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The Value Of Light

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There is no such thing as an average client when it comes to lighting a trade show booth. Expectations and style are unique to each company. There are, however, a few factors that remain consistent across the board: planning, budgeting and a demand for quality light. In addition to the key decisions a company makes regarding structure, carpet and color scheme, lighting should be included in the initial stages of a booth's conception.

Light, Inc. These expenses include lighting design, equipment, transportation and labor. Venue/show management charges such as marshaling, drayage, house riggers and power drops are not included in these costs.)

20' x 20' Booth -- 400 Square Feet

Though rare, booths this modest do purchase professional lighting services. Bas Blommaart, managing director of Hotel Concepts, a European company specializing in the implementation of hotel and resort management software, wanted very sophisticated lighting in his Hospitality Industry Technology Exposition Conference (HITEC) 2001 booth. He knew he wanted to use trusses as structure. He also understood the "moth to the flame" concept of lighting; i.e., he wanted it bright. Off the shelf components were used. After being customized with Hotel Concepts logos, they provided an appealing, cost-effective solution. Total cost was around \$4,500, broken down to \$11.25 per square foot.

40' x 40' Booth -- 1,600 Square Feet

Traditionally, this is the entry-level size for dedicated flown lighting trusses. For Aquawear America's 2001 Kitchen and Bath Show booth, a 26' diameter circular truss was not only used to light the booth, but was also brought into play as a structure for their round signage. Pipes were added in a radiating pattern in order to position light fixtures to reach every nook and cranny of the booth. Additional lights were placed inside the truss itself, which were programmed into a marquee sequencer. The Aquawear America booth was bright and visually exciting, proving very effective in attracting attention across the trade show floor. Total lighting services cost around \$13,000, or \$8.15 per square foot.

50' x 50' Booth -- 2,500 Square Feet

MacGregor had not utilized professional lighting services in their booth prior to the 2003 PGA Merchandise Show. They were not ready for the commitment of a full trussing system, but they saw a need for improved lighting. Individual lights were positioned in the steel support beams of the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando. With help from the Convention Center's in-house rigging department, headed by Sammy Stokes, assistant technical services supervisor, individual lights were hung from the building's beams. Thirty fixtures were cabled to a distribution panel, which allowed an electrician the ability to turn



Hotel Concepts wanted to use trusses as structure.

Audiences are becoming more sophisticated, expecting market leaders to have cutting-edge design. Companies that choose to save money by ignoring professional lighting services are doing themselves a disservice. Professionally lit booths draw more traffic from the trade show floor because of their heightened visibility. A properly lit booth looks happier, cleaner and more inviting than a booth lacking in the illumination department.

One of the simplest things companies can do to improve their appearance is turn off the houselights over their booth. When the houselights over a booth are turned off, dramatic atmospheric changes can be felt in relation to the rest of the show floor. Separation from the visual cacophony on the show floor offers clients a relaxing place to dwell while they listen to a presentation or view product.

So now we know that every booth requires suitable lighting. Where do we go from here? The amount of lighting and trussing a booth will require depends on what is being lit. From airplanes to golf balls and kitchen sinks, each product has its own challenges when it comes to lighting design. To get an idea where to start in the budgeting process, we will look at a few recent projects organized by booth size.

(Note: The costs detailed are estimates provided by Canavan Scenic &



the light on and off daily. This particular lighting structure provided unique pools of light in several key zones of the booth. The MacGregor booth was large, and the graphics were effectively lit without employing a truss system. Total cost was around \$7,500, broken down to \$3 per square foot. This offered a very economical entry-level lighting system.

60' x 60' Booth -- 3,600 Square Feet

Booths of this caliber should always use lighting trusses. Top-Flight Golf Companies chose an innovative style for a booth at the 2003 PGA Merchandise Show that minimized the visual impact of the technical support overhead. High-quality black trusses with black fixtures were used against the existing black ceiling, making their lighting equipment nearly invisible. All of the product displays were exceptionally lit this way, as well as all of the internal and external signage. Beyond that, different sections of the booth were lit in contrasting styles to make the booth's space seem even larger.

"It was not just about shining a light on our displays," says Ed Seval, vice president of marketing services for Top-Flite Golf Company. "The idea was to create lighting variations designed to guide visitors through our booth and create interest in each area."

Top Flite's incredible booth was 110' x 100', or 12,100 square feet. Lighting services ran around \$85,000, or \$7 per square foot for superlative lighting inside and outside the booth.

At the National Business Aviation Association Convention, Cessna



Top-Flight Golf Companies chose high-quality black trusses with black fixtures.

employed trusses that were unique and stood out. With an oval center and radiating wings, Cessna's trusses accentuated the dynamic lines of their custom booth managed by Chicago Exhibit Productions. The Cessna project utilized a 130' x 90' footprint at 11,700 square feet. This particular project cost \$35,000, broken down to \$3 per square foot.

Trusses are not only used for lighting. For SIGARMS' 2003 Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade Show (SHOT) booth, trusses were used to support banners as well as the lighting. The banners were a significant component of the booth design, and were visible across the entire show floor.

"Our goal for SHOT was to increase visibility and awareness of our company while establishing brand related awareness represented by SIGARMS," says Laura Burgess, director of public relations. "With all of the visual clutter and color that is usually found at trade shows, we needed a way to make our brand banners stand out from the rest. By using lighting to strategically enhance our banners and product modules, we were able to differentiate ourselves from the crowd."



Cessna employed trusses that were unique and stood out.

"The lighting increased the excitement level of the booth space," adds John Magness, account executive for FDI Group, the booth design firm. "The booth was extremely crowded, so we can only surmise that the lighting by Canavan contributed to that end." The SIGARMS project utilized a 50' x 60' footprint, or 3,000 square feet. Lighting costs ran around \$30,000, broken down to \$10 per square foot. "We consider the lighting comparable in cost with 'built-in display' lighting but with more flexibility and a much greater impact," says Magness.

In conclusion, to have an inviting trade show booth with plenty of traffic, lighting will cost between \$3 and \$11.25 per square foot, depending on the size of the booth and how intricately it is lit. Including these funds for professional lighting services in a trade show budget will ultimately increase a company's opportunity to make lasting, beneficial connections with clients. Booth traffic will increase and an environment will be created that is conducive to networking, relationship building and extended visit times from show attendees. **eb**



MacGregor had not utilized professional lighting services prior to this show.

All photos courtesy Canavan Scenic & Light, Inc., Orlando, FL