

F R E E M A N

First-Time Exhibitor Program: Shipping, Transportation and Material Handling Cost Saving Tips

“The more you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll Go.

Dr. Seuss, “I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!”

As the quote above suggests, knowledge is the source for success in everything we do. When participating in an event, knowledge about shipping, carriers and material handling rates and rules are critical in the financial and logistical success of your participation in that event.

Because transportation and material handling can involve such a significant part of your exhibiting budget (on average 11 %*), let’s examine each area independently on how you can reduce expenditures, and increase peace of mind.

Shipping and Transportation

As there are numerous choices when choosing a transportation carrier, research will pay off in the long run.

- Choose a carrier or freight forwarder that is familiar with the trade show industry. Experience can save time and money.
- Consider using the official show carrier with onsite representation. This can also eliminate off target, late fees, and material handling surcharges.
- Ask your carrier for a discount off of the standard class 125 rate used for exhibit material.
- Provide your carrier with all of the pertinent show information, such as event name, booth number, destination, marshalling location, target move-in times and dates, and move-out information.
- Make sure your shipment is properly packaged, labeled and insured. Remove all old labels.
- Plan your shipping in advance to avoid air freight or rush delivery surcharges.
- If possible, scale your shipment prior to tendering it to your carrier, but always request that your carrier obtain a certified weight for your shipment to avoid delays and billing discrepancies.
- Ask your carrier about assessorial charges, waiting time fees, fuel surcharges and other charges associated with trade show transportation. Oftentimes the original quote from a traditional carrier may exceed that of an official show carrier.
- If possible find out if your carrier will be consolidating your shipment with other shipments. This can affect you target times, pick-up times and material handling costs.
- Choose a carrier that will not split your shipment up in transit. Split shipments can lead to multiple material handling charges rather than just one.
- Ask your General Service Contractor for transportation options, including round trip services, packages, multiple event logistics and caravans.
- Track your shipment with your carrier and bring your shipping information with you to the event.

Material Handling

Material handling rates and rate structures will vary from event to event and from city to city so it is important to familiarize yourself with each event that you participate in.

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- Read the exhibitor manual and be familiar with move-in and move-out times, targets and rates for material handling. This can reduce your exposure to overtime, late fees, surcharges, and rerouting. If you need clarification on any information, contact customer services.
- Consider advanced shipping to the general contractor's warehouse as opposed to shipping direct to the event. While advance shipping can appear to be more expensive, it can actually be less expensive if direct shipping involves overtime. Advance shipping can also provide peace of mind by avoiding expedited and late arrival surcharges.
- Consider the weight and design of your display. Light weight fabrics can create a dramatic visual effect, while saving significant material handling charges.
- Consider renting an exhibit from the local general contractor. This eliminates material handling charges as well as shipping, storage, and the cost of building an exhibit.
- Do not arrange for display labor on the same date and time as your target date. If you need assistance in this area, contact your General Service Contractor.
- Consolidate small packages into a larger shipment. This can eliminate multiple minimum charges for individual small shipments and material handling surcharges associated with small package carriers. Ask your General Service Contractor for guidance in this area.
- Palletize or package loose items to avoid loose and uncrated surcharges.
- Avoid special handling surcharges by instructing that your shipment be loaded in a manner that does not require additional labor or equipment to be unloaded, or use an LTL carrier/forwarder.
- Consider storing your exhibit with a contractor as opposed to shipping it back and forth.

It may appear to be a daunting task for the uninitiated to follow the above steps, but with time... "The more you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."

*According to TSEA Annual Exhibitor Budget Survey 2009