

# How One Firm Sweats the Details of Trade Show Marketing ...So You Don't Have To

by Jim Ambrosio,  
photo by Dan Epstein

Trade shows are pressure cookers. To exhibit successfully requires pulling together exhibit design and construction, messaging, staffing and giveaways, not to mention arranging transportation, set up, and packing up. Somehow, you have to do all this while remaining not only calm, but downright cheerful once the doors open and the show begins.

An entire industry has grown up around the idea of keeping business people sane at trade shows. They focus on the overwhelming details involved in designing and building exhibits, moving them, wiring them, putting in phones and allowing their clients to focus on the actual work they're attending the exhibition to do. As one Nimlok client puts it: "They allow us to focus on spending time with our existing and future customers."

## inBiz Profiled

Paul Conway  
Nimlok NYC

In this case, the company he's talking about is Nimlok NYC in Fairfield. The New Jersey and New York partner of global solutions provider Nimlok is headed by Paul Conway, a 20-year veteran of the trade show world. With his office just 30 miles from what is arguably one of the world's busiest trade show destinations—New York City—Conway is in the thick of competition for the business of exhibitors as diverse as the Inc. 1000.

So Nimlok offers exhibit design, turn-key rental services, transportation, and installation and dismantling. (He also helps plan and stage sales meetings and customer events.) His strategy is simple: act as consultants, act as team members, and the business will follow.

"We take a consultative approach to sales and trade show marketing," he says. "We focus on the added value we can offer to clients." While many competitors focus on price, Conway won't engage in "commodity type" sales. "We're not the lowest priced guys, by any means," he allows, "because we put a lot of money into our service."

It seems to be a strategy that works: since Conway took over the Nimlok franchise in 2002, the business has grown from three people to a full-service firm of 26, operating out of its own 30,000-square-foot building. Globally, Nimlok is regarded as a leading creator of trade-show exhibits and

customized solutions. Locally, Nimlok NYC is known for its deep expertise. One reason, says Conway: "I have operations people that have been with me for years."

Conway tends to view Nimlok NYC as an extension of his clients' marketing teams. Even before a design phase begins, his staff works to understand each project's goals, its target, and its competitors. They keep an eye on the budget, aiming to meet the client's objectives in the most cost-effective way. By focusing on the design and mechanics involved in a successful trade show, the company allows customers to focus on the business at hand without distraction.

In many ways, Nimlok's goal is to offer what might be called "sleep-at-night insurance." And as anyone who's worked a trade show knows, you need all the sleep you can get.

### YOUR RESOURCE FOR: TRADE SHOW MARKETING

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