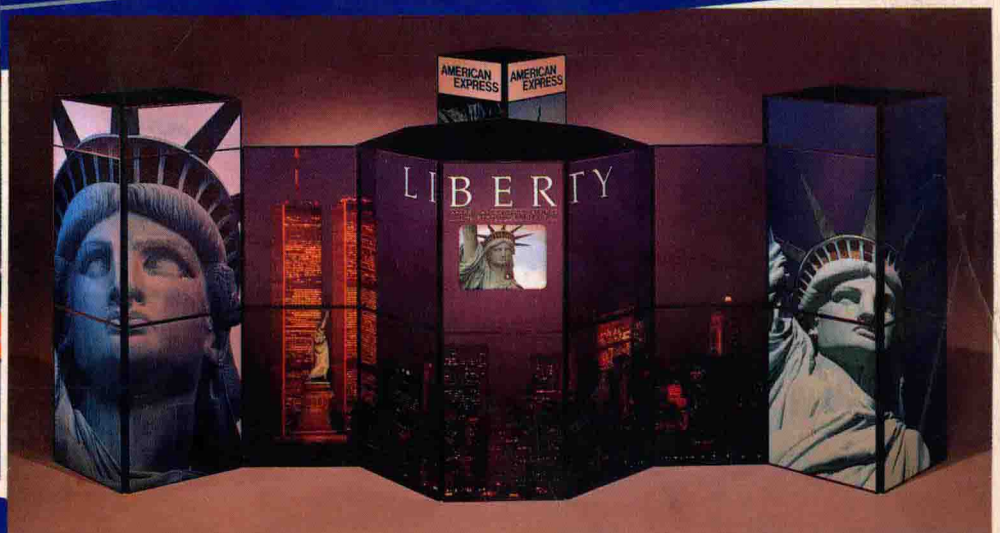


# Exhibit Design 2

## Trade Show Graphics



Robert B. Konikow

# Exhibit Design 2

Trade Show Graphics

compiled by **Robert B. Konikow**

PBC International, Inc., New York



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*Distributors to the trade in the United States:*

PBC International, Inc.  
One School Street  
Glen Cove, NY 11542

*Distributors to the trade in Canada:*

General Publishing Co. Ltd.  
30 Lesmill Road  
Don Mills, Ontario M3B 2T6, Canada

*Contact PBC International, Inc. for information  
on the distributors throughout the rest of the world.*

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Konikow, Robert B.  
Exhibit Design 2.

Includes indexes.

1. Exhibitions. I. Title. II. Title: Exhibit  
design two.

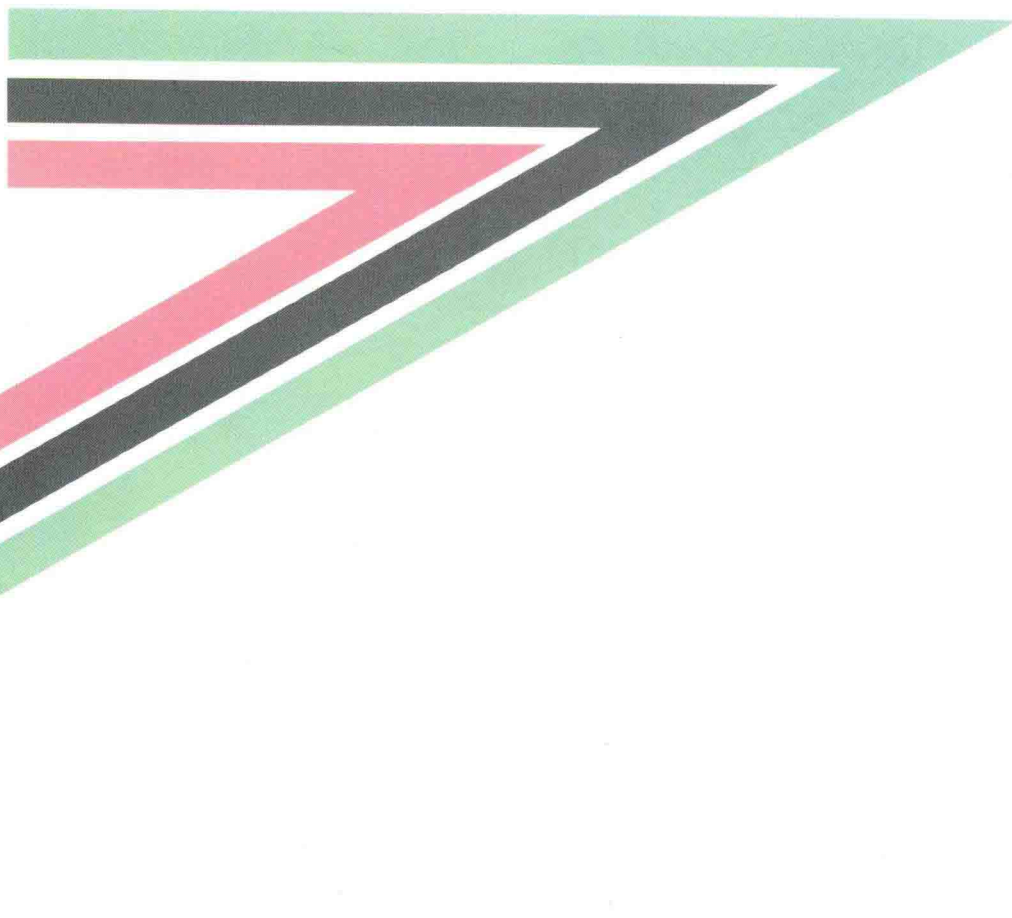
T396.5.K65 1986 659.1'52 85-21825

ISBN: 0-86636-011-5

Color separation, printing, and binding by  
Toppan Printing Co. (H.K.) Ltd. Hong Kong

Typesetting by Vera-Reyes, Inc.

PRINTED IN HONG KONG  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2



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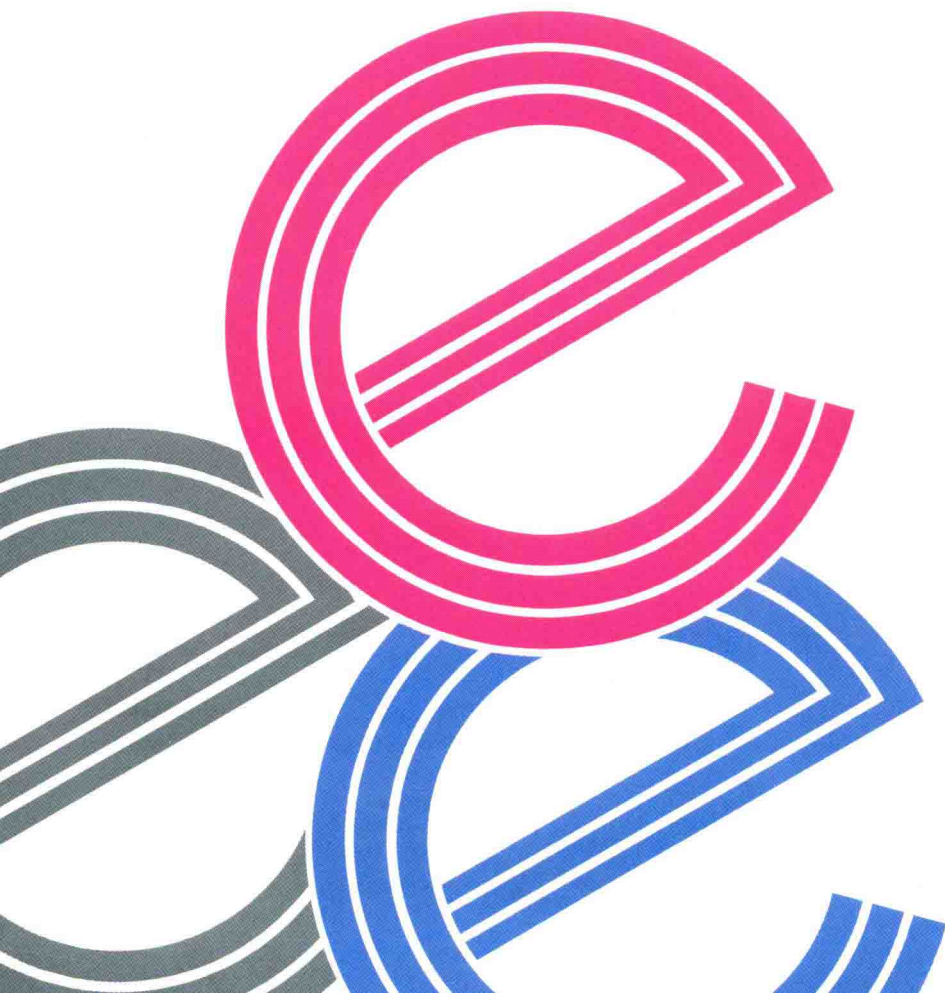
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# Exhibit Design 2





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Trade Show Graphics

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PBC International, Inc., New York



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Konikow, Robert B.  
Exhibit Design 2.

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1. Exhibitions. I. Title. II. Title: Exhibit  
design two.

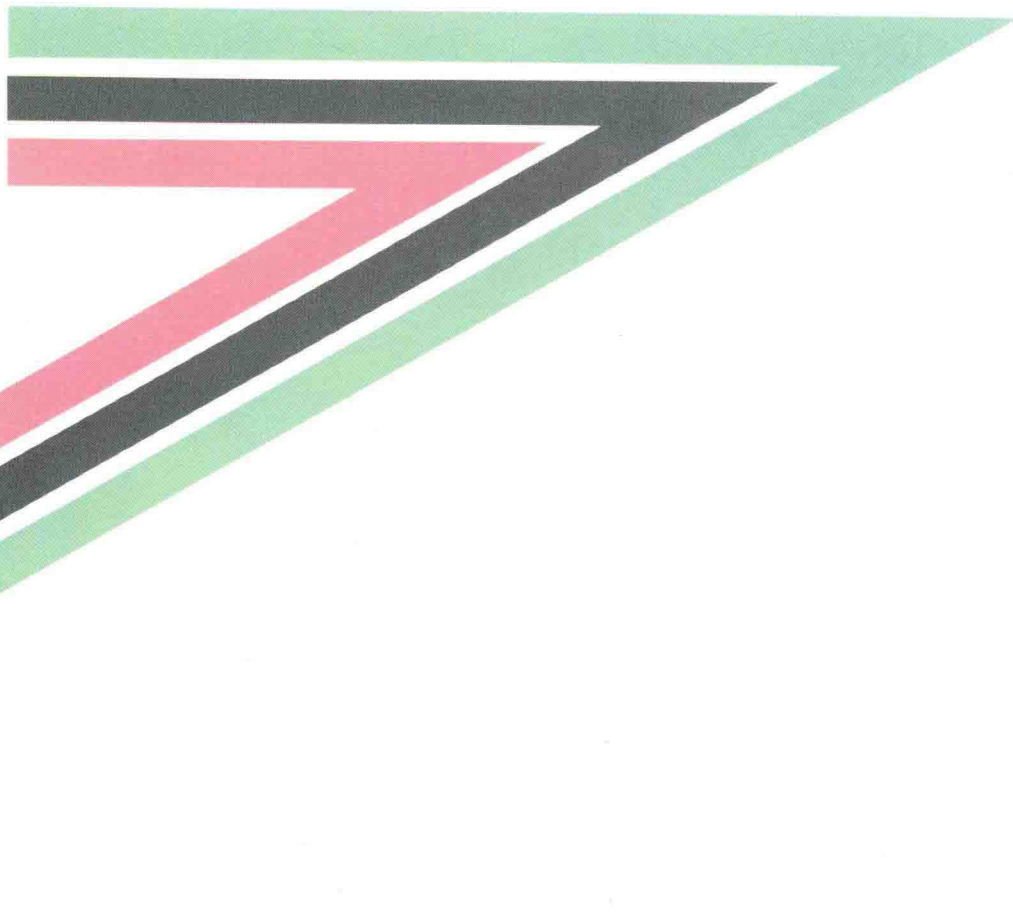
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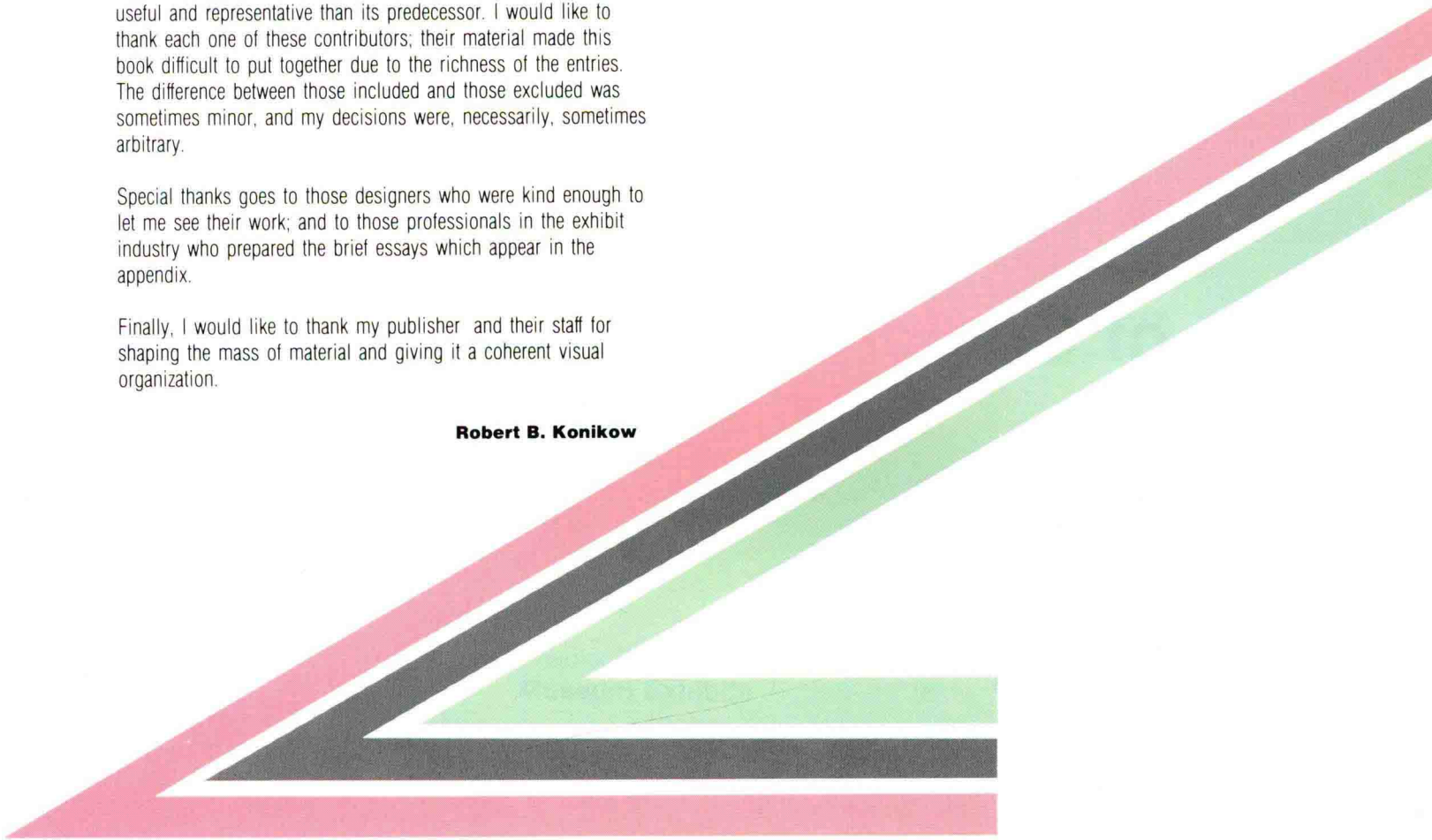
# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The enthusiasm and participation of all those who submitted material for this book has made *Exhibit Design 2* even more useful and representative than its predecessor. I would like to thank each one of these contributors; their material made this book difficult to put together due to the richness of the entries. The difference between those included and those excluded was sometimes minor, and my decisions were, necessarily, sometimes arbitrary.

Special thanks goes to those designers who were kind enough to let me see their work; and to those professionals in the exhibit industry who prepared the brief essays which appear in the appendix.

Finally, I would like to thank my publisher and their staff for shaping the mass of material and giving it a coherent visual organization.

**Robert B. Konikow**



Publisher:	Herb Taylor
Project Director:	Cora Taylor
Editor:	Carol Denby
Editorial Assistant:	Carolyn Edwins
Art Director:	Richard Liu
Art Associates:	Dan Larkin
	Marilyn Allensbach



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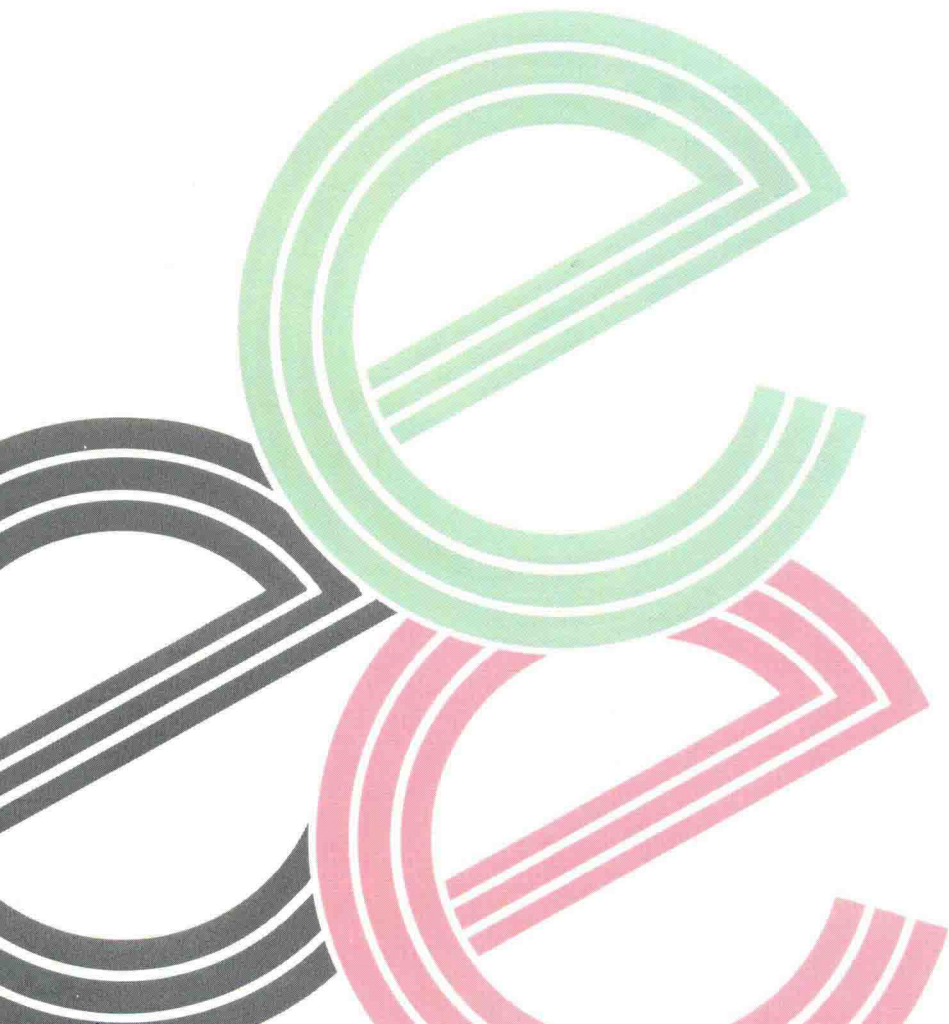


# FOREWORD

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How much does design contribute to the success of a trade show or educational exhibit? It is certain that *bad* exhibit design can seriously compromise the goals of an exhibitor. A design that is expensive to construct or is complicated or time-consuming to set up is impractical. However, a design that is simple to set up, has a logical traffic pattern, and involves practical use of space, simple materials and construction techniques, may not be attractive to passersby. Exhibit designers who overlook the most basic principles of exhibit design can create a booth that's the focal point of a show; however, it will likely fall short of the exhibitor's overall goal.

What is the definition of "good" or "bad" design? Are there standards for judging whether or not an exhibit is "well-designed?" When we look at the purpose of an exhibit—any exhibit—we may find some answers.



Any exhibit, whether large or small, dramatic or subdued, must work. It must create a business-like setting, communicate the overall image of the exhibiting company and it must satisfy the overall objectives of the exhibitor.

Simply stated, design is just one of the building blocks that makes an exhibit successful; it should never be regarded as the only element of a successful exhibit.

A good exhibit designer must play a variety of roles in the development of the exhibit. First, the objectives of the exhibitor must be understood. If those objectives are unclear, or perhaps undefined, the designer should help define those objectives by asking all the right questions, and by knowing how to interpret the answers.

A good designer must also be willing to devote some time and energy to learn as much as possible about the client's business, products, markets, competition, and marketing strategies. Good exhibit design supports the total company, not just one small segment.

Also, a good exhibit designer must get inside the client's mind, to ferret out the needs, objectives and messages that should be integral to the design.

To answer the initial question, design *does* play a role in successful exhibiting. It is neither the beginning nor the end, but another link in the chain that ties together the total effort.

This book contains many exhibits; some good, some better, and some excellent examples of design which support the marketing goals of the exhibitor.

Hopefully, these ideas will help spark new ideas that will make your next exhibit more successful.

**Martha B. Wolf**

McDonald Moving Services,  
Raynham, Massachusetts  
Past President, The International  
Exhibitors Association



# INTRODUCTION

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Exhibit design should be significantly more than just filling space. A work of art is not required to function in a commercial environment, but to stand on its own. This is not true of an exhibit. To succeed, its design must directly support the marketing objectives of the project. Without this support, the exhibit functions as a piece of art, but not as a marketing tool.

If a new company produces high-technology products that compete with those of established firms, a frivolous or overly intricate exhibit may be counter-productive. If the designer is told, "We need excitement; a gimmick to draw people in," the resulting design may better be characterized as a sideshow or an art exhibit, rather than as a marketing tool. An elephant and palm trees at a computer show may call attention to the exhibit, but for all the wrong reasons. Simple, creative design that builds credibility and projects a feeling of technical competence would serve the new company better.

Designers and those who commission them should remember these important criteria:

- The effectiveness of an exhibit is directly proportional to the quality of input used to develop the design.



- The use of gimmicks in trade show exhibits is often directly related to the absence of clear marketing goals or a coherent selling strategy.
- It is better to create a positive selling atmosphere than an exciting design atmosphere.

Successful design solutions go beyond building the right atmosphere and projecting the correct image. They share many of the characteristics of an art exhibit:

- They are people-oriented in that they provide sufficient space for visitors to move around.
- They communicate a theme that supports the client's marketing objectives.
- They offer an inviting, visually simple appearance.
- They strive to communicate with predetermined target groups within the overall audience of trade show attendees.
- They do not intimidate or confuse visitors.

- Their contents relate to specific products or services being sold by the exhibitor.
- They clearly identify the exhibitor.
- They leave show visitors with a positive, informed impression of the exhibitor and the exhibitor's products or services.
- They are not created to achieve "a look," but to help attain marketing objectives and support a company's image.

The best way to ensure that the design process results in a marketing-oriented exhibit is to start with the fundamentals: a marketing plan or sales strategy. Three important elements are:

- The design team should be involved in all planning meetings from the conception of the project on.
- Aim the design at the target audience. The designers should know who these groups are and should be given as much information as possible about them.
- The design must accommodate all of the functions needed to support the

exhibitor's marketing objectives. If the objectives are compromised for an exhibit's "look," the results will also be compromised. Many good designs are compromised before they reach the exhibit floor because their role as a support to the marketing objectives wasn't sufficiently considered.

Successful exhibit design requires a blending of space planning, product design and graphics, and an understanding of structure and materials.

With these requirements, exhibit design is best left to professionals whose specialty is the trade show medium. Exhibition at trade shows can be a powerful selling tool, but fulfilling that potential is dependent on a clear understanding and support of sound marketing objectives.

**George G. Dorr, President**  
Giltspur Exhibits  
Rochester, New York



## Chapter 1

# Techniques of Exhibit Design

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At first glance, it may seem a long distance artistically from the couture salons of New York and Paris to the trade exhibits of the New York Coliseum or the Paris Air Show. Yet the challenge faced by the exhibit designer is, in many ways, similar to that confronting the fashion designer at the close of a season: Everyone knows that next year's line will feature pants, skirts, dresses, and shirts; everyone knows the models will be tall and painfully thin. But only the designer's genius can transform these familiar shapes into a unique, provocative fashion statement.

This chapter highlights some of the original ways exhibit designers have found to energize familiar elements. The first step to an imaginative—and effective—exhibit is to form a strong partnership with the client. Exhibit design isn't an individual sport. It's a team effort that must include the client's marketing, sales, and public relations representatives, experienced and talented designers, and detail-oriented producers. The qualifications to carry out the proposed program successfully include knowledge, skill, facilities, and other resources necessary for an effective exhibit design.

