interact with your products, and walk away with a memorable experience.

And Don't Forget to Look Down – We love to see exhibits getting creative with their flooring options. We saw several exhibits made to look like hard wood floors. Many coordinated their floor with the look and design of their booth, which was not only creative but completed the theme. This totally sets you apart and can completely transform the feel of your exhibit.