

3D Printed Models Create the Ultimate Tool for Experiential Exhibiting

The use of 3D printed models for marketing has grown over the last decade because even though virtual demonstrations are compelling, it is still more stimulating to our senses to hold and examine a physical object.

This is especially true in the trade show environment. Upon entering any major trade show today, you will notice the tremendous amount of electronic and visual media being displayed. There tends to be too many messages, all similar in scale and magnitude, fighting for your attention. And, although these formats are easy to implement, they are costly and lack the capability of user interaction with the product.

Electronic media is not the only thing keeping exhibitors from standing out. Don't believe me? Then go to a health care industry show; you'll be surrounded in a mass of blue and white, colors that convey reliability and cleanliness. Set off to a show in the banking industry and you'll see more marble than at the mausoleum of the Taj Mahal. Walk the aisles at nearly any show for any industry and before long the exhibits start to blend together.

It is important to get noticed. That's why more and more exhibitors are attempting to cut through the clutter with 3D printed product models. Why? Because 3D printed plastic replicas are lightweight, functional and durable. They look like and simulate the functions of actual end-use products, but are inexpensive to display yet are impactful. If prospects experience it, they'll retain more of it. And that's what experiential exhibiting is all about. It appeals to your senses through sight, touch, and use of the product.

These scale replicas are also drawing crowds because their uniqueness sets exhibitors apart. PaR Systems, Inc. a leading systems integrator specializing in custom automation, is one of the first companies to implement 3D printed product replicas in the tradeshow environment. Their automation solutions are delivered through specialized robotics, material handling, and crane equipment applications that improve customer quality, safety and productivity. Having been in business for more than 48 years, PaR Systems is one of the countries first robotic equipment designers and most knowledgeable systems integrators in the country.

"A model that small yet functional creates a major visual impact – something you just can't get with flat graphics, said Karen Knoblock, PaR Systems Marketing Director. It has turned into quite the conversation piece and really helps to draw in attendees."

PaR Systems "gets" experiential exhibiting. Uniquely, they also understand 3D printing technology. When they set out to marry the two technologies, they chose RedEye On Demand because they could rely on RedEye to reduce costs and deliver a high quality demonstration model.

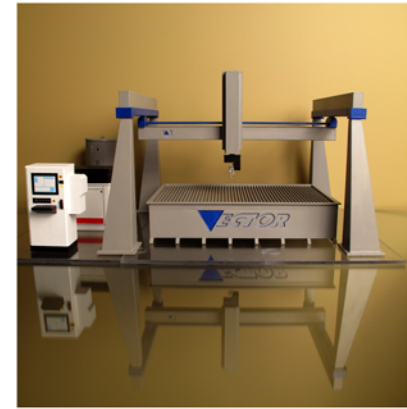


Figure 1: This product model was manufactured by RedEye On Demand, using 3D printing technology.



Figure 2: Vector® waterjet cutting system.

PaR Systems has exhibited for years with actual products in their booth because prospects were drawn to explore their equipment. By using RedEye to produce a 1:12 scale replica of their Vector® WaterJet cutting system from thermoplastic material, they reduced both their booth size and the amount of equipment exhibited, resulting in a 40% savings over past shows. Cost reductions were realized in drayage, storage and on-site labor hours. They also saved money by avoiding damage to their actual equipment. These 3D plastic models are inexpensive and durable, allowing exhibitors to use them repeatedly without the fear of damage to actual product. PaR Systems also chose to have their model painted by Claire Hilgeman at www.doodlebugart.com.

“And, although the model is striking, the key to our success was not only that we stood out from the crowd, but that we found a way to differentiate ourselves in a way that was both unique and appropriate for our company and its objectives,” continued Knoblock.

It was easy to implement the scaled product model because most of the design work was already done. Companies generally already have design files of their product because CAD files are created during product development. With minor modifications, these CAD models are used to generate a 3D printed model.

Corbin Hilgeman, PaR Systems Engineer, simply uploaded an STL file (a common file output of the most frequently used CAD software) to the RedEye web site and their replica was shipped to him in days. “RedEye represents exactly what we as a business need from a supplier. Their website told me most of what I needed to know to get parts made – from the quoting process through production,” says Hilgeman. We were automatically assigned an account manager who is very knowledgeable and has an excellent response time. He answered all my questions and gave me confidence that we were going to get what we wanted from RedEye.”

Real working parts matter when you conduct market research. Since the replica is fully functional it acts like a market research tool as well. The model allows PaR Systems to receive feedback on the current design, functionality and ease of use. Conducting user group meetings is expensive, but when combined with a trade show where you’ve already paid to exhibit, it’s actually quite economical. Just think, there are no expenses getting people to the meeting – they’ve already paid their own way. There’s no need to rent a large facility – you’ve already done that. You don’t even have to serve them lunch. It’s a quick, easy and an inexpensive way to get customer feedback.

PaR Systems was able to captivate the audience with something that was uniquely different while providing hands-on value for attendees. The new 3D printed model lowered costs related to shipping, on-site labor and design. “We are constantly looking for areas to innovate and improve the way we do business,” says Knoblock. “We strive to create the right solutions for our customers and expect the same from our vendors.”

If you’re looking to save money while creating more impact at your next tradeshow, consider implementing a dramatic product model produced by RedEye On Demand.

The 3D printing technology used at RedEye On Demand is an additive fabrication process that extrudes high-performance thermoplastic material in layers as fine as 0.005 inch (0.127mm). This unique process builds models from CAD files typically created during product development. And, when you already have design files on hand, you can place your order right away.

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