



Artsolute Media Group

AMG EXHIBITION DESIGN ACADEMY

AEDM

Junior Exhibition Designer Training Manual

A training manual for junior exhibition designers.

Building designers who think business first — and can work independently.



CONTENTS

Contents

 Six Chapters, Six Questions

This manual has a fixed skeleton: **each chapter answers exactly one question**, each chapter hands you one rule (an AEDM Rule), and each chapter's assignment builds on the last — the brand you analyze in Chapter 2 travels with you all the way to Chapter 6's review. Finish a chapter, confirm you can answer its question, then move on.

01

What Is Exhibition Design?

The question: What problem does exhibition design solve? The rule: Rule 01 — Design for Business.

02

Why Companies Exhibit?

The question: Why is a company willing to spend USD 300,000 on a booth? The rule: Rule 02 — Start with the Objective.

03

Anatomy of A Booth

The question: What makes a booth work? The rule: Rule 03 — Every Element Has a Job.

04

The Exhibition Design Process

The question: How does an idea become a booth standing on the show floor? The rule: Rule 04 — Zero Questions.

05

First Design

The question: Does a smaller booth need less design? The rule: Rule 05 — Size Changes the Tools, Not the Thinking.

06

Design Review

The question: How do you judge a design without saying "it looks good"? The rule: Rule 06 — Evidence, Not Adjectives.

※ Fixed chapter format: chapter opening (the one question + learning objectives) → sections → the AEDM Rule page → summary → assignment (with review standards for the instructor). Page numbers restart per chapter.

※ This manual is used together with "AEDM Volume 1 — Constitution" (the method's philosophy) and "AMG Production Workflow — Complete Reference" (production specs). When specs conflict, the confirmed spec governs — and report the conflict for correction.

REVISIONS

Version History

 Revisions

This manual is a living system, run with the same Revisions discipline as an AMG drawing set: every version records what changed and why, right here. Errors found in use, outdated specs, better cases — report them to your instructor. The next edition will carry your contribution.

Version	Date	Changes
v0.1	2026-07	First edition: six full chapters, six AEDM Rules, contents and rules summary.
v0.2	2026-07	Added six AMG case-study chapter-opening photos (Opening: one photo, one line); added this version page; added the Constitution cross-reference note to the rules summary. English and Simplified Chinese editions.

※ Known backlog (v0.3 candidates): replace the Ch3 anatomy map and Ch5 plans with real AMG project drawings; add World Case and AMG Case pages per chapter; classroom slide decks per chapter.



It is beautiful.
But that is **not why it exists.**

01

CHAPTER ONE

What Is Exhibition Design?

THE ONE QUESTION

What problem does exhibition design solve?

By the end of this chapter, you must be able to answer this question.

Ask ten exhibition designers what exhibition design is, and you will probably get ten different answers: designing booths, drawing in SketchUp, making 3D models, blowing up the logo. None of these answers is wrong — but none is complete. This chapter builds the single most important idea of your career: **exhibition design solves business problems, not aesthetic ones.**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand that a booth is a business tool, not a showpiece.
- Tell the difference between exhibition design and interior design at their core.
- Name the five business problems a company actually hires us to solve.
- Remember the six core elements of exhibition design: Brand, Visitor, Product, Space, Experience, Business.
- Recognize the five most common rookie mistakes — and the correct move for each.

SECTION 1.1

A Booth Is Not a Showpiece — It Is a Business Tool Introduction

Most people think exhibition design means "drawing the booth." Real exhibition design is **using limited space, time, budget and resources to help a company accomplish, in just a few days, the business communication that would normally take months or years**. A trade show compresses brand, product, customers, media and competitors into one space and one moment — a density of communication that exists in no other marketing channel.

A booth, therefore, is not a showpiece. It is a **business tool**. A tool's value is not how good it looks but whether it gets the job done. A good booth doesn't just get seen — it has to make visitors:

willing to stop → willing to walk in → willing to learn the brand → willing to talk to staff → willing to try the product → willing to leave their contact → willing to become a customer

Notice the order: it is a funnel. People drop off at every step, and the designer's job is to reduce that loss at each link. Aisle traffic does not turn into business by itself — **design is what turns "passing by" into "stopping," "stopping" into "conversation," and "conversation" into "deals."**

If a booth cannot drive this funnel, then even if it wins awards, gets photographed and gets called "gorgeous," it is not a successful piece of exhibition design for the client. Conversely, a plain-looking booth that hands the sales team two hundred qualified leads in three days is a successful business tool.

※ At AMG, every design decision we make for a client — form, circulation, lighting, material — must ultimately answer the same question: how does this decision help the client achieve their reason for exhibiting?

SECTION 1.2

An Exhibit Is Not Oversized Interior Design

 Exhibits vs. Interiors

The most common rookie misconception is treating an exhibit as "big interior design." The software is similar, the drawings are similar, even the construction materials overlap — but the two solve completely different problems:

Interior Design

Designed for long-term use

An office is used for ten years; a restaurant for twenty. Users come back every day and have countless chances to slowly get to know the space. Durability, comfort and maintenance cost are the core.

Exhibition Design

Designed for three to five days

A booth usually exists for three days, five days, a week at most. A visitor typically passes only once — if the first glance doesn't hook them, they're gone. **There is no second chance.**

That "no second chance" property dictates everything in exhibition design: why long-distance visual hierarchy matters so much, why people must understand who you are within three seconds, why the position of the entrance outranks styling details. Interiors can be understood slowly; **an exhibit must complete its communication in seconds.**

An exhibit also lives in a competitive environment. Left, right, across the aisle, on the diagonal — all competitors, all fighting for the same visitors' attention. Interior design has no such face-to-face combat. That is why we say:

Exhibition design is high-efficiency brand communication — creating maximum business value in the shortest time, in the most crowded room.

From today on, when you look at a booth, don't first ask "does it look good?" Ask: can a stranger walking the aisle, with three seconds of attention, instantly know — who is this? What do they do? Why should I care?

SECTION 1.3

The Five Problems Exhibition Design Actually Solves

The Five Business Problems

Companies don't exhibit because they need a pretty booth. They exhibit because they need the market to know them, customers to trust them, products to be seen, the brand to be remembered, and business to begin. In other words, on every exhibit project, these are the five problems a designer is actually hired to solve:

1

How do we get noticed in the crowd?

Hundreds of booths are shouting at once. Visibility is the starting point of everything — height, lighting, color, long-distance identity decide whether you exist at all.

2

How do we make visitors stop?

Being seen is not being stopped. There must be a reason — a product, an image, an action, a sentence — that makes a walking person slow down in front of your booth.

3

How do we make them willing to walk in?

An open entrance, clear circulation, a pressure-free way in. A booth people don't dare step into is just scenery, no matter how beautiful.

4

How do we build trust in limited time?

A case wall, live demonstrations, the quality of materials and craft, professional hosting — trust is built in minutes, in the language of space.

5

How do we turn visitors into opportunities?

Where is the meeting area? How are leads captured? How is follow-up handled? Design must reserve room for "the start of the deal" — otherwise the first four steps are wasted.

So exhibition design solves **business problems, not aesthetic ones.**

Aesthetics is our means. Business is our purpose.

SECTION 1.4

The Six Core Elements of Exhibition Design

The Six Core Elements

A mature exhibit design always handles six elements at once. They are not six steps of a process, but **six dimensions that must all hold true within the same design** — missing any one of them, the design is incomplete:

ELEMENT 1

Brand

Who is this? How does the brand want to be remembered? The booth is the brand's biggest physical appearance — every material and color speaks for it.

ELEMENT 2

Visitor

Who walks in? Buyers, distributors, engineers, media? What does each of them need? Design that doesn't understand its visitors is just designer self-expression.

ELEMENT 3

Product

Which product matters most today? How is it shown — live unit, model, video, interaction? There can be only one hero; everything else is supporting cast.

ELEMENT 4

Space

Where is the entrance? How do people move? Where do they linger? Where do they talk? Where does storage go? Spatial planning decides whether each step of the funnel can happen.

ELEMENT 5

Experience

After walking the whole booth, what does the visitor feel when they leave? What do they remember? Experience is the only thing a visitor takes home.

ELEMENT 6

Business

The final test: did this booth accomplish the company's reason for exhibiting? Leads, orders, media coverage, channel relationships — results speak.

※ Exercise: from now on, every time you see a booth (live or in photos), score it 1–5 on each of the six elements. You'll quickly find that "beautiful" booths don't necessarily pass all six — but booths that do good business rarely fail any of them.

SECTION 1.5

The Five Most Common Rookie Mistakes

 Five Common Rookie Mistakes**✗ MISTAKE 1**

Getting the project and opening SketchUp first thing to start modeling.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Understand the client first: their reason for exhibiting, target visitors, hero product, budget, definition of success. Understand the problem before you earn the right to draw the answer.

✗ MISTAKE 2

Endlessly collecting photos of "beautiful booths" — hundreds of reference images.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Analyze why each one succeeded: what problem did it solve for the brand? How was circulation arranged? What was the hero? Understand the mechanics — don't copy the shell.

✗ MISTAKE 3

Spending hours sculpting forms and surfaces, cramming the functions in last.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Arrange the functions first: reception, display, meetings, storage, circulation. Once the functional skeleton stands, form has meaning.

✗ MISTAKE 4

Believing the bigger the logo the better — clients often ask for this too.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Logo size must match viewing distance: 3 meters from the aisle, 10 meters down the corridor, 30 meters across the hall each demand a different identity strategy — not the same logo scaled up.

✗ MISTAKE 5

Packing the design as full as possible — "more content" to justify the budget.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

A good booth always knows what *not* to include. White space lets the hero be seen and lets circulation breathe. Subtraction is a senior designer's most important skill.

These five mistakes share one root: **confusing "drawing" with "designing."** Drawing is output; design is decision-making. Tools can always be learned. The order of decisions — business first, function next, form last — is what this manual actually trains.

Design for Business.

Don't ask first: "Is this booth beautiful?"

Ask first: "Can this booth accomplish the client's reason for exhibiting?"

If the answer is no — **then no matter how beautiful it is, it is not good exhibition design.** This rule will appear in every proposal you make, every review you sit in, every revision you deliver. Whenever you don't know how to decide, come back to this page.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Summary

 Chapter Summary

Exhibition design is not designing a booth — it is designing **the encounter between a brand and its audience**. SketchUp is a tool; renders are tools. What really matters is whether you know: why is the client exhibiting? Why would a visitor stop? What impression should the brand leave? And does your design actually help the company reach its business goal? Remember the six core elements (Brand, Visitor, Product, Space, Experience, Business), and remember **AEDM Rule 01: Design for Business**.

CHAPTER ASSIGNMENT

Assignment: A One-Page Booth Business Analysis

Find a booth you consider highly successful (any brand, any show — live photos or online cases both fine) and complete a one-page analysis answering these six questions:

1. Why did this company **exhibit**? (Infer their objective.)
2. What is the one thing this booth **most wants to communicate**?
3. What is the **first thing you see**? (That is its top visual hierarchy.)
4. What is the booth's **greatest strength**?
5. If you were the designer, **what one thing would you change** — and why?
6. What **business problem** did this booth actually solve?

The grading focus is not whether your answers are "right," but whether you have started seeing design through a business lens. Discuss with your mentor for 15 minutes when done.

Next — Chapter 02: Why Companies Exhibit?



**Every minute of this night was expensive.
Why were they **willing to pay?****

02

CHAPTER TWO

Why Companies Exhibit?

THE ONE QUESTION

Why is a company willing to spend USD 300,000 on a booth?

By the end of this chapter, you must be able to answer this question.

Companies never exhibit because they need a booth. A booth is just a tool a company uses to accomplish some objective. So the first question a designer asks on a new project is not "what style does the client like," and not "how tall are we going this time" — it is: **why is this company exhibiting?** The question looks simple. It will decide the entire design.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand exhibiting as a business investment, and read its full cost structure.
- Name the eight major reasons companies exhibit — and the spatial strategy each one implies.
- Distinguish the Primary Objective from Secondary Objectives.
- Translate business objectives into concrete spatial requirements.
- Measure success with the right metrics — not just "the booth was crowded."

SECTION 2.1

The Objective Decides the Entire Design

 Introduction

The same 20×20 space, the same budget, will grow into completely different booths depending on why the company is exhibiting. **Different business objectives produce different spatial strategies:**

If the company is exhibiting to **launch a new product** — the booth must make the product the hero.

If the company is exhibiting to **find distributors** — the booth must create space suited to real conversations.

If the company is exhibiting to **build the brand** — the booth must leave one clear, consistent impression.

If the company is exhibiting to **counter competitors** — the booth must show the market its strength and difference.

Flip it around: if the objective is unclear, the designer can only guess — guess what the client wants, guess who the visitors are, guess which function matters. A booth built on guesses rarely succeeds, however beautiful — because it doesn't even know its own definition of success.

Before you draw the first line, complete this sentence:

"This company is exhibiting in order to ____."

If you cannot fill the blank yet, you should not be drawing yet.

This chapter gives you every tool you need to answer that sentence: the true cost of exhibiting, the eight major objectives, the discipline of primary versus secondary, and the method for translating business objectives into space.

SECTION 2.2

The True Cost of Exhibiting

To understand "why anyone would pay three hundred thousand dollars," first see where the money goes. The cost of exhibiting is far more than design and build. A complete show budget usually includes:

Booth space rental	Design & build
Freight & drayage	Power, internet & show services
Shipping products and equipment	Staff salaries, flights and hotels
Marketing collateral and giveaways	Customer invitations and promotion
The team's time away from daily work	Post-show follow-up and lead processing

So when a company decides to exhibit, it is making a **business investment** — and it expects a return. That return might be orders; it might also be leads, meetings, exposure, trust, partnerships, or market intelligence.

Every square foot of the booth costs money.

Every function should have a reason.

Every design decision should move the company **closer to its objective.**

※ What this means for you: every extra tower, extra LED wall, extra meeting room you draw is spent from the client's real investment. Only when you can say "this element works for that objective" have you earned the right to keep it on the drawing.

SECTION 2.3

The Eight Reasons Companies Exhibit

The Eight Exhibition Objectives

1

Brand Awareness

Some companies exhibit so the market sees them for the first time; others are already seen but want to be seen differently. This booth's most important task is to let visitors know, very quickly: who is this? What do they offer? How are they different? What should I remember? **Brand awareness is not making the logo the biggest — it is making the brand message the clearest.**

Spatial priority → long-distance identity, one clear brand message, one memorable signature element.

2

Lead Generation

For many companies, the most direct reason to exhibit is capturing qualified leads. Remember: a person walking in is not a lead, and taking a giveaway is not a lead. A lead worth having includes a clear identity, a real need, a plausible budget, purchasing potential, and a way to follow up. So this booth must not only attract people — it must make it easy for staff to **open conversations, qualify needs, capture data and set the next step.**

Spatial priority → open entrance, interaction points, enough staff positions, a smooth lead-capture flow.

3

Product Launch

When a company launches a new product, the booth becomes a temporary stage. The design must help visitors grasp quickly: what is it? What problem does it solve? Why is it better than the old way? How can I try it myself? The most common launch mistake is **letting the booth's architecture steal attention from the product** — if visitors remember the building but forget the product, the design has lost its purpose.

Spatial priority → hero product zone, demo area, sightlines and gathering space, press camera angles.

SECTION 2.3 (CONT.)

The Eight Objectives (cont.) Objectives 4–6

4

Sales

Some shows close deals on the floor; in other industries the sales cycle is long and the show is only its starting point. Either way, the design must support the act of selling: help customers find the right person, provide comparison and demonstration, create an environment for deeper conversations, and choreograph the flow from reception to display to meeting. **The booth is not the sales team's backdrop — it should be the sales team's operating system.**

Spatial priority → product proof, private conversation positions, quoting and configuration support, a clear "next step."

5

Distributor & Partner Recruitment

Entering a new market, companies often need agents, distributors, suppliers or strategic partners. Here the point is not mass traffic but **high-quality business conversations**. The design usually needs clear company positioning, sufficient credibility and professionalism, semi-open or enclosed meeting space, and tools for explaining the market, the products and the partnership model. Remember: a hundred passers-by may be worth less than three of the right partners.

Spatial priority → business credibility, deep-dive presentation tools, semi-private meeting areas, the partnership story.

6

Customer Relationship

Shows aren't only for finding new customers — they are where companies meet their existing ones. Some customers see the company face-to-face only once a year, at the show. The booth may need to host key accounts, present the latest progress, strengthen the relationship, resolve concerns, and make people feel valued. Here, **comfort, hosting flow, meeting quality and service detail beat dramatic styling.**

Spatial priority → comfortable hosting, VIP meeting space, catering and service support, operational circulation.

SECTION 2.3 (CONT.)

The Eight Objectives (cont.) Objectives 7–8

7

Market Research

A trade show is a highly concentrated live market. Within days, a company can see what competitors are launching, what problems customers care about, which messages get reactions, and how the market feels about pricing, features and trends. Some companies exhibit not only to broadcast — **but to collect**. This booth should create opportunities for interaction, questions, testing and observation.

Spatial priority → flexible demo areas, staff observation positions, structured feedback capture points.

8

Industry Presence

Certain shows are where the industry gathers every year. If every major competitor is present and one brand is absent, the market starts asking questions: is this company still active? Are they losing the market? Have they stopped investing? Exhibiting is sometimes an industry statement — **"We are here. We are growing. We are a serious member of this market."** This booth must project stability, confidence and standing.

Spatial priority → stable brand identity, scale appropriate to standing, a trustworthy overall image.

Eight objectives — eight different booths.

So before asking "what should it look like," always ask first: **which one is this?**

※ In practice a project rarely has a single objective — handling "many objectives at once" is exactly what the next section is for.

SECTION 2.4

Primary and Secondary Objectives

 Primary vs. Secondary Objectives

A company usually has more than one reason to exhibit. It may want to launch a product, find customers, host distributors, build the brand and watch competitors — all at the same time. But **design cannot give every objective the same priority**: space is finite, budget is finite, and visitor attention is even more finite. So the designer must help the client confirm two things:

Primary Objective

The one thing that must not fail

What is the single most important, must-not-fail outcome of this show? It gets the core position, the most space, the strongest visual hierarchy. **There can be only one.**

Secondary Objectives

Achieved without upstaging the hero

What else should be accomplished, provided it does not interfere with the primary objective? They still matter and still get planned — but they may not steal the hero's stage.

Example: if the primary objective is a **product launch**, display and hands-on experience must own the core. Meetings, storage and reception still matter, but they yield — position, area, visual weight, all of it. Reverse the brief: if the primary objective is **distributor recruitment**, the meeting space graduates from supporting cast to lead, and product display becomes evidence that supports the conversation.

The essence of design is making purposeful trade-offs.

The booth that wants everything ends up with nothing.

※ Cross-reference AEDM Rule 01 from Chapter 1 — the basis for every trade-off is the business objective. Not personal taste, and not whoever talks loudest.

SECTION 2.5

Turning Business Objectives into Space From Objective to Space

A business objective cannot stay in the slide deck — it must be **translated into space**. This table is the core tool of this chapter; you will use it in the brief phase of every project from now on:

Business Objective	What the Space Must Accomplish
Brand awareness	Long-distance identity, clear brand message, strong visual memory
Lead generation	Open entrance, interaction points, staff positions, lead-capture flow
Product launch	Hero zone, demo area, sightlines and gathering space
Sales	Product comparison, consultation positions, meeting space, clear next step
Partner recruitment	Professional image, deep-dive tools, semi-private meeting areas
Customer relationship	Comfortable hosting, VIP meetings, catering and service support
Market research	Surveys, testing, interaction, observation and feedback points
Industry presence	Stable identity, appropriate scale, trustworthy overall image

This is the exhibition designer's real job:
 turning **invisible business objectives** into **space you can see, enter and use**.

SECTION 2.6

"It Was Crowded" Is Not a Metric Measuring Success

Rookies tend to assume: the more people in the booth, the more successful it was. But traffic is only one number. **Success must be measured against the reason for exhibiting** — if the company needs five major channel partners, attracting five hundred visitors with no purchasing power may be worthless; if the company needs brand exposure, huge traffic can be a success even with zero immediate deals.

Common ways to measure:

- Booth visitor count
- Product demos delivered
- Quote or sample requests
- Media and social exposure
- New distributor or partnership opportunities
- Qualified lead count
- Meetings booked
- On-site or post-show orders
- Key account visits
- Market intelligence and feedback collected

The designer doesn't necessarily compute all these numbers. But **the designer must know which results matter most — because the space should make those results happen**. If demo count matters, there must be a demo area people can stand at; if meetings matter, there must be enough meeting space; if leads matter, the entrance and reception must never become a barrier.

**Ask the client first: "After the show, what numbers will you use to judge it?"
That number is what your design serves.**

SECTION 2.7

The Five Most Common Rookie Mistakes

 Five Common Rookie Mistakes**✗ MISTAKE 1**

Treating the client's "make it premium" as the objective.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Keep asking: premium — so that **who** believes **what**? Adjectives are not objectives. Behaviors and outcomes are.

✗ MISTAKE 2

Never separating primary from secondary — trying to do everything.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Confirm with the client: what is the **one thing that must not fail**? Arrange everything else around it.

✗ MISTAKE 3

Looking only at booth square footage, never at how work happens.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Learn how selling, demos, hosting and meetings **actually happen** — who stands where, how a guest gets walked to which spot.

✗ MISTAKE 4

Counting a crowd as success.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Define first **which visitors are valuable**, then decide what attracts them.

✗ MISTAKE 5

Finishing the design, then asking the client what outcomes they need.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Confirm **objectives and metrics before the first line is drawn**. The order never reverses.

These five mistakes share the same root as Chapter 1's: confusing "drawing" with "designing." Start drawing before the objective is clear, and the faster and prettier you draw, the faster you travel in the wrong direction.

AEDM RULE 02

Start with the Objective.

Don't ask first: "What should the booth look like?"

Ask first: "When the show is over, what does the client want to have gained?"

When the objective is clear, space has direction. When the objective is vague, **design becomes decoration**. Clients never buy booths — clients buy business results.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Summary

 Chapter Summary

Exhibiting is a **business investment**; the booth is the tool that earns the return. Companies exhibit to build brands, capture leads, launch products, create sales, recruit partners, host customers, research markets, or maintain industry presence. A show may carry many objectives at once, but the designer must isolate the **primary objective** — because it decides what stands out most, which functions get the most space, how visitors should act, how staff will use the booth, and how success will ultimately be judged.

Back to this chapter's one question — **why is a company willing to spend USD 300,000 on a booth?** You should now be able to answer: because what they are buying is not a structure. It is a business opportunity — a few days in which the right audience sees them, believes them, and starts doing business with them. The booth is merely the tool that makes it happen.

Before you start designing, complete one sentence:

"This company is exhibiting in order to _____."

If you cannot fill the blank, you should not start drawing.

Next — Chapter 03: Anatomy of A Booth. Taking the booth completely apart: Reception, Storage, Meeting, Demo, LED, Tower, Graphics, Lighting, Furniture, Electrical, Rigging, Flooring.

CHAPTER ASSIGNMENT

Assignment: Objective Analysis Assignment

CHAPTER ASSIGNMENT

Assignment: A One-Page Objective Analysis

Choose an exhibiting company you know well and complete a one-page analysis answering:

1. Why does this company **exhibit**?
2. What is its **primary objective**?
3. What are its **secondary objectives**?
4. Which **kind of visitor** does it most want to reach?
5. What **action** should visitors complete inside the booth?
6. Which **three spatial functions** matter most — and why?
7. After the show, which **results** should judge success?

Finally, complete the project's design starting point in one sentence:

We are designing a booth for _____, to help it, at _____, get
 _____ visitors to complete _____, ultimately achieving the
 business objective of _____.

※ Review standard (for the supervising reviewer): every judgment needs evidence and reasoning; ban unexplained adjectives like "nice, premium, high-tech"; only one primary objective allowed; every spatial function must map to an objective. Feedback uses the fixed four sentences: What you got right — / The problem most affecting the objective — / What it would cause — / What to submit next round —.



**Tower, LED, truss, stage —
every one of them has a job. Can you name them
all?**

03

CHAPTER THREE

Anatomy of A Booth

THE ONE QUESTION

What makes a booth work?

By the end of this chapter, you must be able to answer this question.

The first two chapters built the mindset: a booth is a business tool, and design starts from the objective. Now we take the machine apart — a booth broken down into its **12 elements**, one by one: what it is, which objective it works for, what you must decide when designing it, and where rookies most often stumble. After this chapter, you will never look at a booth and see "styling" again — you will see a system, running or broken.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Name the 12 elements of a booth, and tell Front of House from Back of House.
- Say which exhibiting objective each element works for — connecting Chapter 2 to real space.
- Remember the key design decisions and rules of thumb for each element.
- Understand why the "invisible" elements — power, rigging, flooring — have the earliest deadlines and the least forgiveness.
- Use the 12-element checklist to audit any floor plan for completeness.

SECTION 3.0

A Booth Is a System, Not a Shape

The Booth as a System

Visitors see form, color, light and product. What makes all of that stand up is a system they never see: wires under the floor, rigging points in the ceiling, a storage room behind the wall, a power plan on the drawing. **A booth is an iceberg — the experience floats above the waterline, the infrastructure sits below it.** Rookies design only what's above the water. Mature designers design both at once.

AEDM breaks the booth into 12 elements, in two groups:

Front of House

What visitors see and use

Reception, Demo, Meeting, Tower, LED, Graphics, Furniture — they directly drive Chapter 1's funnel: get seen, get people to stop, walk in, talk.

Back of House

Keeps everything running, unnoticed

Storage, Electrical, Rigging, Flooring, Lighting — they never face the visitor directly, but if any one of them fails, the entire front of house stops.

The two groups differ in one crucial way: front-of-house mistakes can still be adjusted on site; **back-of-house elements have the earliest deadlines and the least flexibility** — rigging must be submitted for review early, power must be finalized before the floor goes down, flooring is the first thing installed. That is why senior designers always draw infrastructure and function first, and form last.

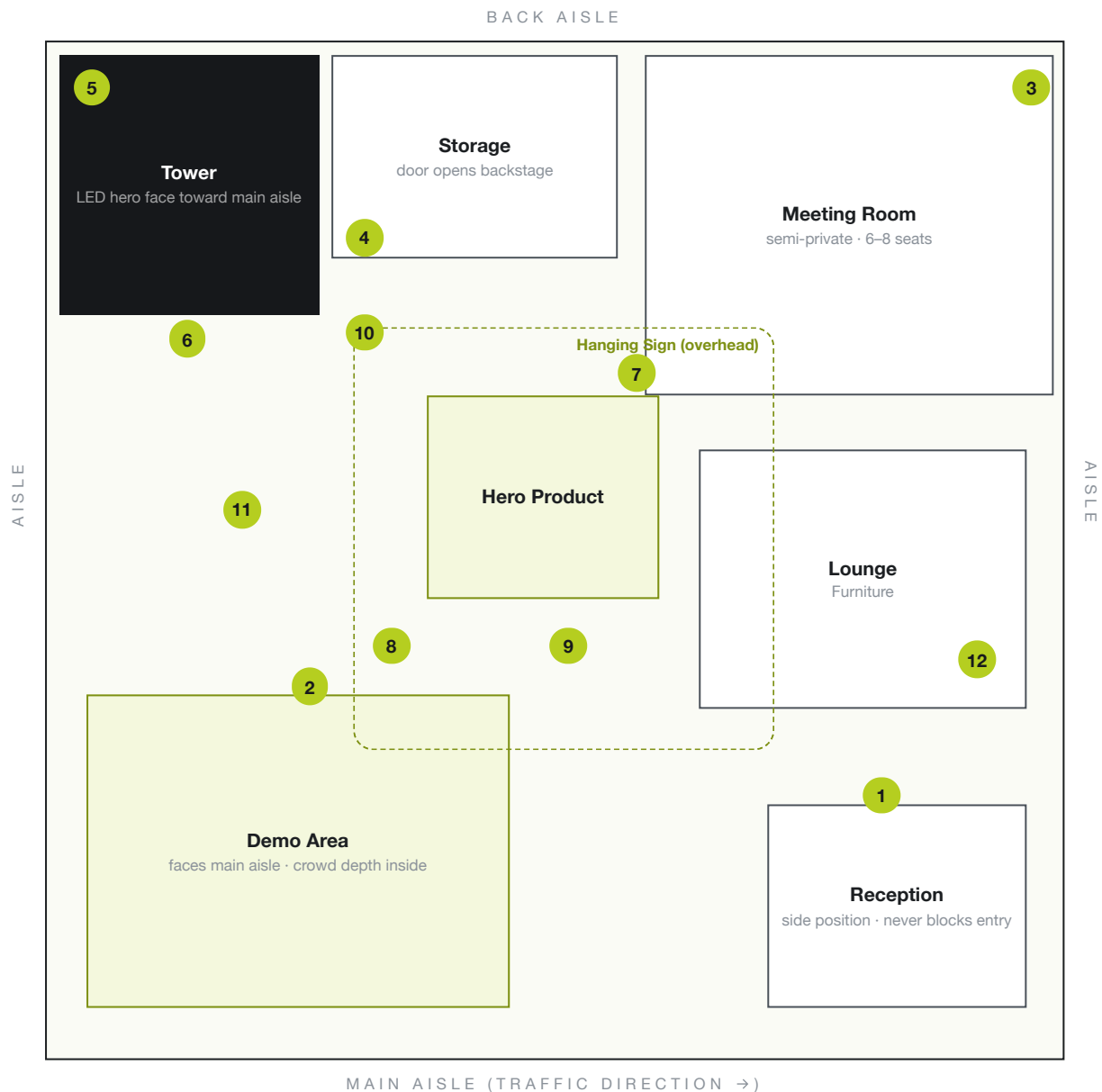
What visitors remember is the experience.

But the experience is held up by infrastructure they never see.

※ The next page is an anatomy map of a 20×20 island booth with all 12 elements marked. After that: twelve pages, one element each.

THE ANATOMY MAP

Anatomy Map: The 20x20 Island



- | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Reception | 2 Demo | 3 Meeting |
| 4 Storage | 5 Tower | 6 LED |
| 7 Graphics | 8 Lighting | 9 Electrical (floor pocket) |
| 10 Rigging | 11 Flooring | 12 Furniture |

※ This is a schematic, not a template. The actual layout is always decided by Chapter 2's primary objective — for a product launch, Hero Product and Demo grow; for distributor recruitment, Meeting becomes the lead.

ELEMENT 01 · FRONT OF HOUSE

Reception

Works for →

Lead Generation

Customer Relationship

Sales

Reception is the visitor's **first human contact** with the brand. Its real job is not "someone standing there handing out brochures" — it is **triage**: quickly reading who has arrived (a buyer? a returning customer? a student? a competitor?) and routing the right people to the right place — buyers to the meeting area, media to their contact, general visitors toward the demo.

Position decides everything for reception. It should stand **at the side or corner of the main traffic direction** — able to see people, able to greet people, but never lying across the front of the booth. A counter placed across the entrance turns an open booth into "a shop with a checkout desk," and the visitor's psychological threshold shoots up instantly.

DESIGN CHECKLIST

- Positioned at the side or corner of incoming traffic — welcoming, never blocking.
- Staff's default position is *beside* the counter, not behind it — behind is a cashier, beside is a host.
- Plan the lead-capture tools and gestures up front: badge scanner, tablet, QR — where they sit, who operates them.
- The reception position should command a view of the whole booth — it doubles as the command post.

✗ THE ROOKIE MOVE

Placing the reception counter dead-center across the front — symmetrical on paper, a barrier on the floor.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Pull reception to the side; give the front to the product and an open entrance. Symmetry is for cameras. Circulation is for business.

ELEMENT 02 · FRONT OF HOUSE

Demo Area

Works for →

Product Launch

Lead Generation

Sales

The demo area is the product's **stage**, and the strongest crowd-gathering tool the booth has — a demonstration in progress is itself the reason a passer-by stops (the "stop" step of Chapter 1's funnel). Its design has three keys: **orientation** (facing the traffic, not the interior of the booth), **sightlines** (the back row can still see), and **depth** (the audience stands inside the booth).

That last point is often missed: most shows require activity and crowds to stay inside your own booth line — you may not clog the aisle. So a demo area is never "a table and a screen"; it is **a demo point plus an audience zone** — you reserve standing room for the crowd the way a theater has seats.

DESIGN CHECKLIST

- Demo faces the main traffic direction; the demonstrator's back is to the booth, face to the aisle.
- Crowd depth stays inside the booth — reserve 4–8 feet of audience zone depending on demo type.
- List power, network and audio needs while drawing (this feeds Element 09, Electrical).
- The demo has a showtime schedule: sessions per day, minutes per session, who presents — design the space around that rhythm.

× THE ROOKIE MOVE

Mounting the demo screen on the deepest wall of the booth — safe, tidy, and watched by no one.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Push the demo to the front edge, facing the aisle, so passers-by "accidentally" see something happening.

ELEMENT 03 · FRONT OF HOUSE

Meeting Area

Works for →

Partner Recruitment

Customer Relationship

Sales

The meeting area is "where business actually happens." It comes in three privacy levels, and **the level is decided by the objective, not by the square footage**: the open lounge (quick chats, sit down in passing), the semi-private (low walls or screens — you can be seen but not heard), and the fully enclosed meeting room (a door; for pricing, contracts, and things not yet announced).

Privacy is bought with traffic: the more walls, the more closed the booth. So the meeting room almost always sits in the **back of the booth**, leaving the golden aisle-facing edge to display and demo. Rule of thumb for size: an enclosed room for 6–8 people needs roughly 10×10 feet — in a 20×20 booth that is a quarter of the floor, and that math must be put in front of the client at the brief stage.

DESIGN CHECKLIST

- First ask Chapter 2's question: are this show's meetings "drop-in chats" or "scheduled negotiations"? The level follows the answer.
- Meetings go to the back; display takes the front — the golden edge is never given to a wall.
- Think acoustics and sightlines separately: many conversations only need to be *unheard*, not *unseen*.
- What goes inside: a screen for laptops? whiteboard? water? storage? — the room's tools follow the meeting's purpose.

× THE ROOKIE MOVE

Making the meeting room the booth's most beautiful volume — and parking it on the aisle-facing corner.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

The meeting room is logistics, not signage. It wants quiet and convenience, not exposure.

ELEMENT 04 · BACK OF HOUSE

Storage

Works for →

Logistics for every objective

Storage is **the most frequently forgotten element in this entire manual**. During the show, a booth breathes stuff daily: brochure and giveaway restocks, staff coats and bags, product backstock, cleaning supplies, prizes, sample cases. Give these things no home, and they will appear exactly where they should not — piled in the meeting-room corner, stuffed under the reception counter, exposed along a wall visitors can see.

Note: storage holds the *daily operation*. Large empty crates usually go to the show's empty storage service, not your booth — so the room is not designed for crates, but for "what gets reached for every day": shelves, hooks, a lock.

DESIGN CHECKLIST

- Draw it into the **first version** of the plan — rule of thumb 3–5% of booth area; inside the tower or the meeting-room block is a natural spot.
- Door position and swing stay discreet: opening onto the backstage path, never facing visitors.
- Three things inside: shelving (printed matter by level), hooks (coats), a lock (valuables).
- Ask the client one concrete question: "What moves in and out of the booth every day of the show?" The list sizes the room.

✗ THE ROOKIE MOVE

Design finished; client asks "where does our stuff go?" — a curtain gets rigged in a back corner.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Storage enters the plan in the same round as reception and demo — it is a function, not leftover space.

ELEMENT 05 · FRONT OF HOUSE

Tower

Works for →

Brand Awareness

Industry Presence

The tower is the booth's **long-distance identity carrier** — at 30 or 50 feet, what visitors see is not your product but your tower. It answers the funnel's first question, "how do we get noticed in the crowd." But towers come with two laws. First, **height limits are governed by the show's Exhibitor Manual** (US shows commonly cap island booths somewhere between 16–20 ft; inline booths are typically 8 ft with line-of-sight rules). Second, **the tower's footprint may not be dead space** — the area it consumes must work.

So a mature tower is almost always a composite: the outside carries brand identity and the LED; the inside is storage, the electrical panel, or the structural core. A hollow tower with nothing but styling is the client's money stood upright for other people to look at.

DESIGN CHECKLIST

- Before starting, check two things: the show's height limit, and whether review is required (most shows require structural drawings above a certain height).
- The identity's primary face points at the main traffic; on an island, consider four-sided legibility.
- Use the interior: storage / power / structure — the footprint must multi-task.
- Breakdown and transport: the tower is the largest structural piece — design it already knowing how it gets into the truck and stands up in two hours.

✗ THE ROOKIE MOVE

Sculpting the tower to perfection, then discovering it exceeds the height limit right before the deadline — the whole composition starts over.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

The height limit is the design's first input, not its final checkbox.

ELEMENT 06 · FRONT OF HOUSE

LED Wall

Works for →

Brand Awareness

Product Launch

The LED is the most abused element of the past decade. Its problem is never the hardware — it is the **content**. An LED is just a picture frame that glows; what you put in the frame decides whether it has a job. So the AEDM order is: **decide the content first, then the screen**. What story plays? How long is the loop? Who produces it? When is it delivered? Until those questions have answers, do not draw a big screen.

On hardware, one rule of thumb: **the pixel pitch number $\approx$ the minimum comfortable viewing distance in meters**. A P3 wall reads comfortably from 3 meters; close-range interactive walls need finer pitch, while a tower-top screen viewed only from afar can go coarser. Finer pitch costs more — so "how far will the audience stand" directly sets the budget.

DESIGN CHECKLIST

- Content first: storyboard, loop length, producer, delivery date — content production is part of the design deliverable.
- Match pitch to viewing distance: fine up close, coarse at range — don't pay P2 prices for a screen viewed from 30 feet.
- LED needs a dedicated circuit and a home for the processor (see Element 09); its weight needs structural support.
- Compare against large-format print for one-time cost: content that doesn't move is always cheaper, brighter, and more reliable printed.

× THE ROOKIE MOVE

Drawing a spectacular wall, then asking the client "do you have content?" a week before the show — and playing a stretched, distorted logo for three days.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Any LED without a content plan becomes a printed graphic. Daring to make that call is what professional looks like.

ELEMENT 07 · FRONT OF HOUSE

Graphics

Works for →

Brand Awareness

The message layer of every objective

Graphics are the booth's speech system. Their core discipline is **three message tiers** for three viewing distances: **30 feet** — who you are (logo, brand color, one positioning line); **10 feet** — what you do and why I should care (main message, product category); **3 feet** — details (specs, cases, QR). With each tier in place, a visitor's approach becomes an automatic brand presentation.

Type only counts if it can be read. Rule of thumb: **at least 1 inch of letter height per 10 feet of viewing distance**, adjusted for weight and contrast. For production, large-format files run **CMYK at 100–150 DPI at full size** (not the screen-world 300 DPI mindset), and always confirm **seam positions** with the shop — one seam through a face or a logo ruins the best design.

DESIGN CHECKLIST

- Audit each tier: at 30 ft do they know who you are? At 10 ft why they should care? At 3 ft is there a next step (QR / contact)?
- Letter height by distance: size headlines in inches, not by "looks big enough on my monitor."
- File specs: CMYK, 100–150 DPI at full size, bleeds and seam positions confirmed with the fabricator.
- Material sets the tone: SEG fabric (no glare, ships light) vs. direct-print rigid board (crisp, sharp edges) — choose by location.

✗ THE ROOKIE MOVE

Typesetting the website's full intro paragraph onto the main wall — thorough, and read by absolutely no one in the aisle.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

One sentence on the wall; details go into the brochure and the QR. Walls shout — they are not for reading.

ELEMENT 08 · BACK OF HOUSE

Lighting

Works for →

The amplifier of every objective

Hall lighting only guarantees "visible," never "looks good." The booth's own lighting has three jobs: **presence** (one level brighter than the neighbors and you get seen first from far away), **hierarchy** (concentrate light on the hero — the hero product should be the brightest point in the booth), and **atmosphere** (color temperature and light quality carry brand personality: 3000K warm and premium, 4000K clean and technical).

The biggest rookie lighting mistake is not dimness — it is **evenness**: the whole booth washed in one flat light, everything equally bright, which means no hero at all. The first lighting decision is always: **who is the brightest?** Only then choose the instruments (stem, track, recessed, lightbox) to make it true.

DESIGN CHECKLIST

- Set the brightness hierarchy first: hero → brand identity → ambient. Three distinct levels.
- One color temperature per booth (pick 3000–4000K); mixed temperatures read as a malfunction.
- Hide the instruments, aim away from visitors' eyes — see the light, never the lamp.
- Every fixture is a line in the power list (see Element 09); the backlit SEG lightbox is a graphics-plus-lighting two-in-one option.

✗ THE ROOKIE MOVE

Globally lit renders, gorgeous from every angle; the real booth relies on hall lighting — flat and gray.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Light in renders must be buildable — every beam on the drawing corresponds to a real fixture and its power.

ELEMENT 09 · BACK OF HOUSE

Electrical

Works for →

The lifeline of every element

Power is the booth's lifeline, and **the element whose sequence you can least afford to break**. On an island booth, power comes **from the floor** — the show's electricians run lines to the floor-pocket positions you specify, and then the flooring goes down on top. That creates an iron law: **the power plan must be finished before the flooring is installed**. Realize you're missing a circuit after the floor is down, and the price is pulling the floor up.

What the designer delivers is the **Power Plan**: every point of use with its position, voltage (120V for typical equipment; 208V possible for heavy machines), wattage — and which devices need a **dedicated circuit**: LED processors, demo computers, servers. Put sensitive gear on a shared line and you've stored the crash for show day. Two more things touch the budget: **the advance order is far cheaper than ordering on site**; and in most US halls electrical work belongs to the hall's union electricians — the designer's job is to get the drawing right, not to pull cable.

DESIGN CHECKLIST

- Start the power list with the first version of the plan: one line per device — position, voltage, wattage.
- Power Plan locks before Flooring; floor-pocket positions drawn on the plan.
- Tag sensitive equipment "Dedicated Circuit"; separate circuits for lighting, LED and demo.
- Watch the Advance Order deadline — the easiest money the project will ever save.

✗ THE ROOKIE MOVE

Finishing the whole drawing, then thinking about power — taped-down cords crossing walkways, or panic pricing on site.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Layout and Power Plan are two layers of the same drawing — drawn together, revised together.

ELEMENT 10 · BACK OF HOUSE

Rigging

Works for →

Brand Awareness

Industry Presence

The hanging sign floating above your booth is **the identity visible from the farthest distance in the entire hall** — towers have height limits, but the sign floats above every booth and reads from half a hall away. For Brand Awareness and Industry Presence projects it is often the single highest-ROI element. A rigged truss with lights is also the workhorse solution for lighting an island.

But rigging has the hardest rules in the building: **only the venue's designated riggers touch the points** — your own crew cannot hang anything; structure and weight go through advance review; **the rigging order deadline is typically among the earliest in the whole project**; and not every show or booth type allows it — inline booths usually cannot, and the Exhibitor Manual is the authority. Miss the deadline and the sign isn't more expensive. It simply doesn't exist.

DESIGN CHECKLIST

- Confirm in week one: can this show, this booth, rig at all? Height limit and clearance?
- Center the sign on the booth or the main traffic direction; consider four-sided legibility (circle, square, triangle).
- Weight, materials and structural drawings submitted early — aluminum frame with fabric is the standard lightweight answer.
- Write the rigging deadline on the first line of the project schedule.

× THE ROOKIE MOVE

Treating the sign as a "bonus item" to handle after the proposal is approved — the deadline is gone, and so is the sign.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Rigging is the earliest-deadline element: confirmed in week one, ordered in the first batch.

ELEMENT 11 · BACK OF HOUSE

Flooring

Works for →

The foundation of experience

The roof over the power

Flooring is the most underrated element because it holds four jobs at once. **It is the roof over the power** (cables run beneath it, so its installation slot comes after electrical and before everything else). **It is what feet experience** (staff stand for three days; whether a visitor stays five extra minutes — padding thickness has a vote). **It is silent zoning** (change the material and visitors know they've entered another zone — carpeted lounge, wood-look display floor, no wall required). **And it is the largest reflector in the booth** (dark floors absorb light and dim the whole booth a level; light floors pay your lighting budget back double).

DESIGN CHECKLIST

- The iron sequence: Power Plan locked → electrical in → flooring in → everything else.
- Thicker padding where people stand long (reception, demo, lounge) — stamina for the team, an invitation for guests.
- Zone with materials and save the cost of walls: carpet = linger, hard floor = move.
- Raised floors hide cabling perfectly, but resolve edge ramps and accessible entry.
- Color enters the lighting math: a dark floor makes you buy the brightness back with more fixtures.

✗ THE ROOKIE MOVE

Flooring as the drawing's final step — "fill in a material," pick dark gray because the render mood said so.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Flooring is decided at the functional-plan stage — it governs sequence, zoning and brightness, not just looks.

ELEMENT 12 · FRONT OF HOUSE

Furniture

Works for →

Customer Relationship

Sales

Furniture is **the design of conversation length**. A bar table with stools = a ten-minute standing chat; a sofa with a coffee table = a thirty-minute sit-down. Whatever furniture you place, you are telling both visitors and staff what kind of conversation is expected here. So furniture choices start from Chapter 2's objective — Lead Generation wants fast-turnover standing tables; Customer Relationship wants sofas that keep people.

Two practical decisions: **rent or build** (show rental furniture is cheap and saves freight, but generic; custom furniture extends the brand's quality, but must ship and survive), and **real dimensions on the plan** — furniture is not a prop dropped into the render last; a six-person sofa group with walking clearance eats nearly 10×10 feet. Leave it off the plan and the real booth is simply cramped.

DESIGN CHECKLIST

- Decide the conversation type first (quick / long), then the furniture type (standing table / sofa).
- Real dimensions on the plan, including pulled-out chairs and walking clearance.
- Rentals have deadlines and catalog limits; custom has freight and wear — mixing both is normal.
- Hide the cables: charging, tablets, demo devices get their routes at furniture-design time.

× THE ROOKIE MOVE

Minimalist thin-leg stools in the render — beautiful; on site, guests want to leave after ten minutes, which is exactly the ten minutes you wanted them to stay.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Furniture is function, not scenery. If you want people to stay, give them chairs worth staying in.

Every Element Has a Job.

Every element must hold a job.

If you cannot say which objective an element works for, it does not belong on the drawing.

Delete it, and give its area and budget back to the hero. This rule is Rule 01 (Design for Business) and Rule 02 (Start with the Objective) landing on the drawing — **the objective chooses the elements; every element proves itself.** In review, your supervisor will point at anything on your plan and ask: "This — who does it work for?"

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Summary

 Chapter Summary

A booth is a system: the **front of house** (Reception, Demo, Meeting, Tower, LED, Graphics, Furniture) drives the funnel; the **back of house** (Storage, Electrical, Rigging, Flooring, Lighting) keeps it all running. Back to the chapter's one question — **what makes a booth work?**

Answer: when all 12 elements **each hold a job**, and **the sequence is right** — rigging reviewed earliest, power before flooring, storage in the first draft, content before LED, objective before everything.

Three sets of numbers and sequences to memorize:

- **Installation sequence:** Rigging review → Power Plan → Flooring → structure and the rest. Deadlines run early-to-late; flexibility runs small-to-large.
- **Viewing distances:** 30 ft who you are, 10 ft why I care, 3 ft next step; letter height ≥ 1 inch per 10 ft; LED pitch $\approx$ comfortable distance in meters.
- **Area discipline:** storage 3–5%; a 6–8 person meeting room $\approx 10 \times 10$; demo crowd depth 4–8 ft kept inside the booth.

Next — Chapter 04: The Exhibition Design Process. The full journey: Brief → Research → Concept → Layout → Traffic → Sketch → 3D → Presentation → Revision → Production → Installation. This is AMG's SOP.

CHAPTER ASSIGNMENT

Assignment: Booth Anatomy

 Assignment

CHAPTER ASSIGNMENT

Assignment: Dissect a Real Booth

Find an island booth case (site photos or online, multiple angles preferred), pair it with Section 4 of the AMG Booth Analysis Worksheet, and complete three tasks:

1. **Element inventory:** run all 12 elements — present / absent, where it sits, which objective it works for. Produce a 12-row table.
2. **Find two problems:** one "element without a job" (it's on the plan, but nobody can say who it works for), and one "missing element" (the objective needs it, and it isn't there). Explain the consequence of each.
3. **Re-plan it:** hand-sketch a 20×20 plan (no computer), re-arranging the 12 elements around the primary objective as you judge it. Mark traffic direction, floor-pocket positions and the hanging-sign zone.

※ Review standard: the inventory must include back-of-house elements — analyzing only the visible front of house counts as incomplete; every judgment needs evidence; the hand sketch is graded on "sequence awareness" (the power-flooring relationship; storage present in the first draft). Feedback uses the fixed four sentences: What you got right — / The problem most affecting the objective — / What it would cause — / What to submit next round —.

※ AMG Case link: in class, the instructor dissects a recent real AMG project with the same 12-element table, side by side with your analysis.

TURN 1 NORTH
GRANDSTAND

➤ GAINBRIDGE



A few weeks ago, this was a drawing.
What happened in between is this chapter.

04

CHAPTER FOUR

The Exhibition Design Process

THE ONE QUESTION

How does an idea become a booth standing on the show floor?

By the end of this chapter, you must be able to answer this question.

The first three chapters gave you the mindset (business), the objectives (eight of them) and the parts (12 elements). This chapter strings them into a production line: the full journey from Brief to Installation. It runs in two halves — the **design half** turns a problem into an approved solution; the **production half** turns the solution into a physical thing. This chapter is how AMG works (our SOP): every project you touch in this company travels this road.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Draw the full process from Brief to Installation and name each step's output.
- Know AMG's five production phases and three gates — and where the junior sits in them.
- Understand "the model is the database": why BIM discipline starts at the quote stage.
- Read a complete production drawing set (page order from A.1 to LABEL).
- Memorize this chapter's quality standard: documentation is complete only when the factory asks zero questions.

SECTION 4.0

The Map The Full Process

The whole process has two halves. The **design half** happens before the sale — input: the client's problem; output: an approved solution with a quote. The **production half** happens after the sale — input: the approved solution; output: a booth standing on the show floor. The most common rookie misconception is that the designer's job ends when the proposal is approved — **at AMG, the quality of the design is tested in the production half.**

Design Half

Problem → solution (§4.1–4.7)

01	Brief	Objectives, visitors, budget, constraints
02	Research	Show rules, venue, brand, inventory
03	Concept	A one-sentence spatial strategy
04	Layout & Traffic	Functions and circulation (the 12 elements)
05	Sketch → 3D	SketchUp · BIM discipline
06	Presentation	Proposal + Quote
07	Revision	Rounds → client approval

Production Half

Solution → reality (§4.8–4.9 · AMG 5 Phases)

P1	Quote Model	Built alongside the design half
P2	Production Model	1:1, millimeter precision → Gate 1
P3	Layout Docs	Complete drawing PDF → Gate 2
P4	CNC Prep	Cut files → Gate 3
P5	Manufacturing	Carpentry → finishing → final assembly
→	Installation	On-site replication via the LABEL document

The left half decides whether the booth is **worth building**. The right half decides whether it **can be built**.

A good designer shows up for both halves.

※ The authority for the production half is the internal document "AMG Production Workflow — Complete Reference v2.0." This chapter teaches the map and the mindset; for implementation specs (BIM template, material codes, naming conventions, checklists), that document governs.

SECTION 4.1 · DESIGN

Brief: Chapter 2 Becomes a Document

The Brief

The Brief is the project's first document — Chapter 2 made real: "why is this company exhibiting," written down and signed off. A complete Brief answers at least:

Objectives: one primary, secondaries ranked (the Ch2 starter sentence)

Visitors: who matters most? What action should they complete?

Product: which is the hero? How is it shown?

Budget: total, and its leanings (structure / graphics / experience)

Booth: show name, dates, size, booth type, space number

Existing assets: reusable inventory structures, old graphics, owned furniture

Functional needs: how many meetings? Demo sessions? What goes in storage?

Success metrics: which numbers judge the show afterward (Ch2 §2.6)

The AMG reality: a project's starting material comes from two sources — **internal** (the Head Designer's 3D model, renders, and PDFs with graphic IDs) or **the client** (their renders and annotations; sometimes just a few images, and you build from scratch). Either way, **starting work with an unfinished Brief means guessing on the client's behalf** — and the cost of a wrong guess rolls all the way to the factory.

The Brief test: remove every image and read only the text.

Could a colleague who never attended the meetings start designing? If yes — it's complete.

SECTION 4.2 · DESIGN

Research: Scout Before You Draw Research

Research is not collecting pretty reference images (Ch1, Mistake 2). It is four lines of reconnaissance, each feeding design decisions directly:

1**Show Rules (the Exhibitor Manual)**

Height limits, line-of-sight, rigging permissions, electrical rules, move-in/move-out windows, the deadline table. As Ch3 said: these are design **inputs**, not final checkboxes. Download it on day one and mark it up.

2**Venue & Location**

Where in the hall is the booth? Which way does traffic come? Who are the neighbors, and how tall? Columns, fire hydrants, floor utilities? The same design in a corner and at the mouth of a main aisle are two different projects.

3**Brand & Competitors**

Brand guidelines (colors, type, logo rules), product material, last year's booth photos, the main competitors' track record — your design will stand next to theirs and be compared.

4**AMG Inventory**

Standard panels, standard counters, truss, furniture, lighting. **Inventory maximization is the core quoting strategy** — use standard parts wherever possible and spend the custom budget on the hero that truly needs it. This one line decides whether the quote is competitive.

Research's output is not a folder. It is a **constraint list:**

on this project — what can't be done, what needn't be done, what money needn't be spent.

SECTION 4.3 · DESIGN

Concept: A One-Sentence Spatial Strategy The Concept

Concept is the most misunderstood step in the process. It is **not** a mood board, not styling inspiration, not "we're going high-tech this time." The AEDM definition: **a concept is the one sentence naming the spatial strategy that answers the Brief.**

Examples (illustrative):

"Turn the whole booth into a **tasting corridor** — visitors don't come to look, they queue to try." (Objective: product launch)

"An **open factory at work** — let buyers watch our craftsmanship happening live." (Objective: build trust, capture leads)

"The **café strategy** — the best seats on the floor, keeping old customers around to talk about next year." (Objective: customer relationship)

A good concept passes three tests. **One:** it answers the primary objective directly, rather than decorating it. **Two:** it fits in one sentence that Sales can repeat to the client verbatim. **Three:** it gives every later decision its criterion — open this wall or not, aim the light where, put the counter where: each time, ask whether the decision serves the concept.

Concept before form.

Concept is the **strategy; form is just the clothes the strategy wears.**

※ Stuck on a concept? Go back to the Ch2 starter sentence and the Ch1 funnel: what would make a visitor in the aisle stop? That "what" is very often the concept.

SECTION 4.4 · DESIGN

Layout & Traffic: Plan First, Volume Later

Layout & Traffic

This is where Chapter 3's 12 elements take the field. The order is disciplined: **function blocks first, then walls, then form**. Push rough blocks around the plan — main display, demo, meeting, storage, reception — until the primary objective's elements hold the best positions. Only then do walls rise.

Traffic is the soul of the layout, and the test is a walkthrough: imagine one visitor coming down the main aisle — **Where do they first see you? What makes them stop? Is the entrance on their line of travel? What do they see first upon entering? How do they reach the hero? Where do they sit? Where do they exit, and what do they leave with?** Every question you can't answer is a hole in the plan.

LAYOUT CHECKLIST

- The primary objective's elements own the golden edge (facing the main aisle, on the traffic side) — Ch2's trade-offs landing as positions.
- Openings face the traffic direction; entry is threshold-free and barrier-free (reception pulled aside).
- Back of house complete: storage in draft one, meetings pulled back, floor-pocket positions anticipated.
- Crowd depth inside the booth; the aisle line is never violated.
- Sweep the 12-element checklist: every element placed, every element employed (Rule 03).

A floor plan is checked with your **feet, not your eyes —
a path that doesn't walk on paper won't walk for visitors either.**

SECTION 4.5 · DESIGN

Sketch → 3D: The Model Is the Database Sketch to 3D

At last, SketchUp — and note that it is **step five** of the process, not step one. Test proportion, massing and viewpoints by hand first; model once you've decided. Modeling expresses decisions — it is not how you search for them.

At AMG, the 3D model is never just "the picture we show the client." From day one it is **the project's database**: the quote grows out of the model (Generate Report exports the part list → Excel → the quoting system), the drawings grow out of the model (Layout viewports stay linked to it), and the CNC cut files grow out of the model too. That is why **BIM discipline starts at the quote stage**:

AMG BIM DISCIPLINE

- **Three-layer hierarchy:** Booth Structure → eight category components (Custom Structure / Inventory Panel / Inventory Counter / Accessories / Fabric Channels / Graphics / Hanging Sign / Carpet) → individual components.
- **No Untagged items:** every component lives in its correct category layer — a mis-layered component stays wrong all the way to CNC.
- **Metadata filled on the spot:** Finish, Description, Lighting entered into Advanced Attributes while modeling — skip it now and someone reconstructs it from memory during production.
- **Custom part numbering:** #01, #02, #03... assigned at the quote stage and carried through to the factory.
- **Inventory first:** standard panels and counters wherever possible; custom is the last resort.

You are not building a model. You are building the data the next five phases will eat.

A messy model makes the whole pipeline messy.

SECTION 4.6 · DESIGN

Presentation & Quote: Tell the Story, Count the Money

Presentation & Quote

A presentation is not a styling showcase — it is **telling a business story**. The order follows this manual's own logic: objectives first (we understand why you exhibit) → then the concept (the strategy we answer it with) → then walk the traffic (this is how your guests pass, stop and enter) → only then highlights and form → and finally budget and schedule. **Renders are evidence, not magic** — every render exists to prove "this strategy will work," never merely "this booth looks great."

While the presentation happens, the quote runs in parallel (the Quote Phase): the model exports its part data → enrichment in Excel (descriptions, finishes, lighting, board) → into the quoting system as a formal quote; graphic data goes to the 2D team for estimating; special items (custom hanging signs, acrylic, metalwork) go out to vendors. This is where §4.5's discipline pays off — **a clean model makes the quote fast and accurate**.

PRESENTATION CHECKLIST

- Page one is the objective, not a render — get the client nodding "you understand us" before showing pictures.
- Walk the traffic on the floor plan, using one concrete visitor persona.
- Tag every highlight with the objective it serves (Rule 03's language is the language of the pitch).
- Every light and every piece of furniture in the render must be buildable and in the quote (Ch3, Lighting ✓).
- Quote and proposal share one version number — pictures that don't match the money kill trust.

SECTION 4.7 · DESIGN

Revision: The Discipline of Changing Revision

No proposal passes in one shot. Revision is an official step of the process, not a failure. But it runs on three disciplines:

1

Every round returns to the Brief

When the client says "change the color" or "make the tower taller," first judge: does this touch the styling layer, or the functional skeleton? **Validated circulation and functional layout are protected** — don't repaint one wall and casually re-plan the whole layout with it.

2

Versions leave a record

What changed in each version, who asked, when it was locked — the drawing set will carry a whole Revisions page for this. "What the client said last time" diverging from "what the file actually contains" is the number-one source of production accidents.

3

"Pending confirmation" must reach zero

Revisions breed open questions: Formica code TBC, LED temperature TBC, client product dimensions TBC. Every "NEED CONFIRMATION" **must reach zero before the production model begins** — AMG's real-world lesson: unresolved confirmations survive all the way to the factory and detonate at the most expensive moment.

Revision changes the **solution**, not the **skeleton**.

If the skeleton must move, go back to the Brief and re-align with the objective.

※ Client approval + confirmations at zero = the design half is over. Next, the solution passes through three gates.

SECTION 4.8 · PRODUCTION

The Production Half: Five Phases, Three Gates Phases & Gates

After approval, the project enters the production half. AMG controls quality with a **Gate system**: the junior executes three stages, and every stage runs the same rhythm — **Junior executes → AI reviews → the senior design engineer validates** — all three pass before anything moves on. This is your home turf as a Junior Designer / Drafter:

G1

Gate 1 — Detailing (the Production Model)

Refine the quote model into a 1:1, millimeter-precise production model: every custom panel broken into its pieces (internal numbering __XX#N), hardware positioned (camlocks, wood pads, hangers), every electrical hole and LED notch modeled, metadata completed. **Validation focus: zero empty fields, zero "NEED CONFIRMATION."**

G2

Gate 2 — Layout (the Drawing Set)

Link the model into the Layout template and produce the full drawing PDF (page order on the next page). Every panel gets front, back, side and section views with dimensions, finishes, hardware and holes. **Only after Gate 2 passes does the PDF distribute** — to the warehouse, to sales, into the system — followed by the joint design + sales + production final meeting.

G3

Gate 3 — CNC (the Cut Files)

Import the model panel by panel into the CNC software, nest by material, generate toolpaths, export cut files and the nesting PDF. **Validation focus: drawings and cut files match 1:1** — no missing pieces, no extras, mirrored panels oriented correctly, material thicknesses consistent. Only after the senior's final sign-off do the files go to the CNC operator's server.

Gates aren't bureaucracy — they're insurance:
an error caught on screen is free; on the CNC it's a sheet of material; on the show floor it's an all-nighter.

SECTION 4.9 · PRODUCTION

A Complete Production Drawing Set The Drawing Set

The page order is fixed (page counts scale with the project). Memorize this table and you can read the documentation of any AMG project:

Page	Content
A.1 Material List	Inventory listing: standard panels, counters, furniture, lighting
A.2 Revisions	Version history — §4.7's discipline lives here
A.3 Location Layout	The booth's position in the hall, neighbors, orientation
A.4 Scope of Work	Renders, graphic locations, critical notes only
A.5 Overall 3D	Full booth 3D: areas, directions, finishes, accessories
A.6–A.9 Elevations	Front, back, left, right (structure dimensions, no fabric)
A.10 Structure Layout	Panel layout: sizes, locations, numbering, door swings
A.11 PVC Cover	PVC cover specifications and dimensions
A.12+ Custom Panels	One page (or more) per custom panel: finish view + frame view + piece labels
Floor Plans	Electrical / internet / lighting / hanging sign / rigging (for sales and the organizer)
LABEL	Final assembly numbering: on site, the crew replicates the warehouse build by it

Note the final page, **LABEL**: at final assembly in the shop, the installation manager assigns every panel its final number, and the LABEL page records that system — so show-site installation becomes "re-running, by number, an assembly that already succeeded in the warehouse." This is the secret of AMG's fast installs: **the site solves no puzzles; the site only executes.**

**The drawing set has exactly one quality standard —
zero questions from the factory. Every question a carpenter asks is one
failure of the PDF.**

SECTION 4.10

The Five Most Common Rookie Mistakes

 Five Common Rookie Mistakes**✗ MISTAKE 1**

Opening SketchUp while the Brief still has blanks — "let's get started and ask later."

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Brief checklist complete and signed before the file opens. Every question skipped now is rebuilt from memory during production.

✗ MISTAKE 2

Modeling for looks only — components unlayered, unnamed, metadata empty.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Sweep before every save: any Untagged items? A mis-layered component stays wrong through quoting and CNC — and it's nearly invisible.

✗ MISTAKE 3

Letting "pending confirmation" items sit — someone will surely confirm them later.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Every NEED CONFIRMATION has an owner and a deadline, and reaches zero before the production model — in real projects they live far longer than you think.

✗ MISTAKE 4

Client asks for a styling change; you re-arrange the layout while you're at it — "everything's being changed anyway."

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Layered revision: the styling layer may move; the validated functional skeleton is protected. Skeleton changes = back to the Brief.

✗ MISTAKE 5

Two documents disagree — you copy the one that's closer to hand.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

The confirmed spec governs, and you report the conflict so the document gets fixed. Real-world lesson: a standards document once listed white Formica under a black color code — whoever copied it ordered a batch of black panels.

The five mistakes share a pattern: **save ten minutes now, pay ten factory hours later.** Every step of this process prepares data for the next one — every file you hand off, someone uses to make a decision.

Zero Questions.

Documentation is complete only when the factory asks zero questions.

Every question from the production line is one failure of your PDF.

This rule comes straight from AMG's production floor, and it is the quality standard of the entire process: every step of the design half — the Brief asked to completion, confirmations at zero, the model built as a database — exists so that the production half **never has to ask a single question.**

Achieve it, and your design gets built right the first time and opens on time.

Miss it, and the most beautiful render dies on the factory floor.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Summary

 Chapter Summary

An idea becomes a booth by crossing two halves: the **design half** (Brief → Research → Concept → Layout & Traffic → 3D → Presentation → Revision) turns a problem into an approved solution; the **production half** (Quote → Production Model → Layout Docs → CNC → Manufacturing → Installation) turns the solution into reality, quality-controlled by three gates. What joins the halves is **one and the same 3D model** — the model is the database; quote, drawings and cut files all grow from it, which is why BIM discipline starts on day one. And there is exactly one quality standard: **Zero Questions**.

Three disciplines to memorize:

- **Sequence discipline:** SketchUp is step five, not step one; function blocks, then walls, then form; plan before volume.
- **Data discipline:** layer and tag everything, fill metadata on the spot, number customs from #01, inventory first — every field you skip today is someone's overtime tomorrow.
- **Zero discipline:** confirmations at zero before the production model; drawings and cut files matching 1:1.

Next — Chapter 05: First Design. Your first designs at three sizes: 10×10, 10×20, 20×20. Everything from the first four chapters lands on three real plans.

CHAPTER ASSIGNMENT

Assignment: Reverse-Engineer a Drawing Set Assignment

CHAPTER ASSIGNMENT

Assignment: From Finished Product Back to Process

Get a completed AMG project's production drawing PDF from your instructor (the AMG Case) and complete three tasks:

1. **Read the page order:** against the §4.9 table, label what type each page is; count the custom panels and the floor plans.
2. **Find three details that "saved the factory":** three annotations that, if missing, would certainly have triggered a phone call from the shop (hardware positions, door swings, material transition lines). Explain what question each one answered in advance.
3. **Reverse the Brief:** from the drawings alone, use the §4.1 checklist to reconstruct the original Brief — primary objective, visitors, hero product, functional needs. Then check with your instructor and see how much you got right.

Bonus: merge the Ch2 starter sentence with the §4.1 checklist into your own Brief template — you will use it for all three builds in Chapter 5.

※ Review standard: task 2 is the core — reading drawings from the factory's point of view is what separates a junior designer from a draftsman; task 3 tests whether the four chapters connect (from space back to business). Feedback uses the fixed four sentences: What you got right — / The problem most affecting the objective — / What it would cause — / What to submit next round —.



Small doesn't mean simple.
This chapter, you take the pencil.

05

CHAPTER FIVE

First Design

THE ONE QUESTION

Does a smaller booth need less design?

By the end of this chapter, you must be able to answer this question.

Four chapters of mindset and process — now we build. Three practice scenarios walk you through the three most common booth sizes: **10×10 (inline)**, **10×20 (double inline)**, **20×20 (island)**. You will discover something important: size changes the rules and the toolbox — **the thinking stays the same from start to finish**. And the smallest booth is often the hardest to do, because every decision carries more weight.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- State the rule differences between inline and island: height limits, open sides, rigging, line-of-sight.
- Apply the "one job" principle in a 10×10 — the fiercest trade-offs with the fewest elements.
- Zone a 10×20 so two objectives coexist without fighting.
- Command all 12 of Chapter 3's elements in a 20×20.
- Complete your first three-size design set, ready for Chapter 6's review.

SECTION 5.0

Three Sizes, One Method

First, the "rules of the game" for all three sizes on one table (values are common US show norms — the Exhibitor Manual always governs):

	10×10 Inline	10×20 Inline	20×20 Island
Open sides	1 (front)	1 (long side)	All 4
Typical height limit	8 ft backwall	8 ft backwall	16–20 ft
Line-of-sight	Sidewalls often limited to 4 ft in the front half		Usually none; over-height needs review
Rigging	Usually not allowed	Usually not allowed	Usually allowed
Neighbors	Touching both sides	Touching both sides	Across the aisle
Usable elements	3–4	5–7	All 12
Things done well	One	One lead, one support	One lead, several supports

Look at the last two rows — that is what this chapter really teaches. Size doesn't limit your creativity; it limits your **multitasking**: a 10×10 is only enough to do one thing well; a 10×20 fits a lead and a support; only at 20×20 can several objectives coexist. Which is why small booths demand the strictest discipline: **the smaller the space, the more the "what to leave out" decision matters.**

The answer to this chapter's question: a small booth doesn't need less design — it needs fiercer design. Cut to one thing, then nail it.

SECTION 5.1 · PROJECT A

10×10: One Job The 10×10 Inline**PRACTICE BRIEF (FICTIONAL)**

- **Client:** BrewMate — a commercial coffee equipment startup, first time exhibiting.
- **Primary objective:** lead generation (buyers from the food-service channel); secondary: first-time brand awareness.
- **Hero:** one flagship coffee machine that can pull real shots on site.
- **Budget:** tight. Structure from inventory standards wherever possible.

The 10×10 reality: one 8-foot backwall, neighbors touching both sides, and visitors passing at walking speed — **about three seconds of available attention**. Of Chapter 3's 12 elements, you'll fit maybe 3 or 4. The trade-off principle is one line:

A 10×10 can do **one thing** well.

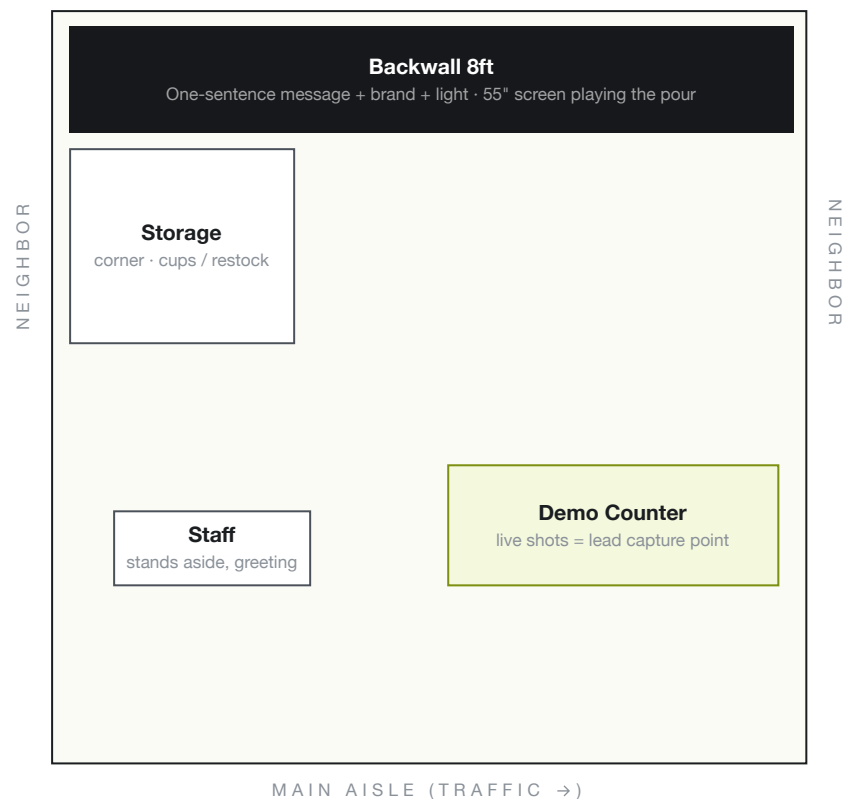
The Brief says leads — so every inch of this booth works for leads.

Applied to BrewMate: the hero is not the logo, not the styling — it is **"the coffee machine pulling shots right now."** Fresh aroma and live action are the strongest stopping power in the aisle (the funnel's "stop"). The backwall says one sentence (the 30-ft message); the counter is demo station and lead-capture point in one; storage hides in the corner. No meeting area, no lounge, no second product — **not because they don't matter, but because they don't fit here, and forcing them in kills everything together.**

※ Using AMG inventory: the standard panel is 990×2413mm (roughly 8 ft tall) — a 10-ft backwall = three standard panels plus posts. All structure from stock, budget concentrated on large-format graphics, lighting, and the machine that smells like coffee. That is Ch4 §4.2's "inventory maximization" at the smallest size.

SECTION 5.2 · PROJECT A

The 10×10 Plan & Playbook The 10×10 Plan



- Fully open to the aisle; counter to the side, never across the front
- Aroma and action = the reason to stop; badge scan for a coffee = the lead

The playbook (decision order — same as Ch4, smaller scale): ① Backwall = the only long-distance identity; one sentence written for someone 30 feet away. ② One hero, placed where the aisle can see it, action facing out. ③ The storage corner claims its spot early (even just 1×2m). ④ Light — spend the little budget you have on the hero and the backwall.

✗ THE SIGNATURE 10×10 MISTAKE

Bringing all six of the company's products — a little of each, the 8-ft wall becomes a catalog, and nothing is remembered.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

One hero. The other products go into the iPad, the brochure, the follow-up email — not into these 100 square feet.

SECTION 5.3 · PROJECT B

10×20: One Lead, One Support The 10×20 Inline**PRACTICE BRIEF (FICTIONAL)**

- **Client:** OakForm — an office furniture brand, exhibiting for years.
- **Primary objective:** distributor recruitment (needs a place to sit and talk); secondary: let buyers physically try the product.
- **Hero:** the new task chair + standing desk series — it must be "sittable."
- **Budget:** medium. One or two custom hero structures possible.

A 10×20 plays by 10×10 rules (8-ft backwall, sidewall line-of-sight, usually no rigging), but the long side is fully open and the frontage doubles — giving you a new tool: **zoning**. One lead, one support, each side with its own duty, stitched in the middle by reception.

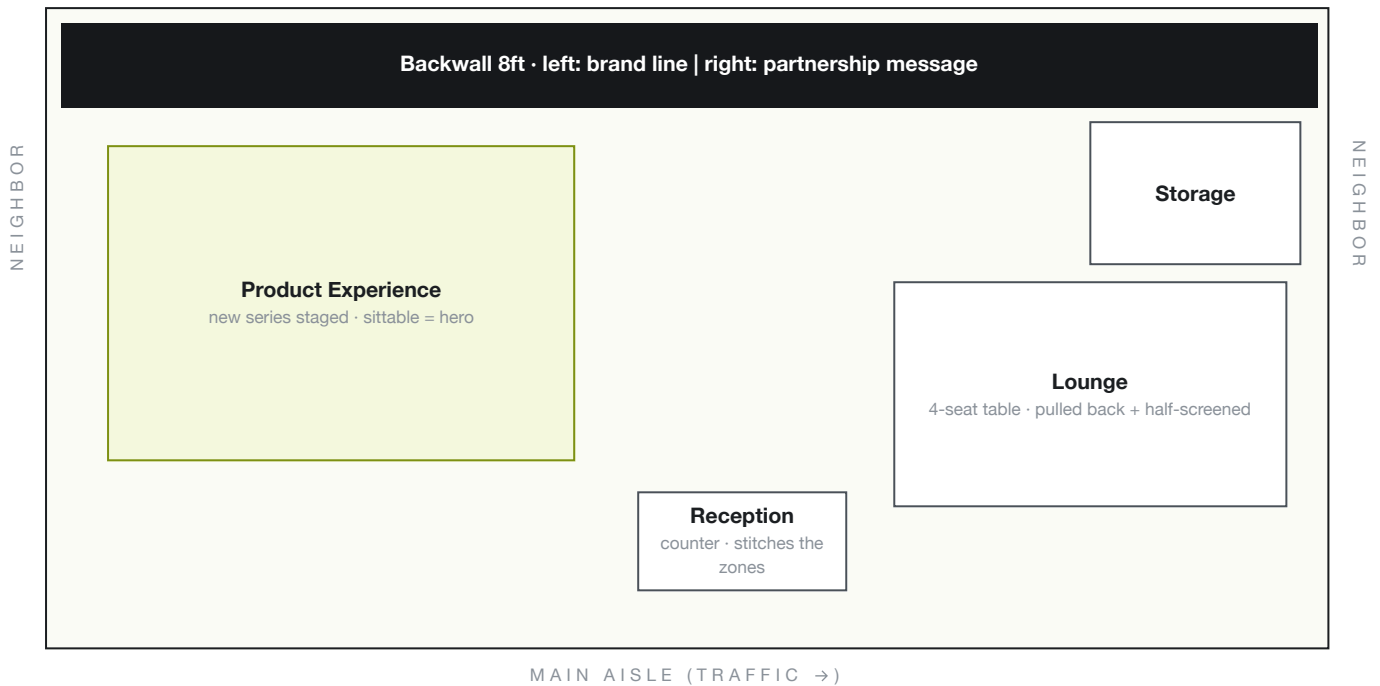
Applied to OakForm: the Brief holds two needs — "talk" and "try." So **the left half goes to experience** (products staged for real sitting — the most persuasive move in the furniture business), and **the right half goes to conversation** (a four-seat table pulled to the back half, borrowing the sidewall's 4-ft height as a partial screen). The circulation is deliberately sequenced: **try first, then talk** — a distributor who has sat in that chair arrives at the negotiating table a different person.

The core technique of the 10×20 is zoning:
two objectives can coexist — but never as equals, and the traffic must have an order.

※ Zoning's silent tool (Ch3, Flooring ✓): wood-look floor in the experience zone, carpet in the talking zone — no wall needed; visitors simply know they've crossed into another room.

SECTION 5.4 · PROJECT B

The 10×20 Plan & Playbook The 10×20 Plan



→ Traffic sequenced "try first, then talk": experience upstream, lounge downstream

→ Floor material splits the zones (wood / carpet) — no wall

The playbook: ① Zone first — the lead (experience) takes the traffic's upstream, the support (lounge) retreats downstream and back. ② The backwall speaks per zone, left and right carrying different messages. ③ Reception sits at the stitching point, one person covering both zones. ④ Storage tucks into the lounge's back corner, borrowing the wall, never the golden edge.

✗ THE SIGNATURE 10×20 MISTAKE

Treating it as "two 10×10s" bolted together — a wall or counter in the middle, circulation cut in half, and neither zone feeding the other.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

A 10×20 is one space, one traffic line, two workstations. Zone with flooring and furniture — not with walls.

SECTION 5.5 · PROJECT C

20×20: Commanding All Twelve Elements The 20×20 Island**PRACTICE BRIEF (FICTIONAL)**

- **Client:** VoltCore — an industrial power equipment company, a familiar face in the industry.
- **Primary objective:** partner and distributor recruitment (high-quality business conversations); secondary: industry presence, hosting existing customers.
- **Hero:** not a single product — the hero is "this company is worth partnering with," itself.
- **Budget:** healthy. Includes hanging sign, custom tower, double meeting rooms.

The island is a different game entirely: open on four sides (there is no "back" — every elevation is a front), height limits relaxed to 16–20 ft, rigging available — **all 12 of Chapter 3's elements take the field**, and Ch3's three sequence laws (rigging review earliest, power before flooring, storage in draft one) all apply.

Note how this Brief differs from Ch3's anatomy map: that schematic was a "product-launch island" with the Hero Product at center. VoltCore's primary objective is **partner recruitment** — so **the meeting rooms graduate from back-of-house support to the core asset**: double meeting rooms sit center-back, the lounge becomes their anteroom, product display shrinks into a "capability proof wall," and the tower and hanging sign tell the whole hall "we're here, and we're big" (Ch2, Objective 8). Same elements, different objective, completely different layout — that is Rule 02 landing on an island.

An island has no back.

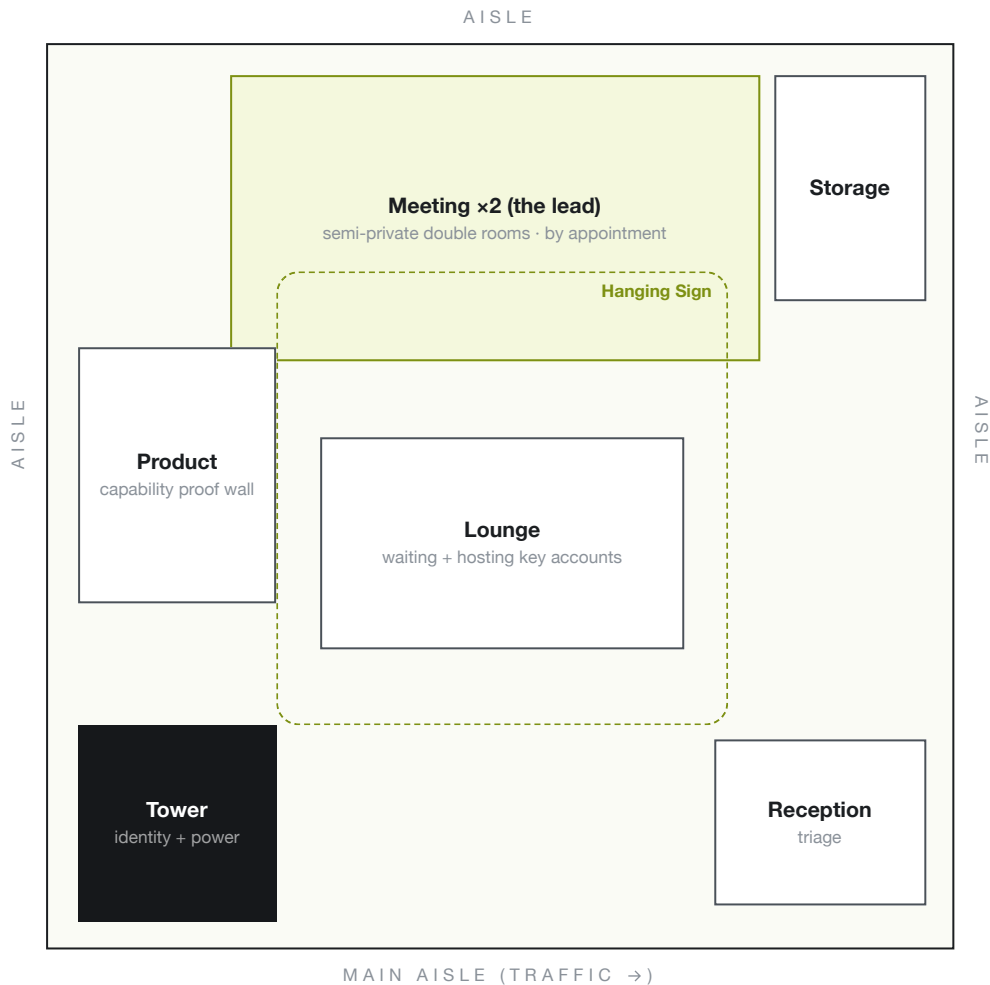
Four elevations, four first impressions — every face must answer "who is this?"

※ The island's three new responsibilities: hanging sign submitted in week one (Ch3 E10); Power Plan before flooring (E09); renders checked from all four sides — an island proposal drawn from one hero angle is a proposal not yet finished.

SECTION 5.6 · PROJECT C

The 20×20 Plan & Playbook

The 20×20 Plan



- Meetings center-back = the lead gets the biggest asset without blocking sightlines
- The lounge is the meeting rooms' funnel anteroom: wait, warm up, qualify

The playbook: ① The lead (meetings) claims ground first — but an island's lead can't be one solid block; all four sides keep sightlines and openings. ② The lounge becomes the anteroom, turning the "conversation funnel" into space: pass by → reception triage → lounge wait → meeting room close. ③ Tower + hanging sign handle all long-distance identity, letting the meeting rooms be a quiet lead. ④ The back-of-house trio (storage, power, lighting) runs by Ch3's sequence.

× THE SIGNATURE 20×20 MISTAKE

Treating the island as an enlarged inline — everything lined up facing the main aisle, and the other three sides become the warehouse's backside.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

All four sides are fronts. Ask Chapter 1's three-second question at each one: who is this? What do they do? Why should I care?

SECTION 5.7

The Shape of the Budget

The three sizes don't just differ in amount — **the money is shaped differently**. Know where the big money sits, and you know where the design effort belongs:

	10×10	10×20	20×20 Island
Structure	Inventory standards, almost no custom	Inventory + one or two custom heroes	High custom share: tower, meeting rooms, forms
Where the money goes	Graphics, lighting, the hero itself	Hero structure + furniture experience	Structure, rigging, flooring, power, install labor
Design leverage	One-sentence message + one reason to stop	Zoned traffic + experience quality	Four-sided identity + conversation funnel + backstage sequence
Deadline density	Low (graphics + power)	Medium	High (rigging, power, flooring, reviews all interlocked)

Two rules that hold across every size. **First:** ordering in advance is always cheaper than ordering on site (Ch3 E09) — the bigger the booth, the more deadlines, the higher the price of missing one. **Second:** **every dollar saved by inventory standards should flow toward whatever makes visitors stop** — that is the structural reason AMG's quotes are competitive, and the lever the designer directly controls.

Budget is not the enemy of design. It is design's grammar.

Know the shape of the money, and you can draw what can actually be built.

SECTION 5.8

Before You Hand It In: The Ten-Point Self-Check

Self-Check Before Review

Chapter 6 teaches how AMG reviews are run. Before that, build the habit: run every drawing you're about to hand in through these ten questions yourself — **they are the first ten questions your reviewer will ask:**

PRE-REVIEW CHECKLIST

- ☐ ① Can you state the primary objective in one sentence? (Is the Ch2 starter sentence filled in?)
- ☐ ② Does someone at 30 feet know who this is and what they do? (The three-second test.)
- ☐ ③ Who is the hero? Does it hold the best position and the brightest light?
- ☐ ④ Is anything on the plan unemployed? (Rule 03 — if so, delete it.)
- ☐ ⑤ Walk it with your feet: see → stop → enter → interact → leave contact info. Does space support every step?
- ☐ ⑥ Is storage in the first draft? Does its door open backstage?
- ☐ ⑦ Height, line-of-sight, rigging — checked against this show's Manual?
- ☐ ⑧ Has the power list started? Are floor-pocket positions anticipated?
- ☐ ⑨ Every light and every piece of furniture in the render — buildable and in the quote?
- ☐ ⑩ Any "pending confirmation" still hanging without an owner?

Self-checking isn't about being perfect — it's about **keeping the cheap mistakes to yourself,**
so review time is spent on what's worth discussing.

Size Changes the Tools, Not the Thinking.

Size changes the toolbox — never the way you think.

The difference between a 10×10 and a 20×20 is how many elements you may use, not whether you think about business.

The smallest booth demands the strictest discipline: the smaller the space, the heavier each decision weighs, and "what to leave out" matters more than "what to put in." **Whoever can get a 10×10 right has earned the right to command a 20×20.** That is also why AMG starts juniors on small sizes — not from distrust, but so you learn, on the smallest board, to make every move for a reason.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Summary

 Chapter Summary

Three sizes, one method (Brief → objective → trade-offs → plan → volume), three different disciplines: **the 10×10 trains subtraction** — one job, one hero, one sentence; **the 10×20 trains zoning** — a lead and a support, sequenced traffic, floors instead of walls; **the 20×20 trains command** — all 12 elements on the field, four fronts, backstage sequence deciding the outcome. The chapter's answer: **a small booth doesn't need less design — it needs fiercer design.**

Three lines to carry with you:

- **10×10:** one thing. Cut to a single hero, then give it all the light.
- **10×20:** one traffic line, two workstations. Try first, talk second; see first, sit second.
- **20×20:** no back. Every elevation passes the three-second test.

Next — Chapter 06: Design Review. Your three drawings are done — now learn how AMG judges them: not "does it look good," but a systematic test across Brand, Traffic, Function, Construction and Presentation.

CHAPTER ASSIGNMENT

Assignment: One Brand, Three Sizes

 Assignment

CHAPTER ASSIGNMENT

Assignment: One Brief, Three Plans

Take the brand you analyzed in Chapter 2 (or an AMG client your instructor assigns), fill out a full Brief with the template you built in Chapter 4, then design **the same Brief at all three sizes**:

1. **10×10**: hand-drawn plan + backwall elevation sketch + one-sentence concept. Mark: the hero, traffic direction, storage, staff position.
2. **10×20**: hand-drawn plan. Mark: zones (lead/support), traffic sequence, floor material transition line.
3. **20×20**: hand-drawn plan + hanging sign idea (shape and content). Mark: the first impression on all four sides, the conversation traffic line, anticipated floor-pocket positions.
4. Finally, answer two questions: scaling from 10×10 to 20×20, what did you **add**? And what **never changed**?

All hand-drawn — no SketchUp. This assignment tests decisions, not modeling. The three drawings go straight into Chapter 6's review session.

※ Review standard: question 4 is the chapter's core test — answering "what never changed" (objective, funnel, trade-off logic) proves the five chapters connect; the 10×10 is graded on the courage to cut; the 20×20 on having no back. Feedback uses the fixed four sentences: What you got right — / The problem most affecting the objective — / What it would cause — / What to submit next round —.



Would it pass review?

Without saying "it looks good" — **how would you answer?**

06

CHAPTER SIX

Design Review

THE ONE QUESTION

How do you judge a design without saying "it looks good"?

By the end of this chapter, you must be able to answer this question.

Your three drawings are done (the Ch5 assignment). Now learn how AMG judges them. A review is not a taste poll, and not seniority pressing down on juniors — it is testing whether a design serves its objective, using **fixed lenses, explicit evidence, and a shared language**. This is the manual's final chapter, and the one you will use every single week: at AMG, **being reviewed and reviewing others are two sides of the same skill**.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Test a design systematically through five lenses: Brand, Traffic, Function, Construction, Presentation.
- Read and use AMG's review rubric (seven items, 100 points).
- Replace "nice, premium, high-tech" with the language of evidence.
- Give — and receive — the fixed four-sentence feedback.
- Run and take part in a complete review: summary → walkthrough → five lenses → scoring → feedback → next round.

SECTION 6.0

A Review Doesn't Judge Taste What a Review Is

Start with a thought experiment (how AMG opens the class): you're shown two booth photos with no brand, no objective, no budget, and asked "which is more successful?" You'll notice you can only say "the left one looks better," "the right one feels more high-tech" — **without objectives and standards, evaluation is just a taste poll.** Then the Brief is opened: the left booth's objective was distributor recruitment, and there is not one table to sit at in the whole space — and "looks better" instantly stops meaning anything.

Hence the AEDM definition of a review: **the process of testing, with fixed lenses and evidence, whether a design serves its objective.** It is three things at once — and not three others:

A review is

- A quality gate — problems get solved on paper, not carried into the factory (Rule 04's front line)
- A training ground — every review is practice in reasoned judgment
- An alignment meeting — design, sales and production speaking one language

A review is not

- A taste tribunal — "I like it / I don't" is not a lens
- Seniority pressure — seniors owe reasons too; rank is not evidence
- A rubber stamp — showing up just to get a "pass" wastes everyone's time

Only one question is worth arguing about in the review room:

does this design accomplish the client's reason for exhibiting? (Rule 01 — back to the start.)

※ Every tool in this chapter — the five lenses, the rubric, the four sentences — exists so that this one question can be answered with evidence.

SECTION 6.1

The Five Review Lenses (I) Brand · Traffic · Function

1

Brand Does it feel like this company?

The core test: **cover the logo — can you still tell whose space this is?** If not, the brand is stuck on the wall, not built into the space. Then audit hierarchy: what reads first at 30 feet? Is the "what we do" clear at 10? Do messages fight each other? (Ch3's three message tiers get their inspection here.)

2

Traffic Can people actually move through it?

Walk Chapter 1's funnel on foot: **see → stop → enter → interact → leave contact**. Does space support each step? Any psychological threshold at the entrance (a blocking counter, a raised platform, a "you'll get sold at" feeling)? Does crowd depth stay inside the booth? On the way out, does the visitor pass what they should pass?

3

Function Can the work get done?

Sweep Ch3's 12 elements: does each one **have a place and a job** (Rule 03)? Is storage in the first draft? Does the meeting privacy level match the objective? Then walk it again as staff: where do they stand? Where do supplies come from? Where do they lead a guest? A booth where visitors flow but staff can't is only half right.

SECTION 6.2

The Five Review Lenses (II) + Question Bank Construction · Presentation

4

Construction Can it be built?

Height limit checked? Rigging permitted? Power sequence right (Power Plan before flooring)? **Which form is most likely to cause fabrication, freight or installation problems?** What are the three most expensive elements — and are they worth it? Does it break down into a truck and stand up within the move-in window? (Ch3's back of house and Ch4's production half get inspected here.)

5

Presentation Can the designer explain the causality?

Can the designer give **a reason for every decision on the drawing**? Does the concept fit one sentence? Are the renders honest — every light and every chair buildable and quoted? Presentation isn't eloquence; it's causality: a decision without a reason is, most likely, a decision never actually made.

The reviewer's question bank (one opener per type; follow-ups follow the answers):

Type	Opening Question
Understanding	In one sentence: what most separates this design from interior design?
Analysis	What is this booth's most important business objective? What evidence do you see?
Traffic	From 30 feet away to walking in — which three decisions does a visitor make?
Brand	Remove the logo — can this space still express the brand?
Construction	Which form is most likely to cause fabrication, freight or installation trouble?
Budget	If the budget dropped 20%, which element would you keep — and why?
Reflection	Has your original judgment changed after this analysis?

SECTION 6.3

The Rubric

AMG's review rubric: seven items, 100 points. All five lenses are inside, plus "improvement proposal" and "expression & reasoning" — because a review tests the drawing and the judgment behind it:

Scoring Item	Points	Standard
Business objective	15	Proposes a plausible objective, supported by evidence from the case
Brand recognition	15	Identifies brand language, focal points and message hierarchy
Functional layout	15	Identifies the main functions and their relationships
Traffic & entry	15	Explains seeing, stopping, entering and moving
Construction / usability risk	10	Raises at least one concrete risk
Improvement proposal	15	Directly addresses the problem, without contradicting itself
Expression & reasoning	15	Avoids empty adjectives; states cause and effect completely

Two disciplines in using it. **First:** this table is a **diagnosis**, not an exam — the lowest-scoring cell is next round's work list. **Second:** a review's output always converges to **the one problem most affecting the objective** — wanting to fix all seven cells means nothing was diagnosed (the reviewer raises at most the three most important problems; the designer commits to one main fix per round).

The score is not the point.

The rubric's job is to make "where it's weakest" impossible to blur over.

SECTION 6.4

The Language of Review: Adjectives → Evidence

The Language of Review

The review room keeps a banned-words list: "nice," "premium," "high-tech," "designerly." Not because those feelings don't exist — but because they carry **no causality and permit no action**. The same remark, restated as evidence, instantly becomes feedback someone can work with:

Empty version	Evidence version
"Because it looks better"	Which specific element makes it work? Which objective does it serve?
"It feels more high-tech"	Is that the material, the lighting, the proportions, the motion content — or the detailing?
"The entrance is very open"	Does the visitor psychologically feel welcome? Does the counter or the staffing form a barrier?
"More logos is better"	What should the eye land on first? Does logo overload weaken the hierarchy?
"If the client likes it, it's fine"	When client, visitors, factory and budget conflict — what decides?

Notice the structure shared by the right column: **specific element + causality + objective**. It is also the sentence pattern for defending your own design — "I pulled reception to the side (element), because the front must stay open for the product's sightline (causality), and the primary objective is making people dare to walk in (objective)." One sentence, three components. The only thing that can't be argued with is evidence.

**Feelings are a fine starting point —
but before they enter the review room, feelings must become **evidence**.**

※ Reviewers are bound by the same banned list: "I just don't like it" is not feedback. Any opinion that names no element and no causality — the designer has the right (politely) to ask for the rest of it.

SECTION 6.5

The Fixed Four-Sentence Feedback

The Four-Sentence Feedback

AMG feedback has a fixed format — four sentences, no more, no less. It prevents both the empty "good / not good" verdict and the thirty-item bombardment:

- ① What you're **getting right** is —
- ② The problem **most affecting the design objective** is —
- ③ This problem **would cause** —
- ④ Next round, **please submit** —

Each sentence has a job. **Sentence one** anchors — confirm which judgments are right, so the right things don't get touched next round (protect the validated skeleton, Ch4 §4.7). **Sentence two** singularizes — pick only the one problem that most affects the objective; this is the reviewer's hardest and most important call. **Sentence three** consequentializes — name the problem's real price on the show floor, so the fix has motivation. **Sentence four** operationalizes — what gets delivered next round, and when, said out loud before anyone leaves the room.

For the person being reviewed, three matching disciplines:

Restate before responding — repeat the "problem most affecting the objective" in your own words; discuss only after confirming you heard it right. The defensive reflex is a rookie's worst enemy: the drawing is being reviewed, not you.

Ask until the causality is clear — if you don't understand the "why," ask until you do. Take home a conclusion you don't understand, and next round you'll just be wrong in a new way.

Write down the commitment — sentence four is your next-round delivery list. Write it; the next review starts by checking it.

SECTION 6.6

How a Review Runs

Running a Review

The Seven Steps

Classroom and project use · one round ≈ 20–30 minutes

01	Self-check	The designer runs Ch5's ten points first — cheap mistakes never enter the room
02	30-second summary	The designer opens with the fixed sentence pattern (below) — strategy before renders
03	Walkthrough	Reviewers walk the traffic on foot: see → stop → enter → interact → convert
04	Five lenses	Brand → Traffic → Function → Construction → Presentation
05	Scoring	Seven-item rubric; find the weakest cell
06	Four sentences	Right / biggest problem / consequence / next delivery
07	Record	The commitment goes into the version record — next review starts by checking it

Step 2's 30-second spoken summary uses a fixed pattern (it is also your future basic move for explaining design to clients and to sales):

This is a booth whose primary objective is _____, aimed at _____. Its most effective feature is _____, because _____. Its biggest problem is _____, which could cause _____. I would first revise _____.

※ If it doesn't fit in 30 seconds, the issue is usually not too many words — it's an unfinished thought. Compressing a design into these seven blanks proves you truly own it.

SECTION 6.7

Five Rookie Mistakes in the Review Room

Five Common Rookie Mistakes

✗ MISTAKE 1

Snapping into defense the moment a problem is raised — "what I actually meant was..."

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Restate the problem first; respond only after confirming you understood. The drawing is being reviewed, not you — lifting your ego off the drawing is professionalism's first lesson.

✗ MISTAKE 2

Accepting every comment wholesale and redrawing the entire board next round.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Fix only the "most affecting the objective" item plus the committed list. Changing everything = exercising no judgment; the validated skeleton is protected.

✗ MISTAKE 3

Notes that record only conclusions: "move the counter left."

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Record the *why*: counter moves left because traffic comes from the right. Conclusions expire; the logic of the judgment is what you keep.

✗ MISTAKE 4

Treating every word from the supervisor as gospel, never daring to question against the objective.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Supervisors owe reasons too (the banned list binds everyone). Pushing back with evidence, anchored to the Brief, is professionalism — not insubordination. AMG hires judgment, not obedience.

✗ MISTAKE 5

Reviewing a colleague's drawing and saying only nice things, to spare feelings.

✓ THE CORRECT MOVE

Run the four sentences as designed — the first one is the compliment. Withholding the problem means letting them take it onto the show floor. That's the real unkindness.

All five mistakes share one root: treating the review as **a judgment of the person** instead of **a diagnosis of the drawing**. The language rules (evidence, four sentences, one problem) exist precisely to protect the person — so the drawing can be examined honestly.

AEDM RULE 06

Evidence, Not Adjectives.

"Nice, premium, high-tech" is not language in the review room. Every judgment must be able to answer: "because of what?"

This rule binds everyone: juniors, seniors, supervisors, clients. What it protects is not anyone's face — it is **the quality of decisions**. When every judgment must carry an element, a causality and an objective, arguments of taste become discussions that converge. And it is the last of the six AEDM rules: the first five teach you how to design; this one teaches you how to let a design be examined honestly.

CHAPTER SUMMARY · END OF VOLUME

Summary — and What This Book Leaves You

 Summary & Closing

A review tests whether a design serves its objective, using **five lenses** (Brand, Traffic, Function, Construction, Presentation), **one rubric** (seven items, 100 points — diagnosis, not exam), **one language** (evidence, not adjectives) and the **fixed four-sentence feedback**. Answering this chapter's question: without saying "it looks good," what you judge is — **elements, causality, objectives**.

Six chapters done — an inventory of what you now hold:

- **Ch1–2, the business eye** — a booth is a business tool; design starts from the objective, never the form.
- **Ch3, the parts library** — 12 elements, each with a job; the back of house decides the outcome.
- **Ch4, the production line** — two halves, three gates, the model as database; zero questions from the factory.
- **Ch5, the practice discipline** — size changes the tools, not the thinking; small booths train ferocity.
- **Ch6, the quality language** — evidence, four sentences, one problem; reviewed, and reviewing.

One last thing: this manual is **v0.2 — a living system**. The errors you find in use, the outdated specs, the better cases — report them (as Ch4's Mistake 5 taught: when a document is wrong, report it so it gets fixed). The next edition will carry your contribution.

This book taught you how to think, not what to draw.

Now — go draw your next one.

CHAPTER ASSIGNMENT

Assignment: A Formal Review

 Final Assignment**FINAL ASSIGNMENT**

Assignment: Review Your Drawings — and Theirs

In groups of three (the instructor fills in if short), bring your three plans from Chapter 5 and complete one full review round:

1. **Being reviewed:** take turns opening with the 30-second summary, then take questions through the five lenses, rubric scoring, and four-sentence feedback from the other two. Practice "restate before responding" throughout.
2. **Reviewing:** take turns as reviewer. The banned list is in force — every opinion carries an element, a causality and an objective; feedback converges to four sentences.
3. **The revised version:** afterward, fix only "the one problem most affecting the objective," submit the revised 10×10 plan, plus one page explaining: what I changed, why, and what consequence it resolves.
4. **Reflection:** answer the question bank's final entry — has your evaluation of your own design changed since the review? Where?

※ Review standard: this is the whole book's final exam — watch three things: can they not defend while being reviewed; can they produce evidence-based four sentences while reviewing; and did the revision truly touch only that one item (changing everything = Ch4 §4.7 not learned). Completing this assignment completes all six chapters of the AEDM Junior Manual.

※ AMG Case link: in the advanced class session, the instructor pulls a real AMG project's proposal version and final version — students review the proposal first, then compare with the final, and see what the real-world review caught (or missed) back then.

THE AEDM RULES

RULE 01

Design for Business.

Don't ask if it's beautiful first — ask if it accomplishes the client's reason for exhibiting.

RULE 02

Start with the Objective.

Ask first what the client wants to have gained when the show ends — a clear objective gives space its direction.

RULE 03

Every Element Has a Job.

If you can't say which objective an element works for, it doesn't belong on the drawing.

RULE 04

Zero Questions.

Documentation is complete only when the factory asks nothing; every question is one failure of the PDF.

RULE 05

Size Changes the Tools, Not the Thinking.

Size changes the toolbox, never the thinking; the smallest booth demands the strictest discipline.

RULE 06

Evidence, Not Adjectives.

Every judgment must answer "because of what?"

※ This table is the Junior Manual's classroom version. For the philosophical layer, see "AEDM Volume 1 — Constitution" — its Rule 1 ("Never begin by asking what the booth should look like; begin by asking what must happen because this booth exists.") shares its source with Rules 01/02 here. The Constitution governs the philosophy; this table governs classroom language.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Calvin Yee

Founder, Artsolute Media Group

Calvin Yee is the founder of Artsolute Media Group (AMG), an exhibition and booth design company serving trade shows across the United States and Asia. He created the AEDM method to train the next generation of exhibition designers — teaching them how to think, not merely what to draw.

- › www.artsolutemediagroup.com
- › info@artsolutemediagroup.com



Scan to visit us & get in touch

PRINCIPLE ZERO

**Teach designers
how to think,
not what to draw.**



Artsolute Media Group