

Observations about branding at the
2013 Consumer Electronics Show

Branding Report

CES 2013

Introduction

The Consumer Electronics Show: January 8-11, 2013

Every year we attend the world's biggest consumer technology show to see how large and small consumer electronics brands are presenting their latest products, and how they are positioning themselves. And every year we publish a report on what we observed.

For those who may not have seen this document in the past, please note that this report is not about the latest gadgets introduced at the show, instead it is a collection of photographs and observations about what caught our attention while walking the crowded halls and visiting the many booths.

Please note that the narrative that accompanies some of the images is intended to express our personal opinion, and it is not intended to promote or offend any of the brands included in this document.

We'd love to hear what you think, so please send any feedback directly to me.

A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Alfredo Muccino'.

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3 A few facts

It was bigger than anyone expected.

According to the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA), the 2013 International CES was the largest event in the show's 45+ year history, with 1.92 million net square feet of exhibit space. The previous record was 1.86 million net square feet of space at CES 2012. Apparently, the show featured more than 3,250 exhibitors who unveiled some 20,000 new products, and more than 150,000 people came to Las Vegas to watch it happen.

The crowd included more than 35,000 people from over 170 countries outside the United States – making it the world's largest technology gathering!

Besides the multitude of products launched by large established brands, CES 2013 also showcased new products from a wide variety of startups. The Eureka Park exhibits – presented in partnership with the National Science Foundation and Startup America – grew 50 percent, showcasing innovative young companies looking to gain footing in the consumer electronics industry.

CES is also a magnet for all sorts of celebrities. This year the people that came for the opening remarks included such a diverse group as former President Bill Clinton, Desmond Tutu, Maroon 5 and Snooki. On the show floor attendees rubbed elbows with the likes of 50 Cent, will.i.am, Travis Barker, and LL Cool J, to name a few.

4 A few observations

It was not as exciting as years past.

Innovation is one of the words that is often used in conjunction with CES, yet from a branding perspective this year was not as exciting as years past. At least not for us. We felt that the booth experiences were less dramatic than we've seen in previous years. Even when the economy was going through times tougher than now, companies went out of their way to create dazzling exhibit spaces. Walking through the show we were often amazed by the brave use of new technologies, materials, textures and techniques.

This year most of the product showcases were not as interesting – and far less theatrical. Generally speaking, we left the show as exhausted as ever by the incredible amount of “stuff” we saw – even if the exhibits were less exciting, the sheer quantity can be quite overwhelming on all of the senses. Actually, the fact that not a lot stood out in the sea of sameness that washed over us during the show, was perhaps part of the reason we seemed so exhausted. We looked hard for something exciting and simply had a difficult time finding it. At the end, we left Las Vegas a little disappointed in the lack of innovation from a branding or design perspective.

On another note, there were plenty of iPhone cases and headsets. In fact, we joked that there were more headsets at CES than there are people in the world. We saw high-quality, expensive headsets. And some that were not so expensive. Many of them were colorful. Others furry. But they were definitely everywhere. In the next page is a sampling of some of the headsets we saw while roaming the halls.

Enjoy.

5 The year of the headsets



The big booths.

Samsung



Samsung started to get your attention outside of the convention center with large billboards touting some of the products that attendees would get a chance to see inside. I am not sure why the company decided to omit their booth location - but perhaps since their presence at this event was so dominant, it was not necessary. They simply could not be missed.

9 Samsung



The giant Korean company took up a huge footprint at CES 2013, spilling out of the main floor, right onto the hallways that connect the various halls. Here, Samsung displayed the new Galaxy Note – which is defined as a “phablet” or a mash-up of a “phone” and a “tablet” – and invited people to try the new device, take a picture of themselves with it, and walk away with a t-shirt featuring their picture. And that’s because Samsung – a master of marketing – knows that nothing attracts a crowd at CES more than a free t-shirt!

10 Samsung



The Samsung exhibit space at CES 2013 was nothing short of enormous. The entry to the booth was a gigantic multi-layered gateway featuring a large logo above it that simply could not be missed. The company showcased a wide variety of products ranging from phones, tablets, computers, refrigerators, washing machines and a lot of TVs. In fact, TVs were probably the biggest attraction.

11 Samsung



Large TV displays were central to the booth experience, showcasing a constant stream of messaging and dynamic attract loops. Samsung unveiled their newest Smart TV, the S9 UHD, capable of showing an image with four times the resolution of the standard 1080p high-definition televisions. The company also introduced new LED and OLED TVs, which include their Smart Hub, with advanced gesture and voice features that allows consumers to control their TV using hand motions or vocal orders. I can't wait to be waving to my TV!

12 Samsung



The Korean electronics giant introduced what it claims to be the world's largest 4K LED-backlit TV, sporting a colossal screen measuring 110" — the UN110S9. And if that's too big for your living room, there's always the 85" model. It's also worth noting that Samsung unveiled a prototype phone with a flexible display, meaning it can be folded almost like paper. Instead of glass, the flexible phone features super-thin plastic, making it bendable and unbreakable. The Samsung exhibit was big, impressive and nicely designed, for sure. Yet, there was little that was innovative about it. Then again, a bendable phone is not bad in terms of innovation!

Sony

14 Sony



Sony is no slouch when it comes to making an impact at CES. This year, the company's tagline "make.believe" was supported by a campaign showcasing people captured in a variety of emotional expressions along with the headline "BE MOVED". The brand began the conversation outside of the show floor – right at the transportation hub. Banners hung under the walkways where hotel shuttles drop off and pick up attendees. Considering that some of the bus lines were super long and not moving (at least not very fast), a headline like "BE MOVED" might have actually moved some people in line to tears – much like the woman in the banner above.

15 Sony



The Sony booth was easily spotted from across the show floor thanks to a gigantic overhead “ribbon” that surrounded the massive booth space. The exterior of the ribbon featured the Sony logo and tagline, and were washed in a changing array of colors that smoothly changed hues as they moved across the surface – creating a dynamic sign that delicately caught people’s attention. On the inside, the entire surface became an immense projection screen with videos, abstract flowing color, and photos of the company’s latest products in every possible category. Much to our delight, Sony continued the BE MOVED campaign, paying off the banners outside with actual products that justified the campaign headline and gave it meaning and purpose.



Like some of the other nicely designed exhibits, Sony opted for a clean and minimalist approach that allowed visitors to focus on the products as opposed to the booth.



The size and breadth of the booth is hard to capture without a wide angle lens. Unfortunately, this is the best panoramic photo we were able to take - and it does not do justice to how impressive the wrap-around projection was. Next year we're definitely bringing better equipment.



Here are a few more photos that attempt to capture the energy in the booth. We thought that the products that were displayed on the long tables allowed for interaction between attendees and the Sony folks tasked with helping people understand what made the products special or unique. Also, we think that Sony did a nice job with the messaging and signage around the products, clearly listing the name and the primary features/benefits of each product so that attendees could easily find or identify the new gadgets.

19 Sony



We felt that Sony did a very nice job of presenting its products in a manner that was clean, organized, and pleasant. The company exercised substantial discipline and restraint in its exhibit design, making the large projection screen surrounding the booth the most dominant feature. In our opinion, the design was not as stunning or engaging as some we have seen in the past, instead it was an exercise in simplicity and elegance. In terms of innovation – Sony introduced two interesting products: a phone and a headset that are both waterproof. While I doubt many of us will be making phone calls underwater, it would be nice to listen to Mozart during an early morning swim. And, in case of another big flood, we will be better equipped.

Intel



Intel has been a staple of CES for at least a decade. Over the years the company has built impressive exhibits that never fail to attract large crowds and this year was no exception. We stopped by the Intel booth several times and it was always packed with people. The company leveraged past structures and introduced some new elements to its repertoire. In the past the Intel booth was known for its “blueness”. And although this was still a component, the layered overhead structure used lighting effects to change colors across a full spectrum of hues. We heard from reliable sources that the structure was designed to suggest “layers of technology” or “waves of innovation” – and we liked the sound of the metaphors (possibly more than the structure itself).



Perhaps one of the most impressive things found at CES 2013 was Intel's 18 foot tall tree, featuring 176 ultrabooks on its branches. At its base, five ultrabook convertibles allowed attendees to interact with the tree by customizing a bloom and send it traveling across the entire canopy. Towering over Intel's space at CES, the tree was meant to represent the "transformative, personal and inspiring nature of technology in our lives". We're not always sure that attendees get that kind of subtlety, but we admit that it was pretty cool. In fact it was so cool that outgoing Intel CEO, Otellini, chose to give some of his interviews in the shadow of his tree - and talk about how Intel is making a serious commitment to tablets and smartphones. That said, the tree seemed at odds with the rest of the booth. It was the only reference to an organic form – and it appeared to be somewhat out of context.



Another subtle branding gesture on Intel's part was the use of its proprietary technology pattern as a supporting element in the architectural details of the exhibit. This is the same intricate and colorful pattern inspired by the complexity of microprocessor circuitry that is seen in many of the brand's marketing materials. Leveraging a visual language that should be recognizable to anyone familiar with Intel is a smart branding practice. Even when it's subtle.



Although they were extremely well executed – using high quality materials and techniques – we were not that impressed with the design of the individual demo stations at the Intel booth. In our opinion they seemed a bit over designed, busy and a little heavy-handed with too many layers, too many individual components, too many different finishes. They were far less elegant than they could have been.



From a messaging perspective, Intel clearly communicated its relevancy in a variety of important categories – from ultrabooks and ultrabook convertibles (which offer the benefits of a laptop and those of a tablet in one device) to all-in-ones, as well as mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones. The Intel booth showcased many of the latest devices featuring its technology. We felt that the design of these displays was much simpler – however, the lighting effects seemed to be more focused on the exhibit components than on the devices – making the products difficult to appreciate and photograph.

Huawei



Following the lead of some of its bigger competitors, Huawei – a company with sales over \$200 billion – opted for a very clean and sleek approach to its exhibit design. The products were nicely displayed, the signage was easy to read, and the environment was futuristic and polished. However, the booth seem to lack a soul or any element that made the experience particularly memorable or unique. If anything, the feeling was perhaps a little too clinical and antiseptic.



Walking through the Huawei booth I was reminded of the set of 2001, A Space Odyssey – the classic Stanley Kubrick film. Of course, at the time that Mr. Kubrick directed that film, the sets were quite innovative – and they were meant to suggest a distant future where humanity was less...human. We're pretty sure that this was not necessarily what Huawei intended.



We are actually big fans of simplicity. However, we also believe that good design elicits an element of surprise and creates a sense of connection. In our opinion, here's where the Huawei booth failed. The displays were minimalist – to a fault. And the result was a booth that was uninspiring and made the products feel the same.

Qualcomm

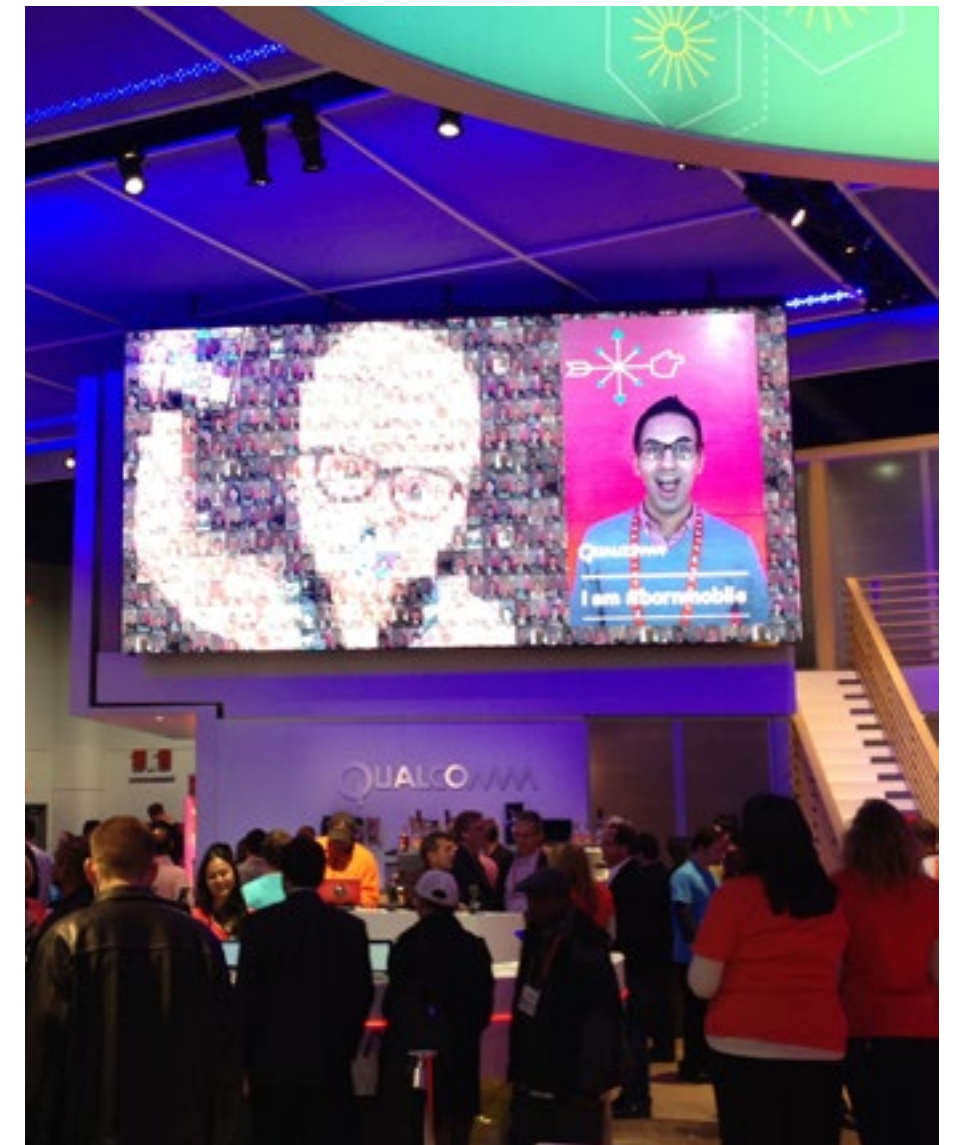
31 Qualcomm



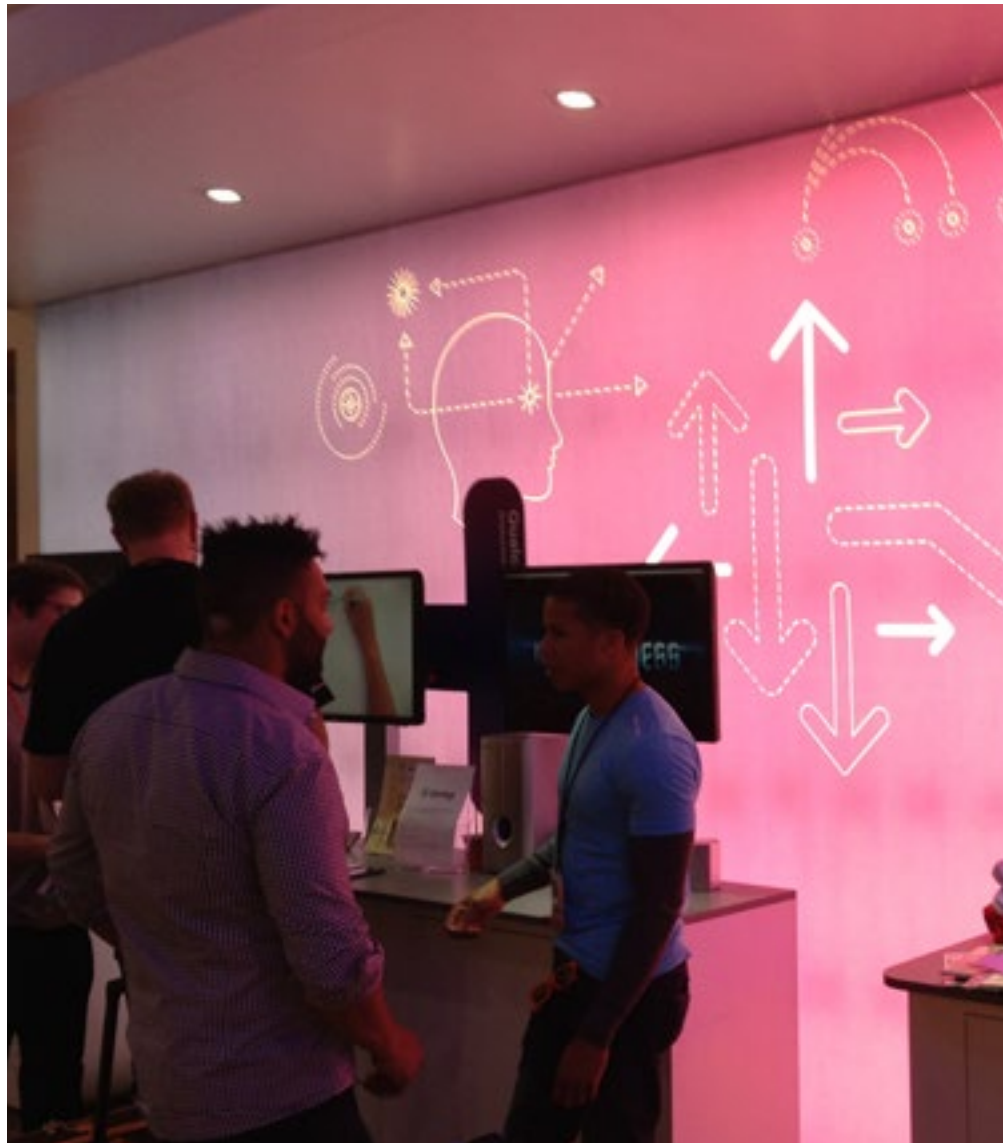
Qualcomm has become the dominant player in the mobile chip category. The company took over the exterior advertising space that was occupied with imagery and messages about Intel. Qualcomm used photos of people and a language of icons to “connect” with the new “mobile generation”. From a messaging perspective, we applaud the simplicity of the execution because Qualcomm made it clear from outside the convention that they are all about “mobile” – a message and approach that is consistent with the brand’s marketing materials and website.



The Qualcomm booth was exactly what one would expect of a tradeshow booth by a large, successful technology company. It was a multi-level structure organized in various “zones” where visitors could experience different facets of how the company’s technology is helping shape everyday life. And, in keeping with the promises made outside of the tradeshow floor, the Qualcomm brand was all about mobile.

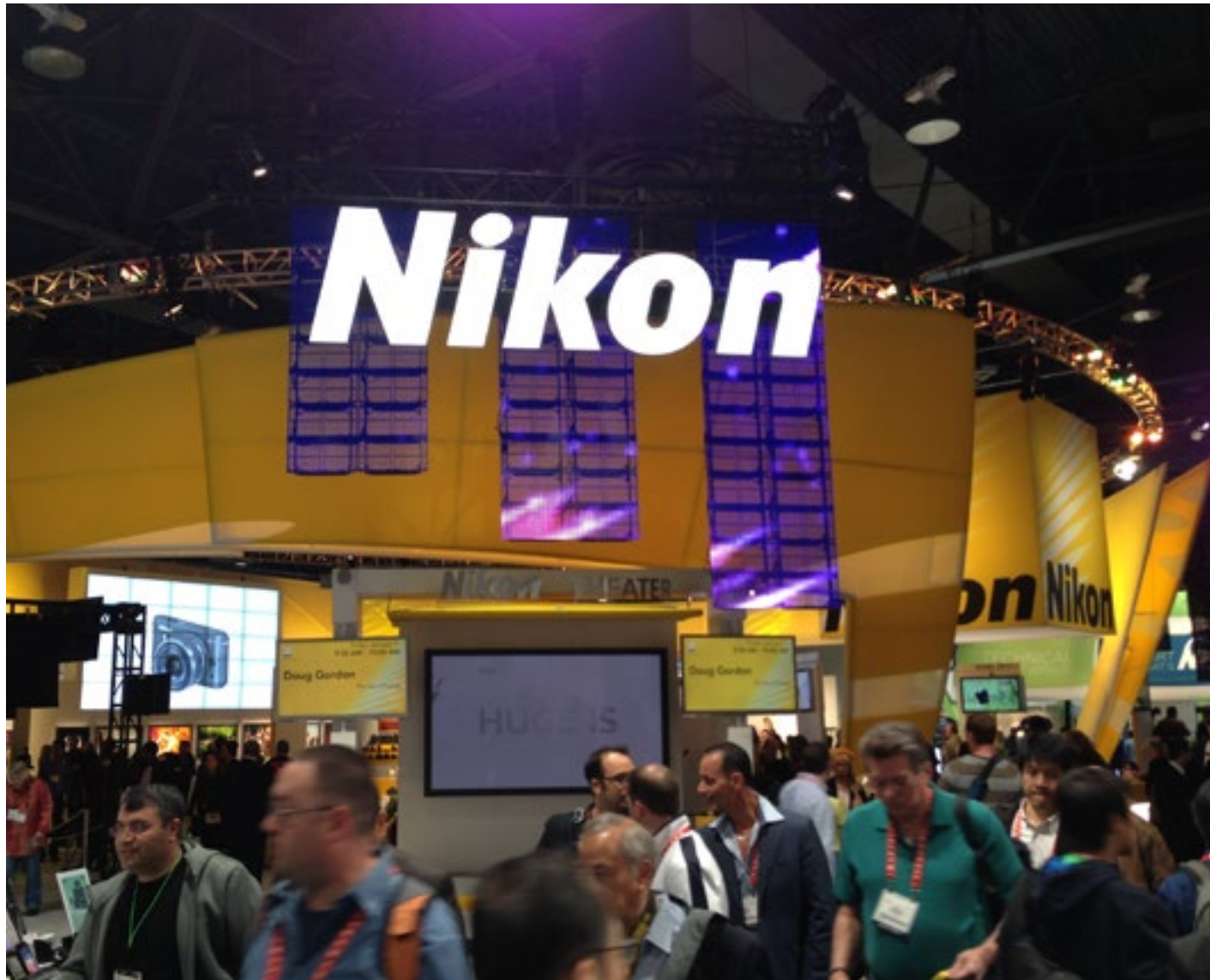


At the booth, we stopped by a station where our picture was taken and a name tag was promptly issued, with our choice of icon that we selected from a library of images representing diverse aspects of mobility. I chose the symbol for “creativity”, and got a badge with my picture and the tagline “I am #bornmobile”. The hashtag was a suggestion to use Twitter to spread the word about Qualcomm, and get an opportunity to win a prize. I was also given buttons that I was invited to wear – and my picture was also displayed – larger-than-life – on the big screen at the center of the booth. Although this exercise was not exactly “innovative”, at least it took into consideration the use of social media to help promote the brand outside of the confines of CES – demonstrating that Qualcomm gets “mobile”.



The Qualcomm booth consistently used its language of iconic illustrations throughout the booth, in both static as well as dynamic formats. The dynamic versions leveraged projections as well as large monitors playing video loops communicating that “mobile” is the future. On the other hand, the demos might not have been that exciting since they were not attracting much of a crowd.

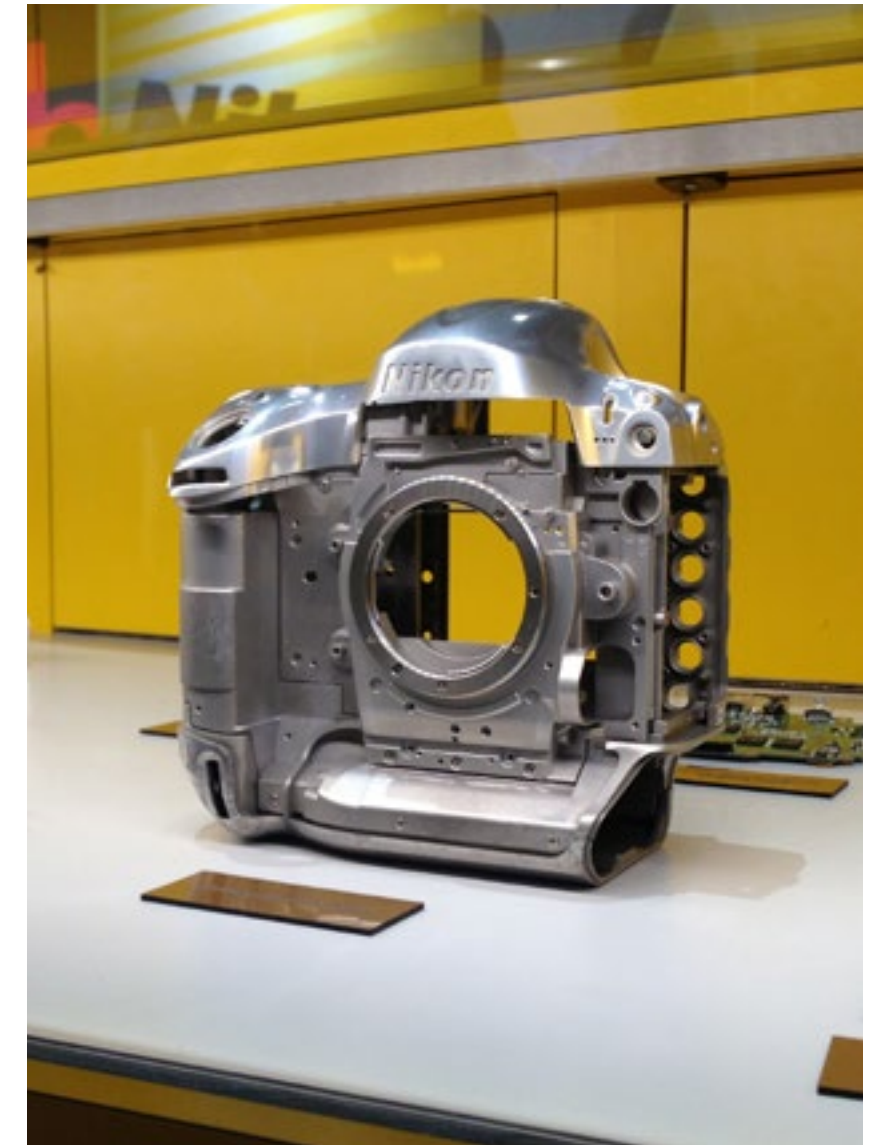
Nikon



Nikon's booth was a celebration of the brand's color – yellow. We applaud the company for not defaulting to an austere and clinical white – and for not using lighting effects that changed colors. Instead, the brand kept it simple, graphic and direct. They embraced the brand color with gusto and courage – and as a result ended up with a very bright, cheerful, eye-catching and strikingly branded booth.



Nikon's booth was easily visible from afar partly due to the bright yellow color and partly because Nikon was not shy about making its logo larger. Inside the booth, visitors had plenty of opportunities to try the new cameras - and dancers were provided as moving subjects that showcased the speed and quality of still shots as well as video capture. It would have been nice to have inserted the Nikon logo in the background, especially if people had also been invited to share those images through Social Media.



We really enjoyed the graphic use of color and the way that the products (mostly black) stood apart from the display. Additionally, we also appreciated the way Nikon showcased the quality of manufacturing, materials, and engineering built into each camera – thanks to unfinished products and products cut in half. Although Nikon may be less innovative than some of the other brands at CES, we were delighted at how they got the basics of branding and design so right.

LG



Probably the most dazzling display at CES was the huge 3D video wall at the LG booth. This wall of monitors must have been over 100 feet long – and if you donned the 3D glasses and had the patience to sit through the lengthy video experience, you walked away either needing to go out and buy a 3D TV, or feeling a little seasick (as I did). All kidding aside, this was the most spectacular 3D I have ever experienced. It was genuinely fun. Of course, I am not sure anyone needs 100 feet of 3D displays at home – but if you have the space and the money, I highly recommend it. Do they shoot the SuperBowl in 3D?

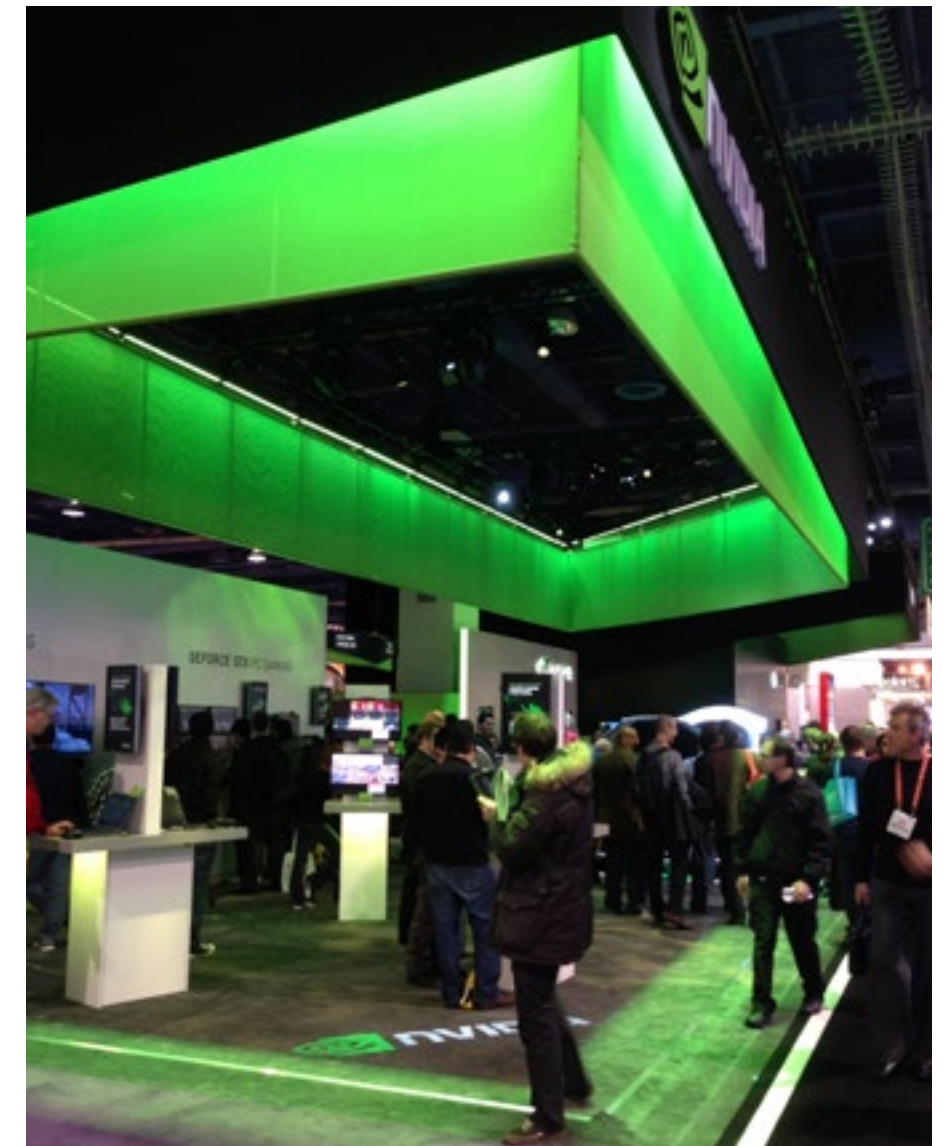


Inside the large LG booth, things were a little less dynamic, although very well executed. We appreciated the attention to detail on these displays. The edge lit acrylic was elegant and interesting – without stealing attention from the products. And the angled panel provided plenty of space for text explaining why attendees should stop and admire the new products on display.



Here's one thing that we definitely did not like; actually two things wrapped into one. We admit that it's probably not a big deal for most people, however if you have any understanding of typography you would agree that the choice of script font that LG chose for its "Touch the Smart Life" tagline was probably not the wisest of selections. In our opinion it does not feel "personal" – it just looks amateurish. That said, it did a good job of distracting us from the message, because – once we got over the typography – we soon realized we did not understand it. What does "Touch the Smart Life" actually mean? What is the "Smart Life"? Why would I want to "touch" it?

Nvidia



Although not as large as some of the other technology companies, Nvidia's booth was easy to spot because of its distinctive color. Over the years Nvidia has been very consistent in "owning" their particular shade of green – and we appreciate their commitment to the brand's color scheme. The booth was much smaller than we had anticipated, yet it was a pleasant experience. There was little innovation or showmanship in the booth – but we understand that Nvidia reserved that for its opening remarks when Jen-Hsun Huang announced a few products that garnered quite a bit of attention.



Nvidia's signature color adorned the overhead structure and emanated a greenish glow on the booth's visitors. Quite frankly it's not the most flattering color on people's skin, however the crowd did not seem to care at all – instead they seemed to enjoy the way that Nvidia presented its latest gaming technologies – including the well-received new gaming console, Project Shield.

The good stuff.

Belkin



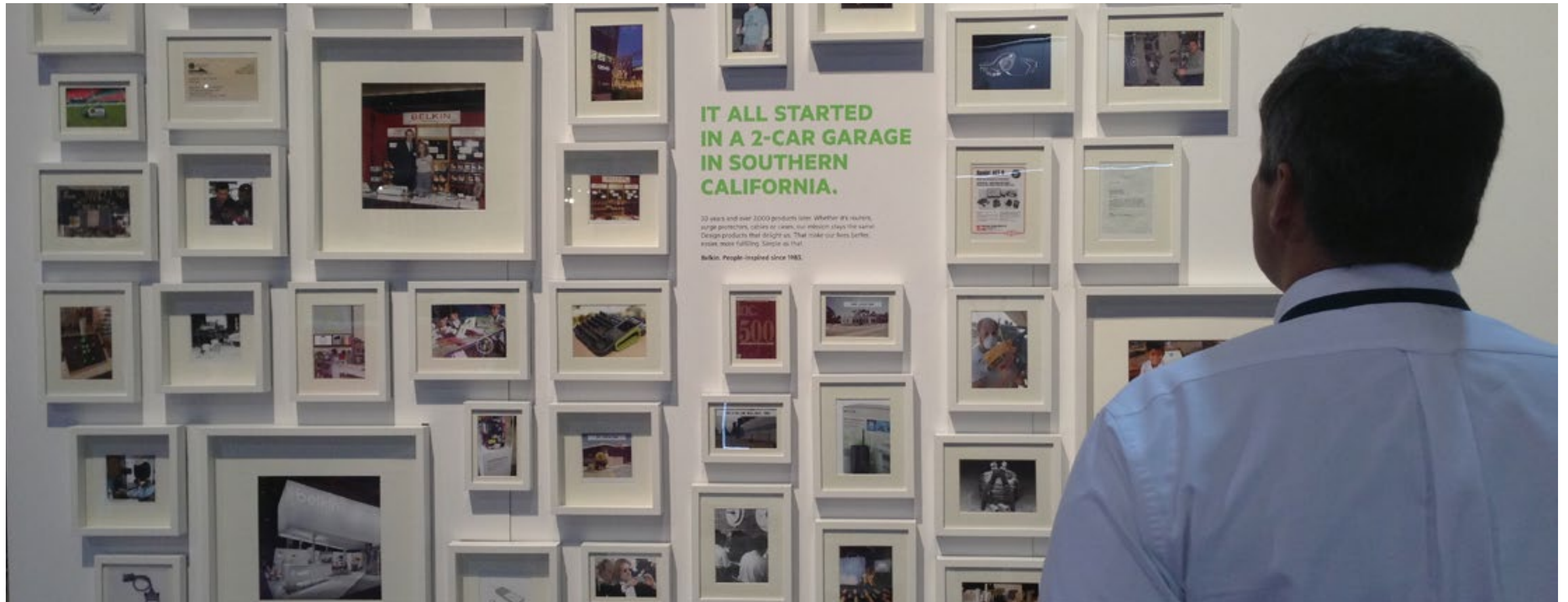
Belkin is a brand that is not so big, yet did a great job creating an interesting, inviting, and compelling booth experience. The exhibit structure was designed to suggest a home, complete with garden. Like Intel, Belkin featured a tree. In this case, the canopy was not covered in ultrabooks, but in this setting the tree seemed more appropriate. On a wood paneled wall, Belkin featured a new logo made of dots forming the shape of a human body – a subtle gesture towards humanity and technology.



Belkin's products are simple, useful items that help make everyday experiences at home with technology just a little bit easier – things like switches and plugs and connectors. Nothing terribly complicated. We liked how they displayed their products on the walls of the booth – in the same way they may end up on the wall of your home. And we also liked the way that the company used a consistent color scheme, easy to read type, and call outs that offered helpful explanations about the features and benefits of each product.



Instead of creating a futuristic idea of a home, Belkin set out to create an environment that was modern, yet familiar. They used vintage furnishings made of natural woods, comfortable leather, and warm fabrics. We liked the ingenuity of using a large digital output of a wall of books that suggested a home office, but was very easy to set up. The effect was warm and graphic at the same time.



Another nice touch was a wall of pictures celebrating the brand's history. Much like someone would display family photos on a wall in their home, these pictures invited attendees to take a nostalgic walk through Belkin's history. We liked that this display continued the conversation that Belkin created about being a brand that helps you live a connected life at home. It was a simple gesture, elegantly executed.

Golla



Some of the booths created retail-like experiences. We think that this is a nice way to approach a show that attracts many retailers and help them envision how the company's products might be showcased in a retail environment. Golla is one of these companies. A Finnish company that bills itself as "the original brand that brought colors and prints to portable electronics", Golla created a welcoming store-like environment where they were able to showcase the array of energetic colors and fashionable prints that are a hallmark of the brand.



We were actually tempted to do a little shopping while in the Golla booth. The aesthetics of the product design was made that more attractive by the simplicity with which they were displayed. The natural wood set off the bright colors, while the large fashion inspired photography helped us visualize the target market for the product lines.



We don't think that Golla has stand-alone stores. But if they did, we would shop there. We think that consumer brands trying to convey their appeal in retail should consider creating more retail-like experiences – as opposed to the traditional trade show booth experience. We enjoyed stopping at Golla and appreciated the approach that the company took to create something memorable and distinctive. Again, there was little innovation in the design of this booth, but the experience was definitely refreshing in a show where many brands simply tried too hard and failed to connect at a human level.

Built

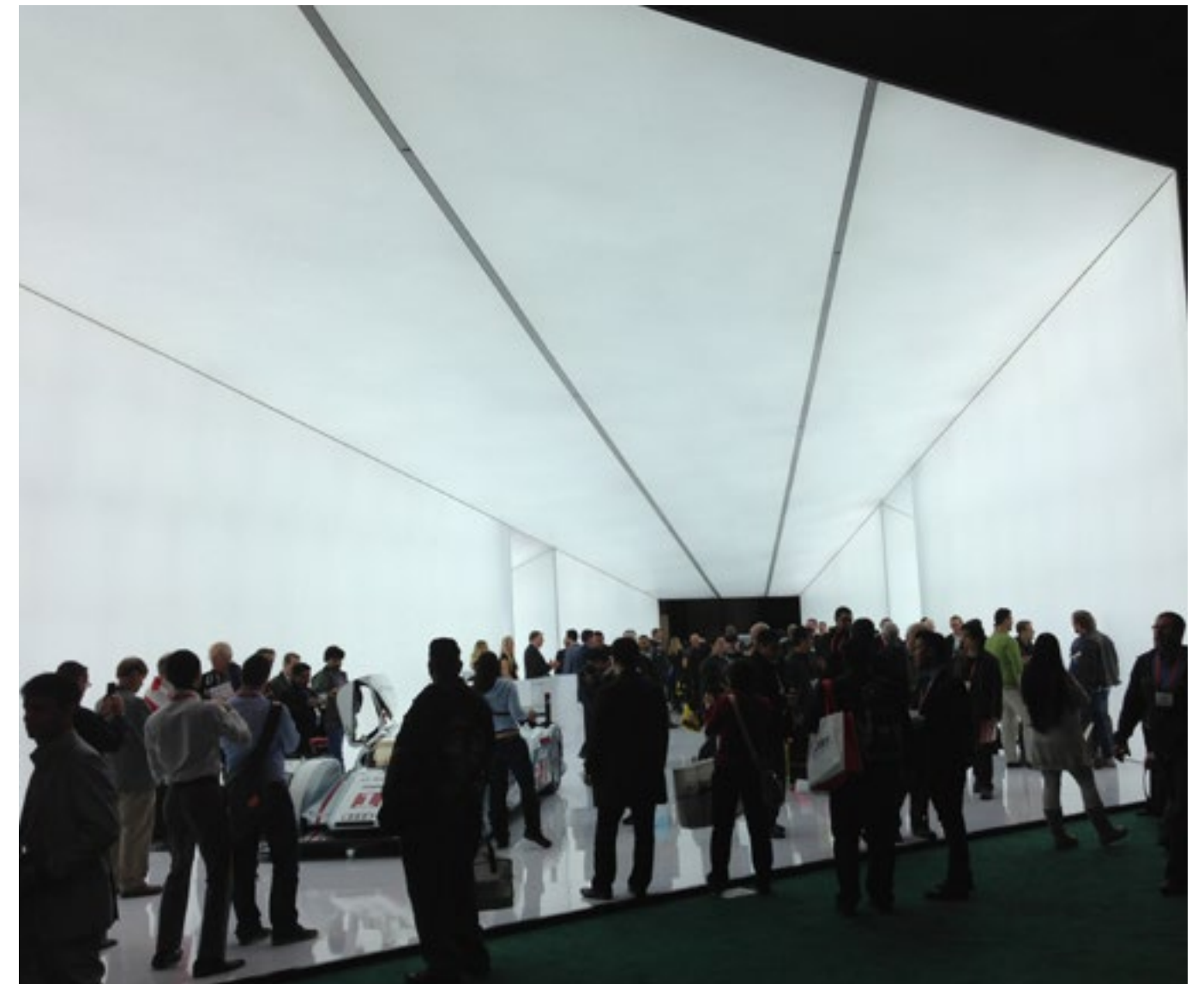


BUILT is a NY based company that designs fashionable, high-quality neoprene iPad cases, lunch totes, laptop sleeves, and more. This year the company celebrates its 10 year anniversary and opted to come to CES in pretty much the same booth structure it has used over the last couple of years. Like Golla, this company decided to suggest a retail experience and created what could have been a stand-alone store in the middle of the show floor.



The structural design of the booth featured wood panels with horizontal openings allowing you to peek inside, creating walls that still allowed some transparency and visibility. The BUILT booth was not as large or as inviting as the Golla booth - and in some ways it was less reminiscent of a true retail experience. Nevertheless, we commend the company for creating a clean and attractive showcase for their colorful products.

Audi



Audi's booth was a much talked about experience at CES 2013. The booth was an exercise in extreme minimalism. From the outside, it looked like a big black box – with no images of sporty cars driving down the road, or attractive models draped over the hood of the brand's latest vehicles. Audi just featured a stylish metallic logo on a large black matte wall. Simple. Clean. Modern. Efficient. And really elegant. But by itself it would have been rather boring. So, Audi delivered a surprise. As you turned the corner, you were greeted with a trompe l'oeil tunnel of light that practically required you to wear sunglasses. The effect was dramatic to the point of almost taking your breath away (and most definitely your vision - at least temporarily).



The interior of the booth was essentially a gigantic light box, emanating white light from the ceiling and all walls. The floor was painted a gloss white, reflecting all of that light. I felt like I had died and went to some sort of car museum heaven. And if I was a fan of Audi, the fact that there was an authentic Formula 1 car sitting in the middle of all this light would have made it much more so. Our photographs do not do justice to the space or the experience. The word “pure” is the best way we can think of describing it.



Minimalism works well when meticulous attention is paid to the details. Audi did this well, even in terms of the signage – which was applied to the floor, with type falling at an angle suggesting speed, and offering an added element of design surprise that created delight. Another side of the booth, accessible through a small corridor, offered the opportunity to test drive the car through a simulator, or sit in the driver's seat and admire all of the smart technology built into the vehicles, while enjoying the comfort of its leather covered seats. All in all, a great experience.

Ozaki



The Ozaki booth was the opposite of minimalism. The booth was a riot of colors, patterns, textures, graphics, etc. Although we are big fans of keeping things simple and elegant - this booth seemed to be noisy and calm at the same time. Perhaps it was the repetitive rhythm emerging from the columns surrounding the booth, which suggested a pattern created from chaos. Or perhaps it was the dominant use of the bright magenta color. But as opposed to being bothersome, the booth design was energetic, youthful, fun and entertaining.



The Ozaki exhibit was really different. The company is not afraid of standing out – and presented its products in a dynamic and lively environment. Yet it did not feel cluttered. Again, we think that the fact that there was some structure to the booth (like the columns, the consistency in the signage, the uniformity of the product displays) helped a great deal to divide the background from the products allowing each to stand out on their own. We give a lot of credit to Ozaki for having the courage to be so bold and colorful.

GoPro



The GoPro booth was not outstanding because of its design. However, it is definitely worth noting that the exhibit was packed with visitors every time we walked by. The brand has done a great job of virtually creating the category – and it has a loyal following. Today, the brand is expanding our notion of Xtreme Performance – and is encouraging people to attach their cameras to helmets, cars, bikes, and all sorts of other modes of transportation. The booth was by no means extraordinary in terms of design – but this brand is doing something right!

More



This was one of the best designed small booths at CES 2013. The company's name is More and they make iPhone cases - probably the most crowded category at CES - next to headsets. Yet we noticed them because they dared to do more with less. A very small company with limited resources, More opted to showcase their colorful products in an all black, glossy environment. They used two mannequins dressed in fashionable apparel to communicate the fashionable nature of their designs. And that was it. We appreciate the elegance and simplicity - and wish these young people luck in a very competitive environment.

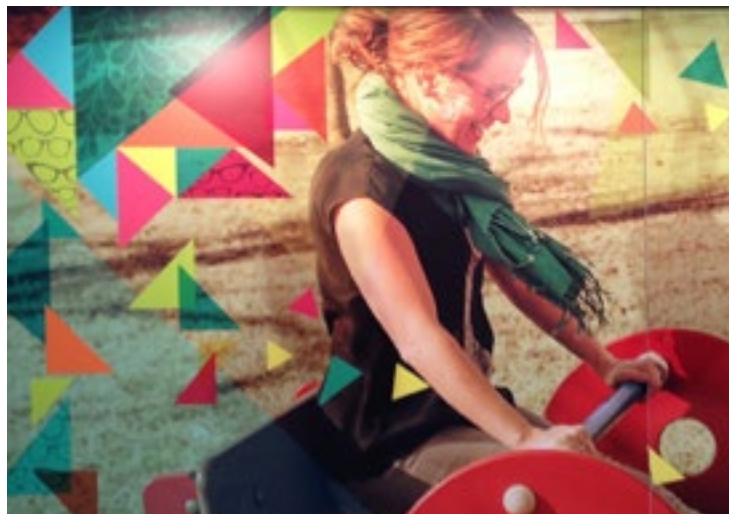
A few interesting details.

71 Colorful patterns



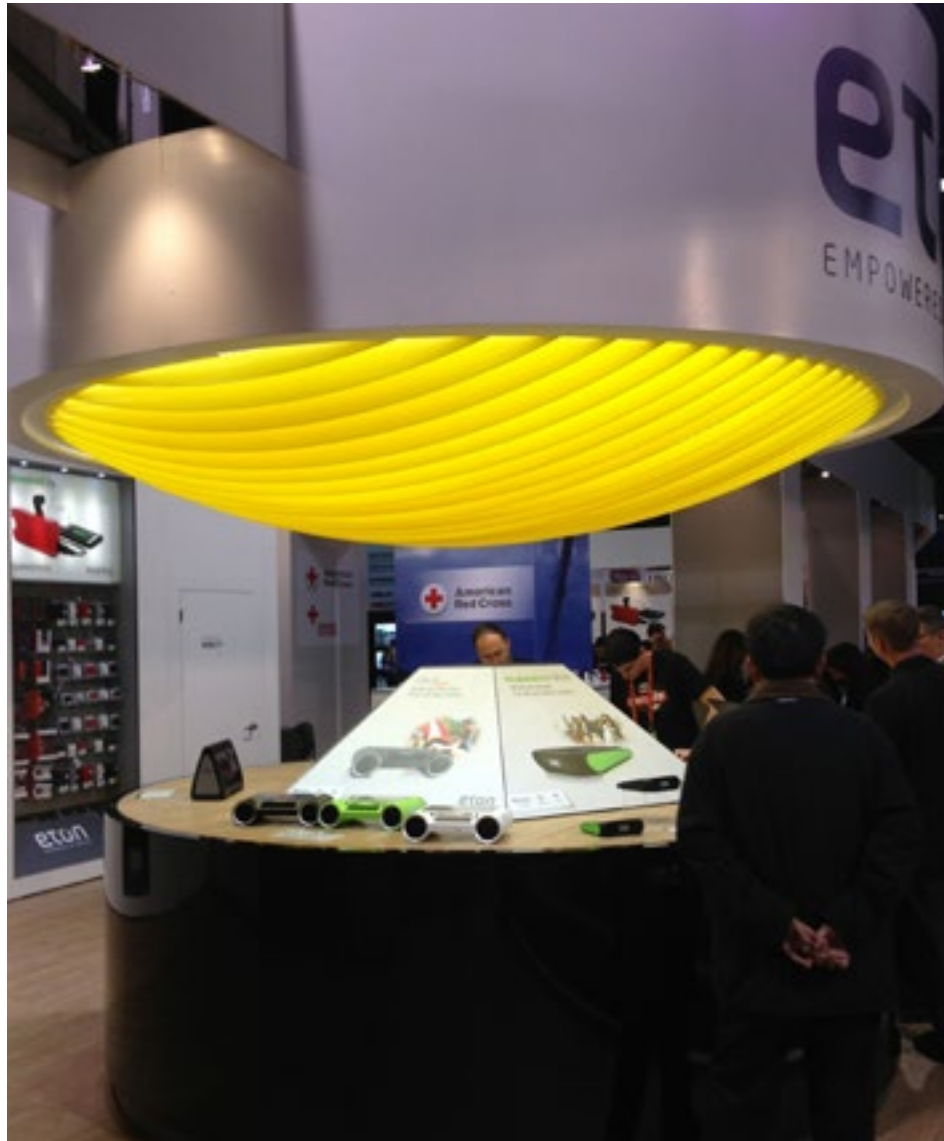
TCL is a newcomer to CES, yet the Chinese company certainly made its impact felt. The booth was large and the graphics may have been the most colorful of any of the bigger companies at the show. Under the umbrella of a theme that invited you to “COLOR YOUR WORLD”, TCL showcased its products against a background of glossy black surfaces and brightly colored geometric patterns that became one of the most distinctive graphic approaches at CES. The patterns were used to frame the booth and were also extended to product display pedestals and colored glass wall dividers.

72 Colorful patterns

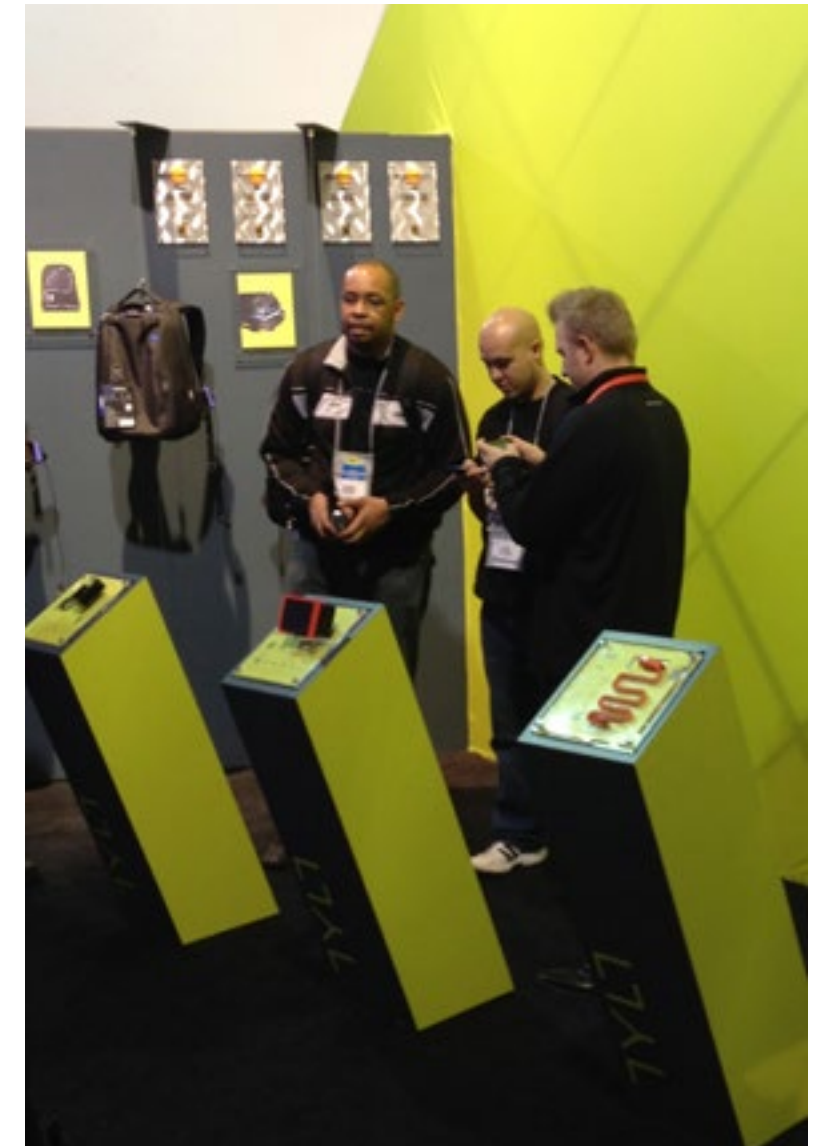


Although no one did it to the extent that TCL did, other booths also experimented with geometric color patterns. Some were more successful than others - but we appreciate the effort and the risk-taking in what otherwise was a graphically monochromatic and conservative show.

73 Interesting lights

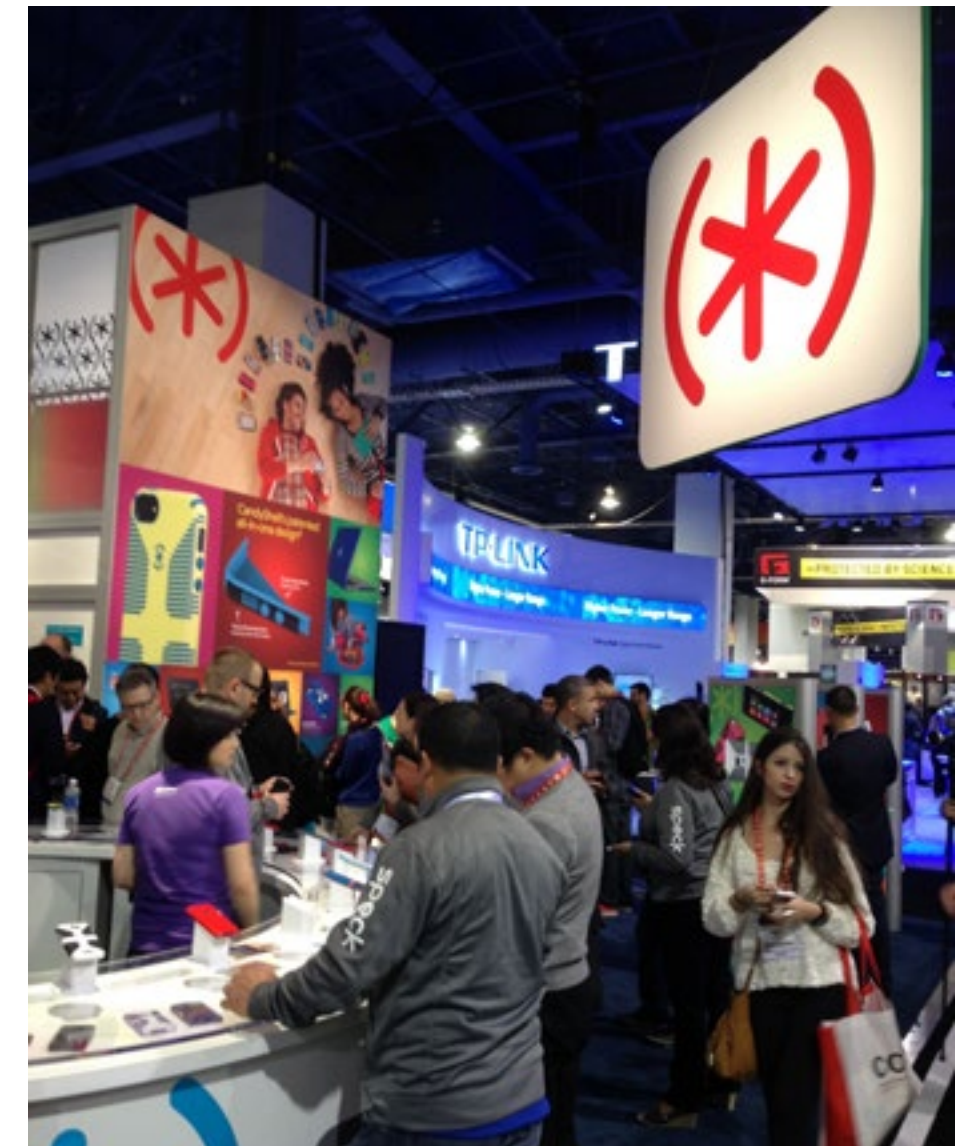


Here are a couple of details that caught our attention. One booth successfully used a gigantic “spotlight” to create attention for some of its new products. While another opted to create a geometric pattern with its overhead lighting structures - which was a welcome departure from the typically circular or square approach preferred by most exhibitors.



We had to stop by this booth. We enjoyed the way that the booth designer literally interpreted the name of the company (TYLT) to create a booth where each element was “tilted”. A simple technique that made the brand’s name more memorable and the booth interesting at a very low cost. This booth was “Built to Tylt”.

Not so good stuff.



The Speck booth has become a destination at CES because the brand has built a reputation as a busy place, where the beer flows freely and the atmosphere is more like a party than a gathering of tech geeks. This year, however, we missed out on the beer (perhaps it was poured when we were not there) and we would describe the booth as more “messy” than “busy”. Every corner of the exhibit was covered in multicolor graphics. Each, on its own, would have been striking and fun – but the multitude of images in different colors and different sizes created an overwhelming visual cacophony of pictures – all competing for attention. We like Speck’s products, but their booth could use a little more focus and more than a dose of restraint.



We're pretty sure that exhibiting at CES is not an inexpensive proposition. And the reason brands show up is to connect with the audiences they seek to influence. So, why would USB show up with a booth that looks like this? What does this say about the brand? And what do all those different versions of the logo mean?



According to Wikipedia, Alcatel-Lucent is a global telecommunications equipment company, headquartered in the 7th arrondissement of Paris, France. So, why does their booth look like this? What is happening here? Are those purple mosquito nets that we see? Is this a new trend in France?

79 Alcatel-Lucent



We don't really want to pick on Alcatel-Lucent – because we're afraid that something disastrous must have happened. Maybe their booth was destroyed or lost in transit, and – at the last minute – this was all they could pull off. Nothing else could explain the netting, the lonely plants, and the furniture rented from DMV. Still, we wondered, why was it necessary to place two logos (in different colors) on those grey storage doors? This is a company that in 2011 reported over 15 billion Euros in revenue. We're pretty sure that they can do better than this. And we hope that they will be able to recover the beautiful exhibit that was destroyed in shipping. Good luck next year!!!



We stopped by this booth and had a difficult time believing that the United States Postal Service would exhibit at CES. What innovation could the USPS boast this year? Definitely not in the booth design category. It is difficult to understand how they thought that this exhibit could help convince technology companies that the USPS is relevant to their business. We will refrain from criticizing the booth in terms of design, messaging, execution, quality, etc. Let's just say that we believe the USPS has a huge potential to win in "the most improved booth" category next year – and we very much hope to see them take home that award in 2014.



Here is another brand that had challenges with their exhibit. Like the Alcatel-Lucent booth, the YIFANG exhibit must have been shipped to the wrong address. After all, according to their website, YIFANG is committed to offering world-class designed consumer electronic products. We're positive that they would not travel from China to CES to display their products in this fashion. We are sorry that the YIFANG company lost its exhibit – and we hope they will retrieve it soon. In the meantime we applaud the talented folks that cut out the sign that says “Digital” – by hand. A difficult task, definitely.



This one sign did make us smile. It seems that this is how the Shenzhen Yibo Electronics company perceives Americans. In this banner, the nice fellow with the hat and mustache is caught unprepared when President Obama calls him. Apparently, his phone is running out of battery. As the headlines appears to say “Will This time you feel helpless or not!!!! How to do?” Well, in case this happens to you, this company can help. If not, you might call on the GameChurch.com – which had a booth not far from Shenzhen Yibo Electronics. Rumor has it, they perform miracles.

Taglines we noticed.

84 Taglines



85 Taglines





What's next for CES?

CES 2013 was certainly a crowded affair. However, regardless of what the Consumer Electronics Association might say, we don't think that CES 2013 was the place where the next disruptive technology was launched. And it was not the place to see exciting innovations in terms of amazing booth design, or new branding practices, or breathtaking marketing campaigns. In fact, the show was a little dull. And somewhat disappointing.

The brands that stood out for us are the ones that kept things simple, executed with attention to detail (like the Sony and Samsung booths). Some brands managed to get our attention thanks to a few bold moves (like the TCL graphic pattern or the Nikon use of color) - while others created

experiences that were pleasant and enjoyable (like Belkin with their "house" concept, or Golla whose booth was more like a retail store). There were very few booths that took our breath away. But the Audi booth sure did.

And there were many, many booths that failed to take advantage of the opportunity to create a positive impression with the multitude of attendees.

Lastly - since many of the computer companies seem to be opting out of the show floor, we wonder if the next wave of booths that will take over the CES show might include brands like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, or the many companies that are part of the

app ecosystem. Or – perhaps – the show will go back to its roots and focus on traditional consumer electronics products since they are now smarter than ever, like TVs, music systems, gaming systems, etc. along with smarter appliances such as refrigerators, stoves, cleaning robots, temperature control devices, etc.

Predicting the future is a difficult thing to do. But it seems obvious that CES is in a state of change.

We would love to hear your thoughts. Please send your comments to:
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About Liquid Agency.

We're not like other branding firms.

Yes, we help define strategies, launch new products and deliver all sorts of creative work. That's pretty standard stuff. What makes us different is not what we do – but why and how we do it. Over the years we've come to the conclusion that branding is not really about making companies look better. We believe it's about helping companies be amazing – and we do this through a process we call Silicon Valley Thinking.

88 About Liquid Agency

We started our business in Silicon Valley, where we've had the opportunity to work side by side with some of the brightest minds on the planet. Over time we grew to have offices in San Jose, CA; Portland, OR; New York, NY; Nottingham, UK; and Santiago, Chile – but the lessons we continue to learn in Silicon Valley, have become part of our DNA – regardless of where we work.

More than just a moniker, Silicon Valley Thinking is a radical shift in the way that we approach brand development. It represents a completely new process combined with a whole new attitude. And this new approach is supported by a set of tools specifically designed to deliver innovative branding for today's fast paced markets.

Liquid has worked with large and small companies helping launch new products and new companies (several of them at CES), as well as revitalizing existing brands; the agency has also delivered complete retail merchandising solutions, interactive branding programs, integrated marketing campaigns, and comprehensive environmental branding projects. We have worked with a diverse set of global clients, including Adidas, Adobe, Cisco, Google, HP, Intel, Microsoft, Nike, Reef, Sony and Walmart - as well as many smaller companies.

To find out more about Liquid Agency, please visit our website. Or drop us a note, we'd love to hear from you.

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