

# Retractable Banner Stand Guide

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Retractable (pull-up) banner stands have gained widespread favor as a convenient, versatile and cost effective means to display information in all kinds of locations and settings. As a result of the popularity, so many brands, types and designs have come on the market that can be confusing to the prospective buyer to compare and select a unit that will best meet the need. In addition to the banner stand itself, the buyer has to choose from a variety of banner media. More often than not, vendors provide minimal information about the banner stand features and the banner media offered. This guide will provide information to help the selection process.

## Applications

Retractable banner stands are designed for indoor use standing on the floor. There are models available sized for display on table top and counters. Regular banner stands should not be used outdoor – they will be knocked down in windy condition. There are specially designed outdoor retractable banner stands available that incorporate heavy bases and spring tensioned poles.

Banner stands can be used as single standalone displays or combined to form a wall.

## Benefits

- Light weight and easily portable.
- Minimal storage space required when not in use.
- Easy change out of graphics – ideal for frequent changes
- Versatile – different sizes and configurations
- The banner resides protected in the base of the unit when not in use.
- Clean, flat edge to edge display of the banner (no grommets, bubbles, curls, etc.)
- Repeated and long term usable
- Cost effective

## How they work

The banner is wound on an internal, spring tensioned roller – much like a roller shade. The roller has a leader piece attached, about 12" long, to which the banner is connected. To change the banner, the banner is fully pulled out exposing the connection to the leader. A hex key is inserted on the side to lock the tensioned roller, allowing the banner to be changed.

There is one system, the Expand M2, that has a tensioning mechanism separately from the roller. When the banner is raised, the roller via a gear drives the tensioning mechanism and is winding up the tension and releasing it while the banner is lowered. In this way the roller, with the banner lowered, can be easily swapped out without having to lock anything and worry about tension – a very clever solution.

## Sizes

Sizes for retractable banner stands range from a small 9" x 11" counter tops to giant 8' wide and up to 10' high units. (These very large units have two poles and require two people for setting up – more about the pros and cons later).

The typical, most used banner stands are for banner sizes from 31" - 39" wide and 78" - 88" high.

## Types

Most banner stand will fall in one of these categories:

### Top Tier

- Full featured. Usually with telescopic pole
- Designed for easy, frequent banner changes
- High quality construction - designed for long term use
- Elegant and well-engineered and serviceable
- Lifetime warranty
- Comprehensive manufacturer and dealer service support
- Durable , good quality, padded transport bag
- Upper price range – typically \$200 to \$400

### Mid-Range

- Has all the features required for a good banner stand. May or may not have telescopic pole.
- Banner changes not difficult but not as easy as on high end units
- Designed for longer term and moderate frequent use
- Functional but not necessarily elegant design
- Reasonably good quality but limited serviceability
- 1 year to lifetime warranty depending on manufacturer
- After -sales support varies depending on dealer or re-seller -
- Decent, padded transport bag
- Medium price range – typically \$130 - \$220

### Economy

- Basic features only. Fixed height pole
- Designed for shorter term use and limited frequency (promotional campaigns for example)
- Banner change out not convenient and easy - mostly designed for one-time installation
- Marginal quality
- Functional look – not designed for aesthetics
- 2 month to 1 year warranty
- Limited dealer support – units usually are not serviceable
- Low quality transport bag
- Price range \$50 - \$120

## Features

Banner change-out systems:

- One of the main differentiating features are the methods and available options for banner change-out. This is probably the most important aspect to consider when selecting a retractable banner stand.
- - o Cartridge or roller change-out system: The banner is pre-installed on the roller or in the cartridge making the change-out in the banner stand a snap. Ideal if banner changes have to be made while on location and when banners need to be changed back and forth. Typically the hanger bar is also pre-installed with the banner. This requires the purchase of extra change-out kits (cartridge/roller and hanger bar) as needed.
  - o Profile system: The leader end in the banner stand and the banner connect together with a profile strip - like a Ziploc. Or the profile strip on the banner inserts into a profile groove on the roller. The banner is supplied with the profile strip installed. The hanger bar will be either the clamping type or also have a profile for inserting onto a pre-installed profile strip on top of the banner. This system makes it possible for one person to change out a banner without the need of tools and taping.
  - o Adhesive system: On lower cost banner stands the banner is usually connected at the bottom to an adhesive strip on the leader and on top to an adhesive strip on the hanger bar. Changing a banner requires cutting the banner off and applying new adhesive strips both on the bottom and top. After a few changes there will be not sufficient length of the leader left to do this. This system is not designed for multiple banner changes and not really a DIY job and best done in the shop by the banner supplier.

Bases:

- Banner stands come with two types of base design. One design is with a wide body that will provide the required stability and the other with a sleeker body complemented with swing-out feet. Banner stands with cartridge/roller change-out systems usually have a wide body since the top will open up for the change-out. Other than look there is no distinct advantage of one over the other. Wide bases sometimes incorporate lean adjustment screws,

Poles:

- Three types: Full telescopic for a banner height range of approx. 30" to full height, partial telescopic for a range of approx. 60" to full height and fixed height in the form of a 3-part pole held together with bungee cords. The full telescopic pole has the advantage that the banner stand can also be used as a table top unit. Telescopic poles have also the advantage of making it easier to raise and lower the banner. Good quality banner stands will have a solid pole holder in the base and not just a hole drilled into the casing. The pole head is usually a plastic piece that inserts into a groove in the hanger bar. Some pole heads incorporate a shoe profile on top for attaching a light.

Features to avoid:

Banner stands often have a tough life. They get uses over and over, tossed around, dropped, you name it. Parts that can break easily or are not made very solidly are to be avoided. This includes thin plastic end pieces and anything else made of plastic on the bases, bases made of thin aluminum that dents very easily (which can jam the roller inside), fold-out wings, poles made of thin tubing that bends easily, cartridges that cannot be repaired, rollers and cartridges that cannot be re-tensioned, bendy hanger bars (your banner will never display flat with these), leaders made of brittle, thin plastic.

### **Special Banner stands:**

- Double sided:
  - These are simply two banner stands combined into one base. Some look nicely designed and integrated, other more like two units bolted together. One pole will hold both banners up with a double sided pole head. Everything works like in a single sided unit.
  
- Outdoor banner stands:
  - This is a special class by itself. To be suitable for deployment outdoor the units will have to withstand high wind and rain. The special design features are:
    - o Typically two sided (2 banners)
    - o A large, heavy , molded plastic base that can be filled with water or sand - or - heavy, large metal feet that attach to the base
    - o One or two spring loaded poles that will allow the banner to give and bend in heavy wind.
    - o Water-proof and rust-proof materials
    - o Units with large plastic base have integrated wheels for ease of rolling unit around
    - o Priced including weatherproof banners in the \$600 - \$950 range
  
- Connected wall units:
  - Two or three banner stands can be connected together to form a wall. These units are and work like regular banner stands but incorporate magnetic ends both on the base and the hanger bar to keep the stands together. There will still be a small gap between the banners
  
- “Jumbo” banner stands
  - Extra-large units that are 5’ to 8’ wide and 7’ to 10’ high. The units have a compact base, two swing out feet and two poles. It will take two people to set them up as the banner has to be pulled up and hooked onto the poles simultaneously. The units weigh between 20 – 30 lbs. The length has to be kept in mind for transporting. These units are an alternative to pop-up display walls.

## **Banner Media**

There are 3 types of banner media on the market: Good, mediocre and bad

Mediocre and bad media include scrim vinyl that curls and buckles, laminated paper that kinks, tears and delaminates, canvas and other fabrics that are too heavy or have un-suitable coatings, polypropylene and other stretchy materials that will not hold the shape under tension, etc.

The demands for a good retractable banner material are quite high:

- The media must roll up tightly and when released not show any marks from rolling
- The media has to stay flat without or minimal edge curl
- The media has to be tear proof
- The media should block or diminish back light
- The media should print in vivid color with water and fade resistant inks
- The media should be between 7 mil to 12 mil in thickness for good performance
- The media should have a low glare coating

The best banner media are designed specifically for retractable banner stands and include:

- Polyester (PET) and PET/PVC films with light block
- Opaque 9 mil PVC
- Vinyl coated woven fabric
- Woven polyester fabric, approx. 7 - 8 oz., with a tight weave

Woven, PVC free polyester fabric is also an environmentally friendly and recyclable media.

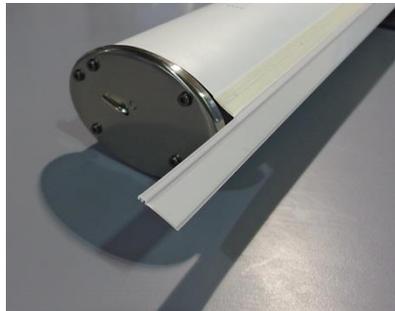
## **Banner artwork file set-up**

Artwork files are best created in Adobe Illustrator or Photoshop. The banner width and height is determined by the model of the banner stand. The width of the banner must always be the same as the banner stand nominal width. The height can be varied if the unit has a telescoping pole. In addition to the visible size of the banner, an extra 6" need to be added to the bottom. This is the part that is required for connecting the banner to the leader and will stay covered inside the banner stand. Any images and text should be at least 2" away from the bottom and top of the visible size of the banner.

- Raster images (photos) should have a resolution of approx. 120 to 150 ppi at the printed size.
- All fonts need to be outlined or the font files supplied with the artwork.
- Bleed is not required. Just set up the file to the size of the banner.
- Specify the PMS designation if specific color matching is required. (such as for logos)

## Examples of banner stand models

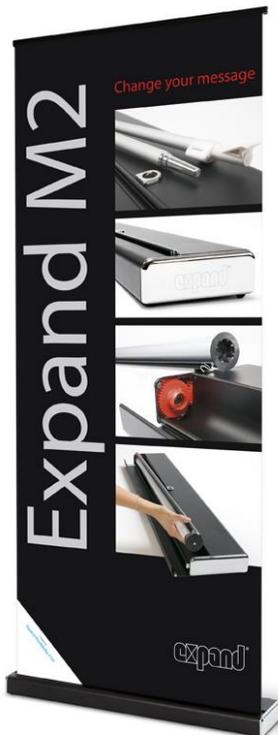
### Top Tier: Duo Set



The Duo Set is a sleek, robust and long term durable banner stand. The main features are:

- Coated aluminum base case with solid, polished steel end caps
- Substantial 3-part telescopic pole for a 35" to 88" height range
- Easy banner connecting system with profile strips
- Polished steel swing foot with large pole holder
- Clip hanger bar
- Lifetime warranty

### Top Tier: Expand M2



The Expand M2 is an elegant, top quality banner stand with some unique features:

- The banner is wound on a roller that can easily be changed out in seconds with another banner pre-installed on an extra roller
- Banner tensioning is separate from the roller and applied via a gear by pulling the banner up.
- Clip hanger bar
- Lifetime warranty

### Mid Range: Expolinc Compact



The Expolinc Compact is one of the best Mid-Range units. The specific features are:

- Compact, lightweight aluminum base with sturdy polycarbonate end caps
- 2-part telescopic pole with 63" to 87" adjustable height range
- Hanger bar with profile strip
- Taped banner connection to leader
- Lifetime warranty

### Economy: Roll-Up



The Roll-Up is a generically named banner stand sold under different names by many re-sellers. It is one of the most widely used economy stands and has the following features:

- Aluminum light weight casing with two swing-out feet
- Clamp hanger bar
- 3-part fixed height pole
- Taped banner connection to leader
- Limited 6 month warranty

## **Distribution Channels**

Retractable banner stands are sold mainly through two channels:

- Manufacturer's dealer network

This is the typical channel for top tier and some mid-range units. The dealer is selected, trained and appointed by the manufacturer and receives full sales and service support. The larger dealers will stock units and have a showroom. There are no distributors and other middle men involved. Bay Area Imaging is such a larger dealer representing Duo, Expand and Expolinc, three of the most respected manufacturers of portable exhibit systems.

- Re-Sellers

Many mid-range and probably all economy banner stands are imported in quantity from China by a distributor and supplied to re-sellers who will sell the banner stands under their brand names to sign shops and directly to the public. The selling of these units is usually conducted over the internet. After-sales support will vary widely depending on the re-seller.

## **In closing:**

In the 15 years of selling retractable banner stands and producing banners for them I have come across almost any type and make and have learned what works well and what does not. Banner stands often have a rough life especially if they are going from trade show to trade show or are used in high traffic public places and multiple events. Only the best will endure. It pays in the long run to buy quality and ease of operation.

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