

Showing Products at a Trade Show: What Works, What Doesn't

September 24-30 2018

# Manufacturing Marketing

GROWING YOUR BUSINESS

## TRADE SHOW MARKETING

WHAT EXHIBITORS  
SAID

TIPS FOR FIRST-TIME  
ATTENDEES

BOOTH DO'S AND  
DON'TS

129,415 registrations.  
2,563 exhibitors.  
1,424,000 square feet.  
IMTS 2018 broke records!

BUT WE ATTENDED IMTS for a different purpose to everyone else: to bring you back our insights into the latest in trade show marketing – from the multi-million dollar booths all the way down to the 10x10s.

In this issue, you'll find everything we noticed and learned. It's made us better marketers, and we're sure the information will help you grow your business, too.

To everyone we met, spoke with and who now subscribe, thank you for a fantastic experience and welcome to Manufacturing Marketing Magazine!

—Dianna Huff, Editor and Rachel Cunliffe, Designer

---

#### THIS WEEK'S SPONSOR

### Deep Hole Drilling Machines Made in America – Kays Engineering

DeHoff and Eldorado gundrilling machines feature a box way design and hand-scraped mating components. The result is superior vibration damping, improved surface finish, and unmatched tool life. **View our entire line of machines:** [www.kays-dehoff.com/mmm](http://www.kays-dehoff.com/mmm)

# Manufacturing Marketing

Issue 14

---



#### COVER:

IMTS 2018 at  
McCormick Place,  
Chicago.

**Editor** Dianna Huff

[dianna@huffindustrialmarketing.com](mailto:dianna@huffindustrialmarketing.com)

**Designer** Rachel Cunliffe

[rachel@cre8d-design.com](mailto:rachel@cre8d-design.com)

#### Contact Manufacturing Marketing

Manufacturing Marketing is published by  
Huff Industrial Marketing and cre8d design  
37 Plaistow Road, Unit 7-245  
Plaistow, NH 03865  
(603) 382-8093  
[inquiries@huffindustrialmarketing.com](mailto:inquiries@huffindustrialmarketing.com)

#### Subscribe to Manufacturing Marketing

[huffindustrialmarketing.com/magazine](http://huffindustrialmarketing.com/magazine)

#### Magazine Archives

[huffindustrialmarketing.com/magazine/archives](http://huffindustrialmarketing.com/magazine/archives)

#### Sponsor Manufacturing Marketing

[inquiries@huffindustrialmarketing.com](mailto:inquiries@huffindustrialmarketing.com)

---

© 2018, All Rights Reserved.

Reproduction in whole or in part without  
permission is prohibited.





## Showcasing Your Products at a Trade Show: What Works, What Doesn't

Huge. Overwhelming. Amazing. These are a few of the adjectives that sum up IMTS 2018. Held every other year in Chicago, IMTS is five large halls filled with booths, equipment, and people. Walking in and

taking it all in for the first time was exhilarating.

Our objective as attendees was to view, from a marketing perspective, as much as possible over two and half days. We wanted to see what worked,

what didn't, and why in order to help you improve your trade show marketing.

We also wanted to highlight exemplary ways manufacturers showcase their products and how you can improve yours, too.

## HP: 3D PRINTING



**Products on display:** Hands-on “please handle us” 3D printed parts (aka additive manufacturing) for industries ranging from healthcare and robotics to automotive and aerospace.

**What we loved:** The display cards which told the story of each part. Each one was a stand-alone card featuring a photo of the part, a brief application note, and the customer name.

**Why it worked:** Reading the card helped you understand how the part was used and why it was made. Handling the part allowed you to feel the texture as well as view from it from different angles. The display card design was simple, clean and on brand. It was a comfortable size to hold and was firm versus flimsy. Each one had a mini-stand attached to the back, so they were quite visible since they stood up on the display stands. Being able to pick

up the information and hold it in your hands made it a comfortable reading experience, rather than having to peer behind a stand or look at things in the glare of the overhead lights. Because the cards and parts were free-standing, booth visitors didn’t have to return them to a set location once they were finished reading / handling.

**Bonus points:** An HP rep talked to us at length about the technology and how the company was using 3D printing to solve unique challenges for customers. The display cards were a natural lead-in to discussions.

**Key takeaway for smaller manufacturers:** Creating cards like these is relatively inexpensive and easy. This marketing technique draws people into your booth, tells a story, and gives people a tactile experience.

**For comparison:** Another manufacturer’s parts were arranged in a plexiglass case. The enclosed parts cannot be touched nor does the display tell a story. The exhibitor put the onus on attendees to know what these parts were and why they’re used.





## IN-SITE SOLUTIONS: FLOOR MARKING TAPES/SIGNS



**Products on display:** Industrial tapes used for marking shop and manufacturing floors.

**What we loved:** That the exhibitor, Al Barker (National Account Manager), installed the tape directly to the cement floor

in his booth.

**Why it worked:** Seeing the tape on the type of floor it is used on, rather than sitting in rolls on a display table, enabled us to see the product at work and envisage a variety of ways it could be used.

A product demo display like this prompted many questions: What is the benefit of this product? Can we have a tape made with a custom message? How is this tape different from competitor tapes?

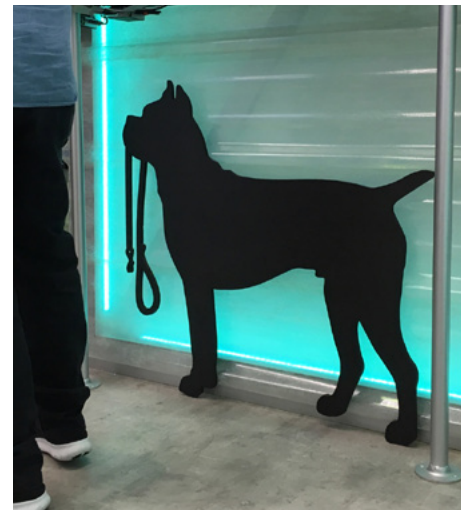
**Bonus points:** When we asked the last question, Al had his answer ready. He held up a roll of cheap vinyl tape and said, “When you stick this stuff down, you have to use a scraper to remove it. Our tape comes up in one piece.”

**Key takeaway for smaller manufacturers:** Creative ideas, such as foregoing carpet and putting tape directly to the cement floor, are free. Don’t be afraid to try something new.

**For comparison:** Contrast In-Site Solution’s engaging display with those you typically see: a booth counter blocking the entrance into the booth, standard signage, and a product or two.



## ALLTING: CNC AND MANUFACTURING SOFTWARE



**Products on display:** Software demonstrated via large monitors and iPads placed strategically around the booth.

**What we loved:** That the booth was themed to look like a shop floor where the product was designed to be used. Note the cement-like texture of the flooring, overhead bare fluorescent bulbs, and the stainless steel handrails. The setup was extremely clean with no visible cables.

**Why it worked:** Industrial in look and feel, the turquoise lighting added an edgy flair. Booth personnel also wore branded denim shirts, black trousers, and black sneakers.

**Bonus points:** The fun cutout of a shop dog.

**Key takeaway for smaller manufacturers:** Consider how technologies such as iPads or monitors can help you clearly communicate your message.

**For comparison:** Compare Allting's booth with another manufacturer who used monitors in a not-so-good way. Note the extension cord snaking across the booth (trip hazard!) as well as the untidy cables hanging from the monitors.



### What Exhibitors Said

“If you’re not at this show, people think you’re going out of business and don’t want to purchase from you.”

“IMTS is a must. It’s the biggest show in North America. You have to be here.”

“We like to keep our marketing edgy.”



## TAP MAGIC: CUTTING TOOL FLUID



**Products on display:** Bottles of Tap Magic cutting fluid.

**What we loved:** That the president of the company, Ken Gaines, was handing out free sample bottles. As soon as he put out a dozen new bottles, people scooped them up in seconds. Seeing him continually replenish the supplies from beneath the counter added to the movement and energy generated at the booth.

**Why it worked:** In addition to Ken, two other friendly outgoing guys manned the booth, so they were able to start conversations with people as they came by.

**Bonus points:** When asked if the bottle of fluid would leak in a bag, Ken had anticipated this and handed the person a plastic baggie.

**Key takeaway for smaller manufacturers:** Instead of standard trade show schwag

(which attendees often collect to bring home to their kids), consider how you can offer a branded sample or scaled down version of your product – one that would be useful to your target audience.

**For comparison:** Compare this giveaway with a catalog CD another exhibitor was handing out. Many people no longer have the drives in their machines to play these, rendering the giveaway useless to them.



### What Exhibitors Said

**“Made in the US is a huge trend. People love it. I buy as much US-made stuff as I can. Even the jeans I’m wearing are made in the US.”**

**“Ladies! Wait up! You walked right through our booth without stopping to interview me about the product I invented!”**

## BLASER SWISSLUBE: SYNERGY 735 COOLANT



**Products on display:** CNC machine coolant.

**What we loved:** The booth signage featured photos of customers and their testimonials. Messaging was simple, visual, and to the point – e.g. “Produce more in less time.” Note that the imagery does not need to be of your product to be effective.

**Why it worked:** The photos were large, dynamic, and featured real people at work using their product rather than boring stock photos.

**Bonus points:** The company carried this messaging through all the show elements, including print brochures and its IMTS

website listing.

**Key takeaway for smaller manufacturers:** Although original photography costs more than stock photos, it is worth the time and money. Your photos stand out and they communicate your message in a way stock photography cannot. Plus, you can reuse the photos on your website, brochures and datasheets, and in your PowerPoint presentations. They can also be incorporated into videos.

### What Exhibitors Said

“I can’t show you our website because it looks like crap on my phone.”

“We’re not fans of booth babes.”





At the Alliance for American Manufacturing booth



With Matt Kays, VP Business Development, Kays Engineering

## Manufacturing Marketing at IMTS 2018



Posing with the mascot of the Gorilla Mill booth



Dianna and Rachel arriving at IMTS



With Carly Krolle, PR & Marketing Manager, and her assisted reality product, UBiMAX

## Question of the Week

### *What should we have prepared if the press visits our booth?*

Journalists from industry publications will walk the show floor looking for potential stories that will interest their readers.

To help them do their job, it pays to have material ready for them in the form of a press kit.

Traditionally, press kits were comprised of folders thick with information: product press releases, corporate and technology backgrounders, high quality photos, and articles featuring the company in big name publications.

Today, press kits still contain this information, but now they're best delivered digitally on branded thumb drives, such as the one pictured from Fanuc.

It also helps to have two or three different angles on your company's story in order to provide relevant information depending on a publication's focus – e.g. new technology, industry trends, or creative marketing, to name just a few.



One tip we recommend, which we didn't see anyone using at IMTS, is giving journalists the ability to schedule an interview at the trade show on the fly – especially if the marketing or PR person is unavailable when they're with a client or on a break when the journalist visits.

The scheduling option should have the ability to issue reminder alerts to both parties and a quieter location designated – not necessarily the booth, especially if you don't have seating.

This way, instead of telling the journalist to “come back later” or “tomorrow” – which he or she will immediately forget after leaving your booth – you have a better chance of getting a story or mention in a publication.



# Tips for first-time attendees of trade shows like IMTS

**SET YOUR PLAN WHEN YOU ARRIVE** – Due to the sheer size of IMTS, it took a couple of hours to get our bearings. We recommend picking up the show planner and studying the building layout so you know where you are and where you want to go.

**MAKE A LIST** – To save time and energy, bring a list with you of the exhibitors, customers and vendors you want to visit. Organize your list by hall and aisle.

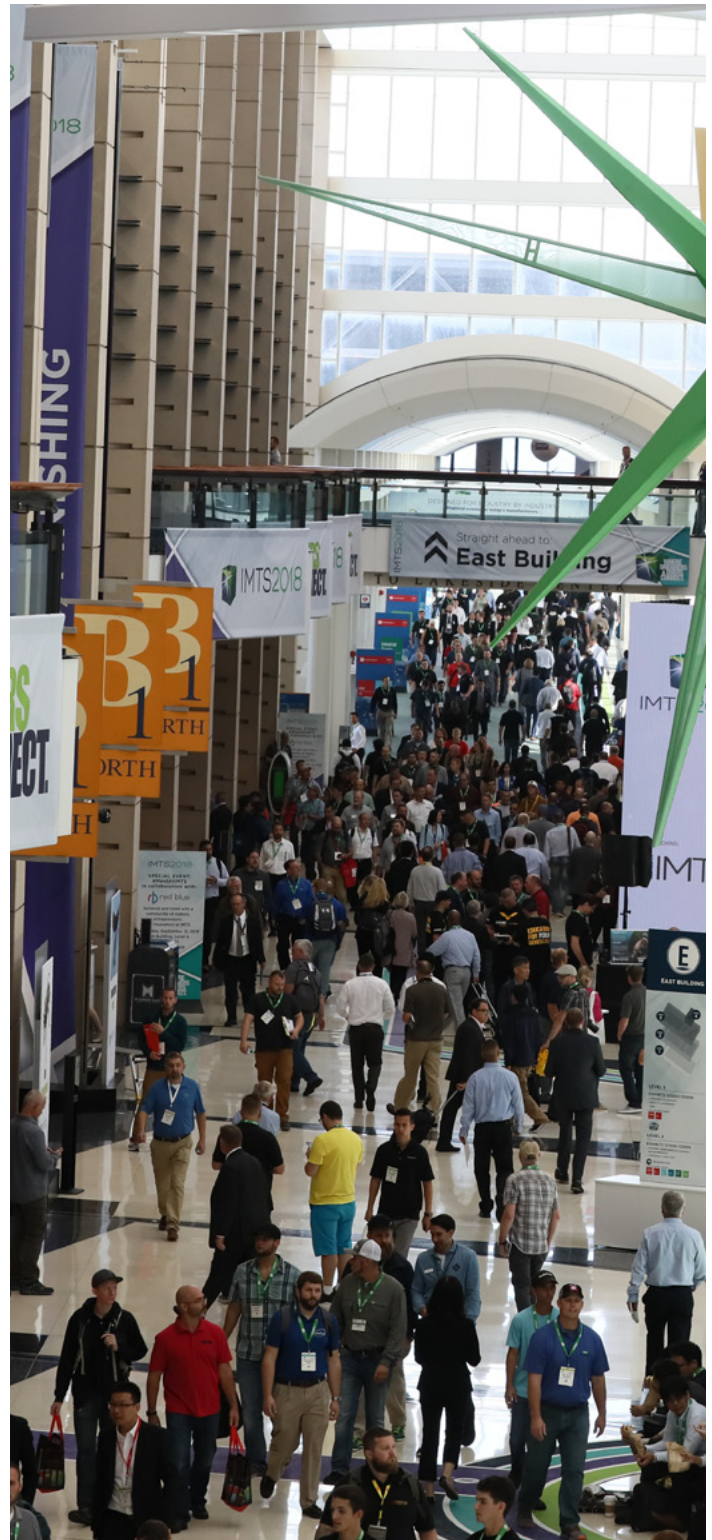
**WEAR YOUR OWN BRANDED CLOTHING** – Just because you're not exhibiting doesn't mean you can't market your company. Branded shirts with your business name and tagline can help spark conversations.

**WEAR GOOD WALKING SHOES** – Although carpeted, exhibition hall floors are made of cement, which is hard on the joints and back. Good, well-supported shoes and cushioned socks will help alleviate knee pain, blisters, etc.

**BRING PLENTY OF BUSINESS CARDS** – It's rather amazing how many cards you end up exchanging with people, so bring more than you think you'll need. Bring a pen, too, so that you can make notes on them.

**HAVE WATER AND A SNACK AVAILABLE** – While it's a chore to carry a bag of stuff around (especially for a few days), having a bottle of water or two keeps you hydrated and headache-free. Having a few snacks on hand is good, especially when food court lines become very long.

**TAKE BREAKS** – Viewing booth after booth, as well as talking to many people, can become overwhelming. When you feel tired, find a quiet spot and take a break.



# Trade Show Booth Marketing Do's and Don'ts

While walking the IMTS show, we noted dozens of things that communicated a company's brand and messaging – or detracted from it.

## PEOPLE

**DO** have friendly, chatty people at the booth front to help draw people in.

**DO** bring your own custom-branded lanyard so that you're not wearing the one provided by the show that advertises another company – maybe your competitor.

**DO** ensure your name tag stays facing outwards always. We noticed that many exhibitors' tags were spun around, so it wasn't clear who you were talking to and what their role was.

**DO** have a dress code: either branded shirts or everyone wearing the same color shirt or jacket, the way Sandvik did with their bright yellow jackets. This makes booth personnel easy to spot.

**DO** be at your booth as soon as the show opens each morning – otherwise, people see an empty booth and may not come back.

**DO** plan ahead for the inevitable afternoon slump. You never know when customers will arrive

at your booth so you need to be at your best always. If you have multiple people manning the booth, schedule short breaks in advance with flexibility to change these if your booth is busy. Fresh outside air and sunshine helps.

**DON'T** use your phone or laptop. A significant number of exhibitors were on their phones or laptops – and with the aisles full of people right next to them! The message sent is “I’m busy” or “I’m not interested in speaking with you” – which means people walk right on by without stopping.



**DON'T** sit with your arms crossed. Body language counts.

**DON'T** eat in the booth or chew gum.

## SIGNAGE

**DO** keep your messaging simple. People are overwhelmed by the sights and sounds at any trade show – but especially huge ones like IMTS. Simple messages communicate your story quickly and get people to ask a question.



**DO** proofread your signage! We saw numerous typos and typography inconsistencies on more than a few booth displays.

**DO** make a regular check of your booth throughout each day to ensure everything is still looking nice and tidy.

**DO** consider having signs, such as “Please touch,” on your products to encourage people to come in off the aisle and talk to you, touch things, ask for a

demo, etc.



**DON'T** fill signage with unreadable tiny text or with so many words that people's eyes glaze over.

**DON'T** have your message split over multiple cloth panels. It's difficult to ensure words / images line up perfectly, it looks unprofessional, and it's harder for visitors to read your message.

**DON'T** make any handwritten signs. It looks unprofessional and unorganized.

## LAYOUT

**DON'T** have steps up into your booth as these are a tripping hazard. Instead use gentle slopes.

**DON'T** place wastebaskets in view of passersby. Even worse are full ones!



**DON'T** place furniture in front of signage so that people walking by can't read it.



**DON'T** let booth counters and tables become filled with clutter: newspapers, empty coffee cups, etc. all detract from the image.



**DON'T** store luggage in the booth. Use the trade show's luggage check instead. Tuck any essential personal bags and items away out of view, you want to present.

**DON'T** have videos playing with sound. These unnecessarily add to the noise in your booth. Instead, use captioned videos.

**DON'T** offer a bowl of candy on your booth table to entice people to stop and talk. They'll simply grab these and go. (Rachel looks pointedly at Dianna.)

**DON'T** offer gimmicky freebies, such as stuffed animals, unless they're closely tied to your branding and serve a purpose.

**DO** think creatively. Just because you have a smaller budget/booth doesn't mean you can't do something different to stand out, the way Genius ERP did. They set up their booth to look like a Canadian lodge.



### ABOUT DIANNA HUFF & RACHEL CUNLIFFE

Dianna Huff, [Huff Industrial Marketing](#), and Rachel Cunliffe, [cre8d design](#), provide marketing and design to manufacturing clients across the U.S. Our process is seamless and efficient and is designed to **strategically create a website and follow-on marketing that gets you sales.** We're easy to work with – and friendly and charming, too.