

Rules of attraction

Head of creative at George P Johnson **Andy Bass** offers tips on how to attract show visitors via the five senses.

As a marketer tasked with ensuring your company has a successful live experience, I'm sure you are all too aware of how quickly snap judgements can be made. In fact, it can take as little as three seconds for people to make an initial first impression, which can then have a lasting effect.

With a need to ensure the right first impressions are made when

exhibiting, it is vital you use all the communication channels made available to you.

I'm not referring to digital, advertising or networking channels but rather our own senses.

Exhibitors should be trying to create an impactful brand experience to ensure the right first impressions with that all important exhibition visitor.

Where to begin

Humans have many senses, yet even the most obvious (sight, sound, smell, touch and taste) are seldom catered for at an exhibition to deliver one cohesive brand experience. By stimulating a broader range of your stand visitors' senses in an integrated and unified way, you are more likely to achieve better impact and lasting impressions.

Start by asking yourself:

- What does your brand stand for?
- How would you describe your brand?
- What are your organisation's key messages?
- Who is your organisation targeting at the exhibition?

You should develop a list of descriptive words that provide a reference point from which to develop your sensory brand experience. This should act as your blueprint, which you should constantly refer to while designing your exhibitor presence.

What are you peeking at?

Humans are visual communicators with a highly developed non-verbal language. It's therefore natural that exhibitors often start with the aesthetics of their stand design, ensuring it is pleasing to the eye while reflective of the brand identity. However it is important to remember exactly what messages your stand design needs to convey.

Excessive branding can leave visitors to your stand overwhelmed and sometimes even deter them from engaging with you. Think more about what your stand is 'saying'.



Food and drink aligned to your brand can leave visitors with more than just a full stomach

“We all recall associations with smells rooted in our own personal experiences”

For example, you may wish to communicate that it is your company’s 20th anniversary. Is it because you wish to highlight that the company has been operating for 20 years or is it because you wish to communicate your business experience and heritage?

Also think carefully about the emotive qualities of colour. There are many cultural variations, but to the western eye, a colour such as navy blue exudes integrity, loyalty and assurance while dark earth tones have connotations of age and heritage.

Do you hear that?

Sound is important to us and tone of voice is a vital component of communication. It’s not simply a question of what you say, but how you say it.

With this in mind, select stand staff who fully understand their role as brand ambassadors and are careful to properly express your messages.

Something else to consider is the wider surrounding noise. The general hustle and bustle of a show floor can create initial excitement and energy.

However, you may decide to create an environment of calm and tranquillity on your stand as this is more in line with your messages.

You could look at ways of reducing outside noise by creating enclosed spaces, or using materials that soften the harsh resonance of an exhibition environment.

A rose by any other name

There is an old estate agent saying: “Freshly baked bread sells houses”. This is because that smell has a resounding connection with family



“What features does this pram have?” Getting visitors to see and handle products is a positive step towards achieving sales

and tradition. This is exactly the type of feeling you want to evoke from a potential home buyer when they view a property.

Yet smell is all but ignored in an exhibition environment, it is possibly the most effective at not only for creating lasting impressions but also dictating the outcomes/favourability of these impressions.

We all recall associations with smells rooted in our own personal experiences and which act as an effective recall mechanism for emotive responses. By tapping into this mechanism, you can instigate positive responses to your brand and imprint a lasting impression of it onto your visitors.

If you want to attack this oft neglected sense, ask yourself what would your brand smell like if it were a perfume? And what emotive response do you wish to instil in your target customer base?

Grasp the situation

From the simple ‘firm hand shake’ to the embrace of an old friend, there are many subtle ways of developing meaningful physical

engagement. Something else to keep in mind is the use of textures in a stand design and on-stand activities that encourage touch and interaction.

Materials have their own range of sensory associations from youthful, fun, irreverence to eminence and endurance. Think about what textured rubber and fur or polished stone and solid wood might say about your brand, as an example.

Give me a bit

Finally, many exhibitors will often have some element of food and drink on-stand to attract visitors. By ensuring your offering is appropriately designed, you are again able to evoke positive experiences.

For example, if you are a British technology supplier, a selection of food offerings which consisted of traditional British food with a modern twist could help underline both your British roots and innovation.

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