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Beechcraft



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# AURA XM



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### Give us the quick version: How do you describe your company?

Aura XM is an experiential marketing organization. We design and fulfill face-to-face experiences for brands to reach their audience in either a B2B format such as trade shows and sales events or B2C engagements including mall intercepts and sponsorship activations.

### How have you changed your offerings over the last few years?

Our offerings start with asking our clients 2 significant questions that will drive all services we will offer.

1. Who are you marketing to?
2. What results do you expect?

These two very basic but influential questions can completely change the approach we take when providing a creative solution to our clients. From these questions, we are now in a position of truly consulting with our clients as to what type of experience they need to deliver at their trade show or any other form of event they attend. Previously, Aura XM was asked to “design and build an aesthetically pleasing exhibit. It used to be a unique offering to market ourselves as “turn-key” or a “single-source”, providing design, build, rentals, storage, global install and dismantle, etc. This approach is no longer unique or genuinely helpful to a client who needs to deliver results from trade shows and events. Ultimately a laundry list of services is expected from brand-side clients looking for a new experiential marketing partner.

### What are three ways exhibits have changed?

1. More interactive/digital – the word “interactive” has been redefined in the event and trade show world. It used to mean, a looping presentation, now it truly means interactive, as in responsive to the audience input. The interactive programs we provide are digitally driven, providing an entertaining and educational experience through a responsive program.
2. More custom rental – everyone wants to be fresh and look to Aura XM to provide a custom rental design with the benefit of a unique presence, without the worry of capital

expense and ownership requirements.

3. Budget expectations – A definite trend is increased expectations to deliver more value for services and product delivered, one that we deliver on a consistent basis.

### What types of things do your clients say about you?

Great creative, global capabilities, flexible and custom rental solutions, responsive account teams, professional and reliable, dedicated and energetic.

### What program from the last 12 months are you especially proud of and why?

As a collective team, we are very proud of the work we have provided for Beechcraft. Jared Pollacco, our President identified this success story as an example of effective consulting, professional fulfillment and team work. Beechcraft has been going through its own renaissance, and it was very satisfying to be part of their renewed presence and excitement in the aviation industry.

### How would you describe the culture at your company?

The company culture at Aura XM promotes innovation and crossfunctional team-work. We see our young and innovative team as an asset in providing relevant and creative solutions for our clients. Everyone at Aura XM has an absolute passion for the moment our clients see their finished exhibit and the ensuing results.

### How can clients get more value from their exhibit build budgets?

1. Set an appropriate amount of time for the design and build process.
2. Balance your exhibit between fully customized purchased components and secondary rental components.
3. Going big doesn't need to mean going complicated. You can provide a massive visual impact without needing to build something expensive and complex. ■

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#### **Tangible Brand Experiences: Mastering the Digital-Physical Blur**

The event marketing world is coming alive as objects, devices, and equipment acquire more digital intelligence.

"Markets now can communicate powerful stories through impactful high-definition video or engage minds through an intuitive touch interactive application. Opportunity for delivering your brand to target audiences has never been better," said Reid Harman, president of Echelon Design, Inc. a company that designs, produces and manages exhibits and provides multimedia solutions for trade shows, corporate environments and museums.

For companies such as Topera, an Echelon client which developed a 3D mapping system to assist in the identification of complex cardiac arrhythmias, recognizing the role of technology and its implementation at events is critical to their overall marketing strategy.

According to Rick Green, vice president of sales and marketing for Topera, "Technology should never take precedent over sound messaging - unless of course the central messaging hinges on promoting the technology itself."

Green knows the challenges of dynamic media marketing. He spent more than a dozen years as chief marketing officer for one of the largest media production companies in St. Louis. He states the key to mastering the digital-physical blur is in finding unconventional ways to deliver messages that facilitate meaningful, lasting experiences.

"We intentionally partner with Echelon because they are a company focused not just on technology, but are conversant and skillful enough to seamlessly blend the technology into a custom and polished branding environment," Green said.

Earlier this year at Atrial Fibrillation (AF) Symposium in Orlando, Green turned to Echelon to develop a fully integrated experience that combined a six-screen video array with product demonstration systems.

Harman said, "Our team of expert exhibit designers, technologists and animators are experimenting with new ways

to deliver unique and meaningful customer experiences and brand messages."

Echelon recently opened a state of the art Technology Lab within its brand new corporate office in Gilbert, IL. At the heart of the 50,000 square foot design and production facility, the Tech Lab offers clients a full array of multi-media capabilities to support their trade show and museum exhibit needs.

- Fully networked digital sign solutions;
- Motion controllers that track all 10 fingers up to 1/100th of a millimeter; and
- Camera mapped and automated lighting control systems.

"The team at Echelon is continuously implementing future ready systems designed to easily plug into your business plan. We are building the foundations to ensure an exciting tech savvy exhibiting and marketing experiences which will elevate your messaging and eclipse your competition," Harman said. ■

#### **About Echelon Design, Inc.**

We design, produce and manage exhibits and provide multi-media solutions using state of the art technology for: trade shows, corporate environments and museums. Our focus integrates all facets of design, architectural, multimedia and visual communications. We offer client partners a one-stop shopping experience adding unique value to their brand's positioning. Our award-winning work spans North and South America, Europe and the Middle East with clients in the Music, Jewelry, Print Product, Communications & Tech, Petroleum, Financial Services, Medical Device, Energy and Utilities sectors.

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## **What are you doing to help clients realize more value from their tradeshow and event programs?**

We have significantly enhanced our strategy offering. People throw the term “strategy” around in our industry, but for Sparks strategy means offering our clients actionable and measureable strategic guidance for tradeshow and event marketing programs. Its application can be singular like determining the proper branding strategy for an event or how best to integrate technology into a face-to-face engagement, or as all inclusive as working with clients to determine multi-level goals and objectives for an entire year’s portfolio of shows and events. For 2014 and beyond, it is an integral part of what we offer and our clients are embracing it.

Sparks has always been strategic in our creative and execution. Our programs are well-thought out in terms of material usage, setup and dismantle times, traffic flow, brand hierarchy, interactives and audience engagements, among other elements. But there is ongoing scrutiny, maybe even more so now than ever before, into event marketing and the effectiveness of tradeshows. We believed it was time to be more proactive in helping our clients achieve a higher level of success, and prove their case to their internal executive teams, not only showing what they are doing but verifying why it is effective.

Over the past year specifically, we have heard a recurring theme when it comes to our client teams – not necessarily the

person whose job it is to get the exhibit built and get it built well, but the accountable person being asked the hard questions like, “How is this affecting our bottom line?” and, “Is this the best way to engage our target audiences?” Clients are looking to Sparks to help answer these types questions.

Solid strategy achieves just that. It actually proves the case and in some cases disproves it. With strategy, objectivity is key. The result may be a complete departure from the original idea or a recommendation about doing something else altogether.

Offering a comprehensive toolkit of strategic services also allows us to get to the bigger ideas faster, and provide an elevated level of creative. For the effect to be more impactful, ideas have to be born out of strategic insights. What’s going on with the brand, the company? What is really going to motivate behavioral change with target consumers? What’s happening in the larger world – the macro trends? Our strategists have to be looking at several key areas and using the data to drive fresh, new thinking.

We know that answering the hard questions is never easy, and that staying ahead of the innovative creative curve is just as challenging. That’s why we believe wholeheartedly that infusing a deeper level of strategy into our programs helps our clients champion solutions that are bigger and more effective—and helps us provide a strong rationale behind everything we do. ■