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CENTRAL COAST VOYAGER • LOCAL STORIES

Exploring Life & Business with Theron Whitney of Xibeo



Today we'd like to introduce you to Theron Whitney.

Hi Theron, we'd love for you to start by introducing yourself.

Xibeo's story actually began before the company ever existed.

My partner, Lauren, and I met in 1998 while working for another exhibit house. I was managing sales, and Lauren was managing projects and operations. We quickly discovered that we shared the same work ethic and a belief that clients deserved a better experience. Together, we helped improve the company's processes, strengthening communication between sales and operations and helped double its sales in just two years.

Those experiences taught us that building relationships with clients was the key to long term success. We saw firsthand that other exhibit houses were focused on selling booths, while clients were looking for creative solutions that fit their goals and budgets.

When circumstances following 9/11 unexpectedly changed our employment status, we decided it was time to build the company we had been envisioning. We had already incorporated Xibeo, believing that one day we'd create a business built around those ideas.

From the beginning, we focused on solving problems rather than simply selling exhibits. We developed modular designs that looked custom while reducing shipping costs, introduced flexible rental solutions for companies that only exhibited once or twice a year, and built every project around the client's business objectives instead of a one-size-fits-all approach.

Within our first year, that philosophy became the foundation of Xibeo. Clients returned year after year, referred colleagues, and trusted us with increasingly larger projects. By our fifth year, we had grown into our own fabrication facility, built an incredible team, and realized our greatest accomplishment wasn't our size—it was the relationships we had developed.

Twenty-five years later, those same principles continue to guide everything we do. We still believe great exhibits aren't only defined by how impressive they look, but also by how effectively they help our clients succeed.



I'm sure it wasn't obstacle-free, but would you say the journey has been fairly smooth so far?

Starting a business just weeks after 9/11 certainly wasn't the easiest beginning, but it taught us an important lesson early on: adaptability is essential. Every major challenge we've faced has pushed us to innovate rather than simply wait for conditions to improve.

During the Great Recession, many companies dramatically reduced their trade show budgets, and much of the exhibit industry struggled. Fortunately, we had already built our business around flexible solutions, including custom rental exhibits, which allowed our clients to maintain a strong trade show presence while working with their newly restricted budgets. This approach helped us not only weather the recession but to continue growing.

Then came COVID-19, which brought the trade show industry to a standstill for more than a year. Like many businesses, we had to pivot quickly. We produced protective barriers, transformed part of our showroom into a video production space, and found creative ways to keep our team working until the industry returned. When trade shows resumed, we were ready to respond immediately because we had retained our people and our capabilities.

Looking back, every challenge reinforced the same philosophy: stay adaptable, keep investing in relationships, and never stop looking for better ways to serve our clients. This mindset has allowed us to continue growing, including moving into our new 30,000-square-foot Ventura facility in 2024, where we're able to take on larger and more complex projects than ever before.



Alright, so let's switch gears a bit and talk business. What should we know?

At Xibeo, we believe a trade show exhibit should be much more than an attractive display—it should be a strategic business tool. Every project begins by understanding what our client is trying to accomplish, then designing an environment that helps them achieve that goal.

Our team specializes in custom exhibits for both purchase and rental, modular exhibit systems, museum displays, retail environments, and branded spaces that combine thoughtful design with practical functionality. Because we design, engineer, fabricate, and manage projects under one roof, we're able to maintain quality, flexibility, and clear communication from concept through installation.



What truly sets us apart, however, is our philosophy. After decades of observing how people buy, sell, and interact on the trade show floor, we've learned that great exhibits aren't defined only by how impressive they look—they're defined by how effectively they support conversations, strengthen brands, and generate business opportunities. Every wall, product display, lighting element, and visitor pathway is designed with purpose.

Brand-wise, we're most proud of the relationships we've built. Many of our clients have been with us for years, some even decades, and much of our growth has come through referrals. We believe trust is earned by consistently delivering on our promises, helping clients maximize their investment, and treating every project as if it were our own.

At the end of the day, we don't just build exhibits—we help companies tell their story, connect with their audience, and create environments where business can happen.



We'd be interested to hear your thoughts on luck and what role, if any, you feel it's played for you?

We think luck has certainly played a role, but we've also learned that luck often favors preparation. Throughout our journey, we've faced challenges that could have ended the business—from launching just after 9/11 to navigating the Great Recession and the complete shutdown of our industry during COVID. In each case, we had already been thinking ahead, adapting our business, and preparing for change before it happened.

We've also been fortunate to develop incredible relationships with clients, employees, partners, and mentors who believed in us along the way. Those relationships have opened doors that no business plan could have predicted.

Looking back after twenty-five years, success has been a combination of hard work, preparation, good people, and being willing to recognize opportunity when it appears. Some people call that luck. We think it's also about staying curious, staying adaptable, and always being ready for what's next.

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