

## Help!

### WIRE MANAGEMENT

**Q** My marketing events are overrun by cables and wires. What are some tools I can use to wrangle our wiring at trade shows and events?

**A** Today almost every marketing event — be it a trade show, user conference, media briefing, etc. — incorporates a significant amount of technology. And everything from interactive kiosks and audiovisual equipment to monitors and printers requires some kind of wire or cable not only to connect it to a power source (often several feet or maybe even several yards away), but also to connect it to other devices. Granted, some exhibitors have lighting crews and AV suppliers that lasso a lot of these issues for them. But other exhibitors have to wrangle their wiring all by themselves.

And let's not forget that U.S. exhibitors generally have it a little tougher than their European counterparts. That's because exhibits with raised flooring — which are perfect for concealing a huge mass of wiring and cables — are commonplace in Europe. In the U.S., such flooring isn't nearly as popular because: a) there's a general perception that Americans are somehow "put off" by raised flooring or any real or perceived barriers into exhibits, and b) the expense to create this flooring can be cost prohibitive to many exhibitors. Given these hurdles, it's no wonder that many exhibit and event managers feel like they're being hog tied by their own cabling issues.



But don't let your wiring get the best of you. Even if a raised floor isn't in your future, there are plenty of wire-management products that can help you safely and effectively route and conceal your wires. Here are a handful of my favorites.

#### Cord Covers

If you need to cover cords running atop your exhibit flooring (and keep them bundled together in the process), you have several options available.

Typically made of rubber or plastic, light-duty covers are perfect for general foot traffic for just about any size crowd. You don't, however, want to roll heavy products such as cars, or weighty I&D equipment such as a scissor lift, across them. Doing so could damage the cord cover — and your wiring. Here are three categories of light-duty cord covers.

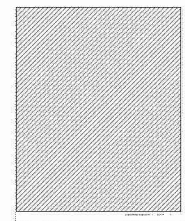
► **Standard Cord Protectors** — Most commonly found in office environments, standard cord protectors are long strips of rubber or plastic, each of which is shaped like an elongated semicircle (flat on the bottom, and domed on top). Laid end to end along the floor, they typically house three to five cords, and each cord is either inserted into the protector through a slit in the bottom of the cover or strung through it like a string

through a straw. Attached to the floor with double-sided tape, they're available in myriad colors and lengths. Prices range from about \$8 to \$17 for a 5-foot length.

► **Drop-over Protectors** — As their name implies, these cord covers simply drop over the wires via cutout channels in the bottom of each protector. The weight of the cover (roughly 3 to 9 pounds per 3-foot length) typically keeps it in place, but you can adhere it to the floor with double-sided tape for extra security. Prices range from \$30 to \$73 per 3-foot length, depending on its size, the number of channels, and the durability of the material.

► **Tape** — Various types of wire-management tape are available, all of which are applied directly atop your cables and cords. This tape can also be used to run wires down the back of kiosks or computer stations to help create a more streamlined look — and eliminate unsightly dangling cords. Tape options include puncture resistance, the ability to be torn by hand, and a hook-and-loop-fastener system to attach to carpet. Prices start at about \$16 for a 40-yard roll.

Heavy-duty plastic cord covers, which resist up to 21,000 pounds, are typically drop-over protectors or devices with a hinged cover on the top that allows cables to be inserted into the device. These covers are generally wider, allowing them to accept more cords and thicker cables than light-duty protectors. Plus, the



## EXHIBITOR Q & A

top of the covers are flat as opposed to rounded. Costs range from \$89 for a 27-by-5-inch strip to about \$150 for a 36-by-17-inch strip.

### Bundling and Routing Products

Certainly, you can also use traditional — and affordable — cable ties, clips, and clamps to bind cables into a tidy, easy-to-route package. But there are a variety of other products to help you bundle wires together.

A loom or wrap is basically a plastic tube that looks kind of like a vacuum-cleaner hose. The tube, however, has a slit in the side so cables can be slipped into it. Braided sleeving, which functions in the same manner, is made of woven nylon, stainless steel, Fiberglas, and even Kevlar. Sleeving ranges in price from 75 cents to \$1.75 per foot.

Command Cord Clips from 3M Co. work just like 3M's picture hangers that can be removed without leaving a mark on your wall. With its synthetic rubber resin as the adhesive, the clips stick to almost all types of surfaces. Simply slip your cords into the bracket and snap the clip, and you've got instant wire-routing capabilities for just about any exhibit or event.

Raceways are another durable and attractive way to conceal, route, and protect cables. In fact, they're used in many residential and commercial applications, particularly when routing wiring inside the walls isn't feasible. Included adhesive tape attaches the thin plastic "raceway" strip to flooring or walls, and optional elbow-shaped fittings allow the strip to bend around corners. Some raceways are like a square tube, the top side of which is actually a panel that opens up — allowing wires to be housed within the raceway. Other styles are U-shaped enclosures that slip over the wiring. Raceways range in price from about \$6 to \$25 per piece.

### Carts and Concealers

Particularly for events, AV carts are the perfect way to store and transport media equipment — until they start to become strangled by cables and cords. Keep all of your cords and AV cables neatly within the frame of your media cart with cable-organization products like the Cord Caddy. (The Cord Caddy is sort of like the cord-management system on the back of a vacuum cleaner, only with roughly five sets of hooks for different cables.) Originally designed to manage medical-monitor wires but now adapted to computer and AV use as well, the Cord Caddy can be mounted to a side wall or the underside of a shelf, where you can wind excess cord length around its hooks.

Power strips in and of themselves can be unsightly, particularly within a pristine, uncluttered booth. So products like the CableBox (which runs about \$23) can house everything from power strips to surge protectors. Two slots on the ends of this 16-by-6-by-5-inch, covered, plastic box allow your cables to pass through unobstructed, keeping your nest of cables concealed. The WireMate cord organizer (which retails for about \$18) is another cord-management option. It lets you wind extra-long cables around hooks, and then protects the spooled-up excess with a snap-on cover.

So the next time you find yourself all wound up over wires, check into one of these products. With a small expenditure, you'll not only help de-clutter your space; you'll likely save yourself time and headaches to boot. — **Christina Hansen, product specialist, CableOrganizer.com Inc., Fort Lauderdale, FL**

### HELP WANTED

Send your tough questions about exhibiting to Linda Armstrong, [larmstrong@exhibitormagazine.com](mailto:larmstrong@exhibitormagazine.com).

### ASK DAN

**Q** As my company's marketing manager, I give some staff members small rewards (gift cards, lunches, etc.) for going above and beyond their job duties. But others act resentful about these rewards. How should I handle this?

**A** Your staff may be reacting that way if you're rewarding employees for accomplishments that their teammates don't think they've actually earned. If so, you need to know why that's happening, and what proactive steps you can take.

We perceive rewards through two lenses: fairness and equity. In fairness, your staff looks to see if you fairly rewarded those who deserved it. In equity, your staff wants to feel that everyone had the same opportunity to earn those prizes. I suspect your employees feel the rewards fall short in one of these two areas.

The solution might be twofold. First, keep the rewards process as transparent as possible. That means listing the specific reasons, in meetings and perhaps also via e-mail, why those individuals received rewards. But at the same time, also note the hard work that everyone else on the team contributed, because individual achievements are seldom attained without the sometimes-invisible contributions of others.

Next, spread the rewards around as much as feasible. Recognize as many other people as practical for their genuine contributions. By keeping your system of accolades transparent and inclusive, you'll make sure your rewards don't become resented.



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