

Trade Shows 2.0 (Part Two)

EXHIBITOR looks at YouTube, virtual trade shows, and business blogs as promotional tools for your trade show program.

-- Charles Pappas --

Copyright EXHIBITOR magazine. All rights reserved.

www.ExhibitorOnline.com

EXHIBITOR

SEPTEMBER 2009

Reprints Available in This Issue

EXHIBITING 101

Reprint R090915

A Penny Saved

Seven ways to cut costs without visibly diminishing your company's trade show presence.

TECHNOLOGY

Reprint R090923

Trade Shows 2.0 (Part Two)

EXHIBITOR looks at YouTube, virtual trade shows, and business blogs as promotional tools for your trade show program.

SMALL EXHIBITS

Reprint R090938

Beyond Pipe & Drape

Exhibiting in a 10-by-10-foot booth doesn't have to mean settling for that mind-numbing pipe and drape. The following products present a selection of options to transform your next ho-hum 100-square-foot space into a beautiful little booth.

CASE STUDY

Reprint R090932

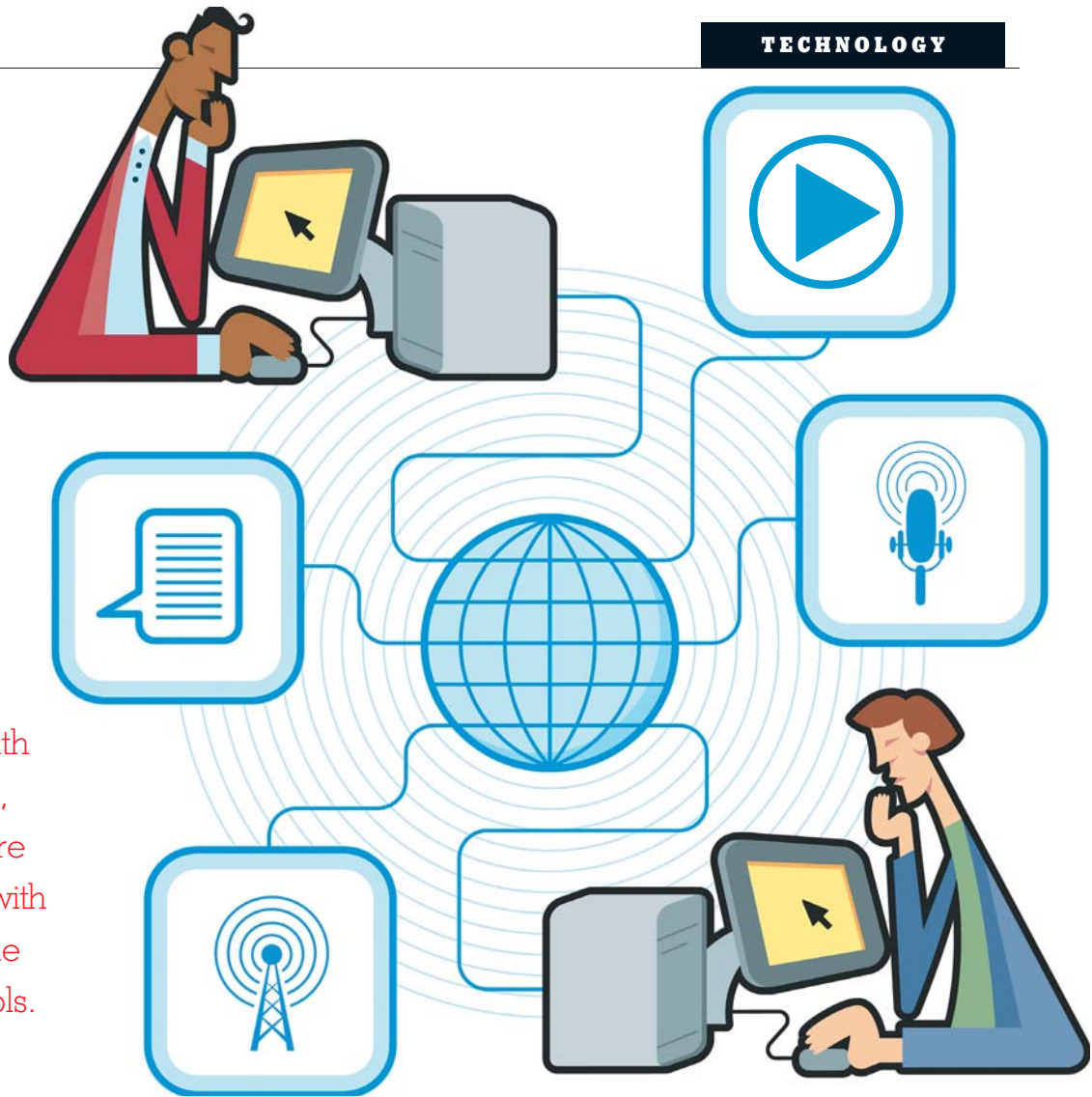
O.C. Tanner Moves On

After ditching its stale exhibit, O.C. Tanner Co. debuts a revolutionary new property at the Society for Human Resource Management expo, rebranding itself as an innovative player and attracting a record number of attendees.

TRADE SHOWS 2.0

PART TWO

Last month, we showcased three Web sites that let you connect with customers. This month, we highlight three more Web 2.0 technologies with the potential to become promotional power tools.
By Charles Pappas



Back in Thomas Edison's day, the business world enjoyed what seemed like eons of time to adjust to newfangled gizmos and state-of-the-art services, like the radio and the telephone: 73 years passed after phones were first made available to the general public before half the country's households had installed one, and it took 32 years from the radio's initial introduction before half of American families were tuned in to the airwaves. With the technological revolution moving almost as slowly as a dial-up Internet connection, marketers felt no need to respond as if their horse-and-buggy world were being threatened by technological advances.

For example, merchants took a marketing siesta lasting almost three full decades before they figured out customers could use the telephone to make nighttime orders after reading advertisements for new products in the evening paper. And it took companies almost 20 years before one aired the first official radio commercial — for a New York apartment complex — in 1922. Industries across the spectrum had missed boarding the marketing boat for

these new technologies, probably because they thought they had all the time in the world to adjust to them.

Once upon a time, perhaps they did. But today, the tempo of technological change for Web 2.0 tools is moving faster than you can speed through commercials on TiVo. It took only 12 years for 50 percent of Americans to buy a cell phone, and just 10 years for half to start surfing the Net. But even that pace, warp speed by 19th- and 20th-century standards, is slower than snail mail when it comes to Web 2.0. The slew of interactive, customer-centric sites and techno tools have covered the Earth in less time than it takes to download an MP3.

These modern-day marketing instruments are rapidly making the way your company used to promote your program and communicate with customers look as old-fashioned as sandwich boards and Burma Shave signs. That's why, in part two of Trade Shows 2.0, we look at three more Web 2.0 tools — YouTube, business blogs, and virtual trade shows — to help you stay one step ahead of the curve — and the competition.

Video Killed the Radio Star

YouTube

The back story: Without YouTube, you might have been deprived of Chad Vader, Obama Girl, or Chris Crocker beseeching the known universe to "Leave Britney alone!" However, the video-sharing site is much more than parodies, put-ons, or pitiful pleas. Before it debuted in 2005, there were relatively few sites where you could post and view videos without having to be more computer nerd than normal. But its user-friendly interface made it possible for anyone who could turn on a PC to post a video that millions of people could watch within a few minutes. Showcasing a wide variety of user-generated video (UGV), including music, animation, movies, and TV clips, YouTube sowed the virtual soil for a generation of viral videos that spread as fast as swine flu, thanks to its more than 100 million users, who view an average of 62.5 videos every month.

How it works: While anyone can log on to YouTube and watch videos, you have to register to upload them. Once you create an account, you can upload an unlimited number of videos in a variety of formats. You can also attach tags to videos, which are simply descriptive terms you want to associate with your content, such as "trade show," "exhibition," or your company's name. Viewers can then search for those terms to find your videos, or you can e-mail video links to clients and prospects.

How exhibitors are using it: Companies as well as customers often post live-action footage and unscripted interviews with clients on the video site. That was a formula that worked for Intel Corp. Starting in 2007, the Santa Clara, CA-based computer-chip maker began posting videos and images on YouTube and Flickr from its Intel Developer Forums (IDFs). Held three times a year in locations as far flung as Moscow and Mumbai, India, the IDFs draw thousands of developers of Intel-based products but leave thousands more unable to make the international journey. By uploading images from the IDF to various Web 2.0 sites, it showed those who couldn't attend IDF the products, speeches, and presentations they missed.

At the International Consumer Electronics Show in 2009, Intel again turned to YouTube, this time in an attempt to attract media and consumer attention. Intel's early experiences

with YouTube at the IDFs showed that simple, subtle tactics could maximize how many people viewed its images and create a sense of community about its company. Intel had discovered that customers started looking for videos not just after the show started but also right before, searching for a sneak peek so they could feel ahead of curve. Thus, staff shot video of the booth during setup, giving the footage a behind-the-scenes, we-are-here-live feel. Second, they filmed video clips of new products using its processors, for those who were interested in the latest Intel-inside gadgets.

During the show, staffers also shot footage of a wide range of industry-specific celebrities, including influential blogger J.D. Lasscia, as well as top PC gamers whose visits to the Intel booth lent the company cyber cred.

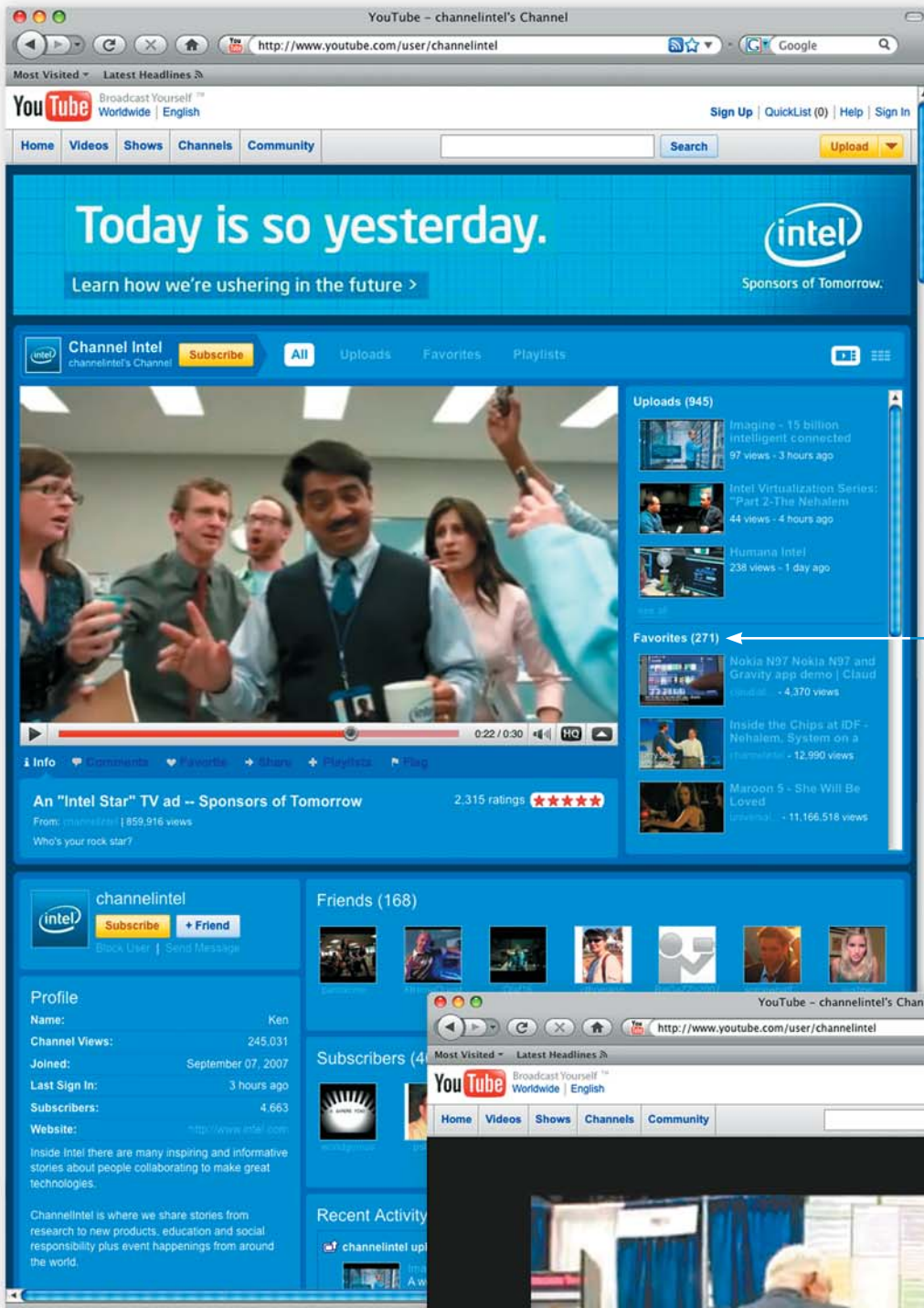
The 21 CES-related videos Intel posted to YouTube garnered 22,891 views and more than 100 reader comments in January, the month of the show — about twice what Intel initially hoped for. "YouTube also allows us to see which bloggers are embedding videos into their blog posts about the company's technologies," says Ken Kaplan, Intel's broadcast and new media manager.

But according to Samir Balwani, videos like those posted by Intel do more than provide YouTubers with footage for their viewing pleasure. When a brand shares images and videos online, it not only builds a community, but it offers


consumers "social proof," says Balwani, online marketing strategist for New York's Morpheus Media LLC. The footage, almost always showing a company happily engaged with customers, provides proof to those who see it that there are plenty of satisfied customers using the company's products, while sending the not-so-subtle message: "People like our products, and you will, too."


The takeaway: Post videos of your booth during setup to build a sense of excitement and behind-the-scenes buzz. Use short, live clips of up to five minutes of high-energy performances, presentations, and/or events, as well as unscripted encounters with clients and company officials. Shoot and upload footage of any new products and related demos that are featured in your exhibit to give your program life long after the show.


The footage provides proof to those who see it that there are plenty of satisfied customers using the company's products, while sending the not-so-subtle message: "People like our products, and you will, too."

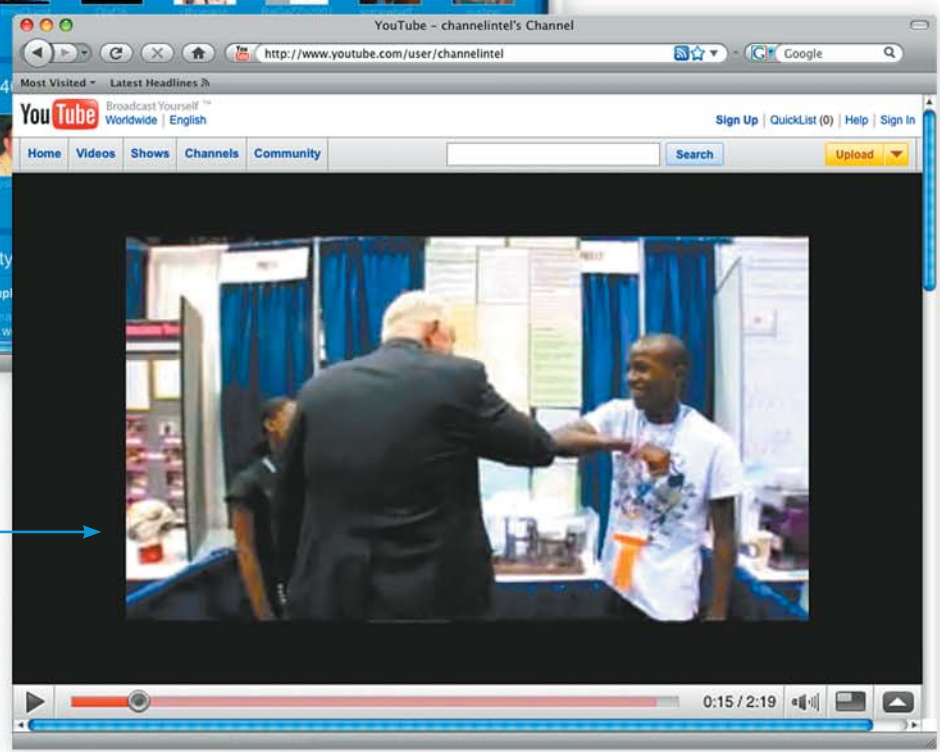


YouTube Tip #1  Make the subject matter useful. For instance, if you're doing a pre-show promotion, focus on the show destination as a topic, highlighting the location of your exhibit or off-site events. Or show how the new products your company plans to release will help customers do their jobs.

YouTube Tip #2  Post your company's videos on YouTube and link to them from your Web site — it'll save you from exhausting your site's bandwidth with videos.

YouTube Tip #3  Post links to all of your YouTube videos in the same place on your Web site, and create an easy-to-browse playlist for viewers.

YouTube Tip #4  Harry Hallman, principal at Octane Interactive LLC, advises keeping your videos to one to three minutes in length. That's long enough to cover useful information in them, but not so long that people tune out.



The Writing's on the Wall

Business Blogs

The back story: Coined in 1997 by Jorn Barger of the Robot Wisdom Web site, the term "Weblog" — later shortened to the more commonly used "blog" — originally meant a list of highly recommended and often-annotated links to sites the author thought well worth your while. Later, bloggers evolved that pioneering usage into the more common one of frequently updated musings, rants, and digressions. From 23 blogs known to exist in 1999, numbers swarmed to 184 million by 2008, according to the New York-based media agency Universal McCann.

How it works: While many businesses start blogs on their own Web sites, there are numerous services online, often free, where you can quickly set up a blog, including Blogger (www.blogger.com), WordPress (www.wordpress.com), TypePad (www.typepad.com), Pitas (www.pitas.com), and Tumblr (www.tumblr.com). Most offer free, advertising-supported blogs but will charge for ad-free upgraded versions that offer additional features. Once you start blogging, the rules are pretty straightforward: Blog entries are usually no more than a few paragraphs in length, are frequently displayed in reverse-chronological order (with the newest post appearing first), and are usually organized by date, topic, and/or identifying labels called tags.

How exhibitors are using it: Knowing the impact bloggers now wield, NBC Universal courted these Internet-enabled influencers at the 2009 International Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas. The company invited a select group of media- and tech-related bloggers by e-mail to its Sharp/NBC Universal Multimedia Lounge, a 20-by-40-foot space adjacent to its exhibit.

Designed by the New York-based experiential-marketing firm Jack Morton Worldwide Inc., the lounge tempted these wired writers with techno-catnip: LCD televisions, a Blu-Ray movie area, gaming stations, and high-speed connections to the Web. On the "Blogger Stage" inside the lounge, the bloggers could write, conduct interviews, and record podcasts. NBC sweetened the bait for unaffiliated bloggers by inviting several of them from its own high-profile properties, such as NBC News, the Syfy Channel's Dvice Web site, and iVillage.com, among others.

In all, more than 100 of the invited guest bloggers and podcasters set up shop during CES in NBC's lounge.

Their blog posts extended NBC's promotional reach to thousands of readers and listeners.

Livonia, MI-based live communications agency EWI Worldwide capitalized on a similar Web 2.0 strategy at EXHIBITOR2008, a conference and exhibition for exhibit and event marketers. But rather than inviting pre-existing bloggers to its booth, EWI invited attendees to impromptu in-booth blogging sessions.

Setting up two laptops in its booth, the company offered visitors the chance to come in and sound off about ... pretty much anything they wanted. Leery of

the typical pep-rally voice in corporate Weblogs, EWI decided its blog would be like a white board on which everyone could grab a marker and express their thoughts. Keeping the pre-show promotion at a low simmer, EWI spread word about the blog through a brief mention in a few press releases.

When attendees entered the 30-by-40-foot booth, staff directed them to the laptop stations. EWI salted the blog with relaxed-fit observations on educational sessions at the show. Taking their

cue from that, visitors sat down and checked out EWI's insights or knocked off a couple sentences. From this undemanding but engaging social activity, EWI estimates it doubled attendees' average booth visit from five to 10 minutes. But the real payoff was in the long term.

Now operating as its own Web site, the booth blog morphed into a freestanding one called Your Story Alive (currently available at www.yourstoryalive.com), where EWI personnel post on a potpourri of topics and field comments just as diverse from the blog's readers on the nature of weaving your corporate story into your marketing efforts. Thanks in part to its introduction at EXHIBITOR2008, the blog realized a 2,800-percent increase in traffic in the first two months following the show, creating another point of contact for EWI and its customers.

The takeaway: Use business blogs as part of a long-term strategy for communicating with customers. Cultivate a non-corporate voice for them. Urge readers to comment openly on your posts. Set up a separate area where customers and the media can blog for you — and ideally about you — in your booth.

Use blogs as part of a long-term strategy for communicating with customers. Urge readers to comment openly on your posts.

NBCU at CES

http://www.nbcuatces.com/

Most Visited ▾ Latest Headlines ▾

HOME BLOG BOOTH LOCATION SCHEDULE EXECUTIVES PHOTO GALLERY PRESS KIT MOBILE CONTACT

UPDATED 05:49 PM JAN 11, 2009

Goodbye and Thank YOU from CES 2009!

By Mark Lukasiewicz, Jay Linden and Bill Hartnett, NBC Universal

Wow! We just spent four phenomenal days surrounded by electronics claiming to be bigger, louder, thinner, smarter and faster than last year. Of course our **NBC Universal** booth was bigger, louder and smarter than last year as well.



NBC UNIVERSAL ENTERTAINMENT YOU CAN TOUCH CONTENT THAT TOUCHES YOU NBCatCES.com

UPDATED 02:33 PM JAN 11, 2009

Swag! Swag! Swag!

By Eliot Sakhartov, Gia Pace & Marisa Frongillo, NBC Universal

Swag! That's really what this show is about. Seriously, we've gotten almost a lifetime supply of breath mints just in the first 2 days. At the **NBC Universal** booth it's no different.

Our brand ambassadors are doing a lot of embassing while giving out 12,000 2GB micro SD cards, they gave away almost 5,000 the first day. Take the card over to one of the five [Microsoft Surface](#) tables, and you could win a prize like a [Monk bobblehead](#), or a [Battlestar Galactica toaster](#) to an [SNL](#) script signed by the entire cast. Even if you don't win a signed [Today Show](#) mug, you can download free videos from the kiosks.



Blogging Tip #1

Smart bloggers use headlines that are relevant to their audience. And in this era of the nanosecond-long attention spans, your headline is all many readers are likely to see. So make them count with short, declarative phrases.

Blogging Tip #2

Scott Monty, who runs [The Social Media Marketing Blog](#) (www.scottmonty.com), suggests spending more time reading and commenting on other blogs than you do your own. This way you establish yourself as a thought leader in your area.

Blogging Tip #3

According to Debbie Weil, author of "The Corporate Blogging Book," a vital key to blogging success is consistency. Posting new material a couple of times a week is ideal, while three times a month is a minimum.

Blogging Tip #4

To get readers involved, ask a question, or invite them to provide their perspective on a given topic. It may take some coaxing to elicit responses, but once you do, you'll start a self-perpetuating dialog between you and your customers.

The Next Best Thing to Being There

Virtual Trade Shows

The back story: Virtual space is the real final frontier. The best known of these virtual sites, which offers a semi-realistic, three-dimensional environment, is Second Life. Debuting in 2003, Second Life was inspired by the “Metaverse” in Neal Stephenson’s sci-fi novel “Snow Crash.” It quickly became the template for other 3-D sites with special software that lets registered users, called residents, create avatars — digital stand-ins for human beings — through which they can interact with others and explore the vast virtual landscape. Residents can also open stores where they hawk real products, or buy and sell virtual property with real money.

For exhibitors, Second Life and other virtual platforms provide an opportunity not to replace face-to-face trade shows, but to enhance them by bridging the traditional boundaries of geography and time that can reduce their reach and effectiveness. Instead of exhibitions running three or four days, virtual trade shows allow companies to host online exhibitions that run the same length of time as regular shows, but videos of product demos, literature, and presentations are often made available 24/7 for 90 to 180 days.

While Second Life boasts an estimated 7 million users, companies looking to host virtual trade shows and corporate events generally opt to work with firms such as Menlo Park, CA-based Unisfair Inc., Chicago-headquartered InXpo Inc., or ON24 Inc. of San Francisco, which have created virtual trade shows and events for businesses as diverse as Google Inc. and Eastman Kodak Co.

How it works: Just as you work with an exhibit house to design a booth, you work with a virtual trade show company to create an exhibit or a show. Unlike the months-long process in the physical world, the virtual one has a start-to-finish time that can run from a few days using templates to 90 days for custom builds. Most virtual trade shows employ a visual “vocabulary” that’s easy for visitors to navigate because it’s so familiar to them. Attendees, for example, can log into your virtual trade show Web site at a given time, choose from a stockpile of avatars, and then enter through a main hall into a show floor with booths, kiosks, auditoriums, and lounges.

Logging on and off as often as they please, visitors can click on videos of product demos and services, or

download company literature. Educational sessions, keynote speeches, and presentations can be both live and recorded, so that users can access them at any time.

How exhibitors are using it: After Ariba Inc. heard many of its customers were not attending trade shows due to budget cuts, the Sunnyvale, CA-based company decided to hold a virtual show that would enhance, but not replace, a six-city traveling trade show that appears in venues from San Francisco to Stockholm, Sweden. Working with Unisfair and Norwood, MA-based Cramer Inc., the company constructed Ariba Live 2009, a 3-D trade show, last April, providing an opportunity for time-starved and budget-challenged customers to attend.

When participants logged on, they were greeted by an avatar of Ariba’s CMO as he walked around a replica of a generic exhibit hall. On the trade show floor, visitors accessed networking forums, downloaded white papers, chatted with Ariba staff in real time, and viewed product demos. Ariba’s executive keynote addresses were broadcast live via video feed, while all the breakout sessions streamed live via audio. In addition, a resource center let attendees download information on sponsors’ products. Even real-life schmoozing and networking had a cyber counterpart at the “Connection Café,” where visitors joined group forums or engaged in impromptu chats with their peers.

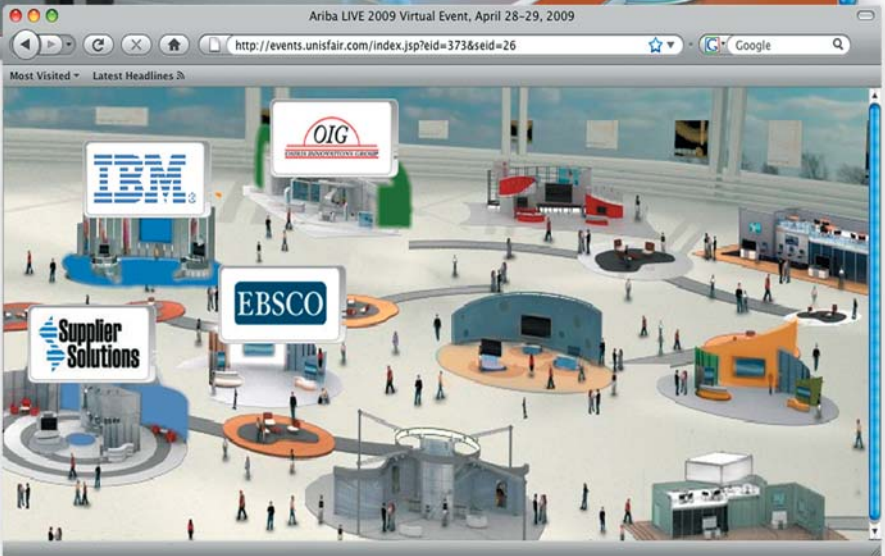
Costing Ariba 30 percent less than an equivalent show in the physical world,

Ariba Live 2009 attracted 1,571 attendees — more than twice the company’s original goal — who clocked a total of 5,232 booth visits and 3,929 downloads (roughly 25 and 30 percent above target, respectively).

The takeaway: Use virtual shows to target attendees who can’t make it to your live events. Design your virtual show to resemble its real-world counterpart with exhibit halls, booths, and presentations. Offer downloadable documents, videos, and other materials typically available at shows, and keep them available for three to six months to allow for maximum exposure and convenience. **E**

Virtual trade shows allow companies to host online exhibitions that run the same length of time as regular shows, but videos of product demos, literature, and presentations are often made available 24/7 for 90 to 180 days.

Charles Pappas, senior writer; cpappas@exhibitor magazine.com



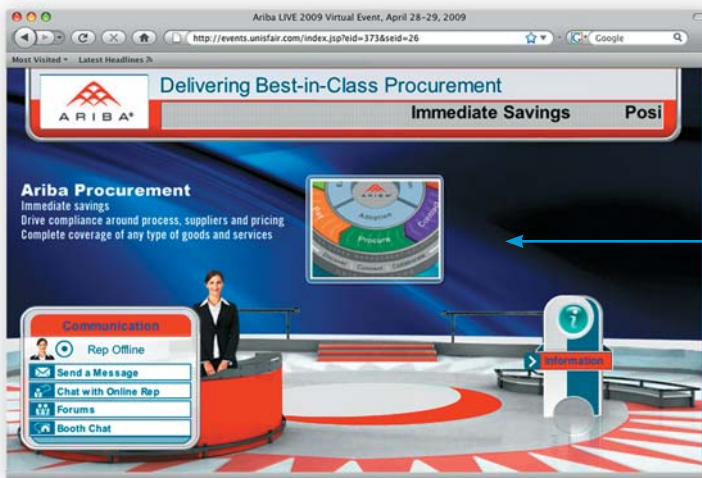
Virtual Trade Show Tip #1

Dennis Shiao, client services executive at InXpo Inc., suggests you work with your provider to give exhibitors — and potential attendees — unaccustomed to virtual trade shows a sneak-preview day. Do a walk-through of the show, demonstrate how to log in, initiate chat, watch presentations, and more. This will work out any kinks before the show's actual opening day.

Virtual Trade Show Tip #2



Experiment with online promotional tools such as blogs, Web pages, LinkedIn, Facebook, etc. After all, attendees who are most comfortable with the idea of attending a virtual show are likely well connected in the virtual world of social media and Web 2.0.



Virtual Trade Show Tip #3

To re-engage with attendees, hold a second, smaller virtual show 30 days after the original one. Stage a live Webcast, for example, with a popular presenter. Your cost will be relatively low since the virtual show doesn't need to be installed again like a physical one.