

An Introductory Guide to Pop-Up Gazebo-style Market Stalls: Procurement and Operational Use

NABMA members, particularly our Consultants Rob Nixon and John Walker, with the benefit of their long experience, have offered some valuable advice to those members needing guidance on the procurement and use of pop-up market stalls.

General

Pop-up stalls offer high presentational quality: they look good and therefore add to the traders' individual marketing offer and to the overall attraction of the market. However, for operational reasons some traders prefer the traditional type of stall with fixed counters or board & trestle arrangements with back sheets and side sheets.

Pop-ups are normally of lighter weight than traditional stall designs, so are more susceptible to wind, particularly due to the canopy arrangements. A market with traditional stalls may be able to trade on a windy day when pop-ups would have to be taken down (wind can blow through a traditional stall, whereas wind blows into a pop-up canopy and destabilises the stall). It is therefore important to bear in mind the location of use when considering the purchase of different types of stalls, as some market locations may be unsuitable for light weight stalls with enveloping canopies.

When considering the procurement of new stalls, it is also important to consider traders' views; there would be little point having new stalls that traders will not want to use. Consider also what replacement/repair problems and costs that may cause you future operational and financial issues. Whilst many market operators have chosen to use pop-ups and benefited from their attractiveness to the shopping public, it is right to say that others have tried them and returned to the traditional type of stalls.

Some of the best advice we can give is to use NABMA's excellent networking opportunities. Market managers are pleased to offer their own personal experiences from using different types of stalls, so arrange to go and see their stalls being used practically and discuss with them and their traders what benefits and issues there are. Finding out the practical pros and cons before spending significant amounts of money will inform good decision-making.

Rob and John have given the following good advice pointers:

- It really is about quality. If pop-ups are to be used on a regular basis (rather than one-off usage) you need strength and good design. Cheap stalls don't last.
- Type of framework - aircraft aluminium is strong and light.
- What is the system of securing parts - metal/plastic, lock bolts or rivets/normal bolts? Is it simple and easy to use, saving time and effort?
- Type of cover – sewn textile or welded pvc? Thickness/grade/seams/weight for manual handling.
- Think carefully of colour combination to improve visual appearance but be careful that it does not make the units too dark inside which is bad for promotion of product.
- Have your units branded on fascia/rear/sides - then if used elsewhere they are always promoting your market.
- Are pinch points (such as corners and where supports rest on the sheet) reinforced?
- Are the feet substantially sized and well secured? (i.e. not single welds as these will quickly break off in poor weather).
- What is the weighting system? Anchor points in the floor are best and risk averse, but if you do not have anchor points then you will require jigsaw weights or other systems. Are these in with the price of the stalls? Anchors do limit the layout of the market, but this is far more secure in inclement weather. This also enables the market to trade in some poor weather systems.

It is suggested to buy more than the suppliers' suggested weight amount. Experience suggests 30kg per gazebo leg, and to brace each unit to the next on

adjoining legs. This can increase to 45kg in inclement weather and never leave them up overnight.

- What type of counters/tables will you provide? Have you thought of counter skirting so that traders' back-up storage of goods is not on show? Can traders selling clothing on hangers use hooks attached to your framework?
- Will you be providing lighting systems/rigs? Types/costs.
- Should the stalls have a gutter system or is a front overhang available?
- Consider the significant labour costs for erection and dismantling. Different stall types will have different labour requirements.
- How will you transport and store your stall equipment? Tractor/trailers? Box vans? Other?
- If using Velcro to hold side sheets, check that this is of industrial strength and full length rather than being simply strips at corner points and similarly how are sheets secured to legs?
- How do you retract legs - by push button or pull ring? Test the operation yourself or with a trader rather than simply observing the stall providers demonstrations.
- Are replacement parts readily available and what happens if a stall is taken out of action due to damage - do you need to return it and what is the timescale/cost?
- Who locally has stalls that you can visit and get pros/cons from those using them? Always worth doing.
- Why not create a short list of stall providers and ask them for a unit to be put up on site for traders to view and question?
- Get a full break down of cost for all elements including cost of fascia/ side sheet branding, weights and

replacement sheets including delivery and length of any guarantee.

- Also if your traders or erection/dismantling team have never used them before it is important they understand how to put them up and take them down properly and store them to ensure a decent lifespan. Too often they are thrown about or excessive weight hung on the inside. Training and supervision is essential.
- Consider adding a small charge to rentals so that this could cover sheet replacement after 3 years - worth thinking about as it keeps the market looking good and you can change the colour to give a location uplift.
- End run side sheets are also good to use for a full size visual welcoming people to your market and to promote your social media sites.
- Make sure that if traders borrow your equipment, they give back each day what they use - particularly feet weights!
- One consultant on a major purchase tender indicated that the price was 30% of the scoring matrix. The large selection criteria was on quality, provision of spare and replacement parts, time for delivery of such parts, backup support, reputation and speed of supply.
- Be aware of the financial effect of cancellation of markets due to high winds as the types of stalls used and their susceptibility to wind may influence your procurement decisions.
- What operational and charging policy will you have for bad weather/market closure conditions?
- Create a detailed risk assessment for your operations. It is essential to consider safety factors.

NABMA would of course point out that the above is based on personal experience only and will therefore urge on each occasion to take appropriate advice and that local financial regulations and procurement policies are followed as normal.