

Tips for Exhibitors from the Exhibits Round Table

Best Practices for a Successful ALA Conference

1. There is an **exhibitor lounge** on the show floor. What You Will Find There?
 - Answers about any part of the exhibitor process
 - Where you need to go to sign up for next year's show.
 - Complimentary coffee/water/soft drinks (*while supplies last)
2. Pieces of paper will “magically” appear in your booth overnight. You should always read these. Some of these documents have important exhibitor information on it.
3. A clear one-page flyer prominently located on a table or brochure rack in the front of the booth that I can take for immediate info and to take along for future reference. (Helps attendee formulate questions if they chose to pursue more info or a demo.)
4. Swag: do not underestimate quantities. Some attendees have voracious appetites.
5. Swag alternative: consider donating some/all your swag budget to library-related causes, such as an ALA scholarship (the Hoy scholarship comes to mind). Display the alternative donation prominently in your space.
6. Read the Exhibitor Manual and pre-show notifications.
7. Contact show management with questions.
8. Contact ERT board members for insights and tips. (ertbd@lists.ala.org)
9. Do not make assumptions – ask questions.
10. Use the ALA hashtag in all of your SM posts and start posting early and often.
11. Make sure that your posts include a ‘call to action’ (i.e. coming to the booth to enter a contest or \$\$ for referring another customer.)
12. If you utilize one of ALA’s advertising opportunities, again, use a ‘call to action’ for your marketing collateral.
13. The *Aisle by Aisle* guide from Library Journal can be great if it pulls people to your booth for something besides a giveaway. Use Cognotes, the official show daily, for daily events or “Meet the Authors” in the scheduler app to promote signings.
14. Try to make appointments with prospects during the show - a scheduled meeting is more likely to result in sales or further discussion.
15. Partner with other vendors to cross-pollinate.

16. Use clear signage of name that can be seen from a distance. Introverts don't like to have to ask or get caught in a sales pitch.
17. Scheduling appointments in advance, and making sure that there is enough staff to cover walk-ins plus the scheduled appointments.
18. Easy grab pamphlets for those who are interested but don't have time for a sales pitch are useful
19. **TRAIN your booth staff.** Smile & engage people walking past your booth. Keep your hands out of your pockets. PUT AWAY the cell phone. If you must take a call or text, WALK AWAY from your booth as to not appear disengaged from your potential clients. Have your sales pitch condensed to an elevator size. There are literally HUNDREDS of booths, and attendees will never get to all of them with the limited time they have on the show floor. Make your few moments count. Make sure your staff can answer questions or someone is present that can answer them. If you need to diffuse a situation, offer to take that individual away from the booth so you can sit & talk and not disrupt other potential customers.
20. **Educate yourself about drayage/material handling:** Ditch the paper products. Ship only a minimal amount of printed marketing collateral. You can obtain email addresses either through a lead reader or from the potential customer, and then send any information digitally. Not only will it reduce your shipping & drayage costs, you will then be able to follow up with the lead through email and tout your environmentally friendly practices.
21. **Order booth furnishings, utilities & labor EARLY:** Almost every show has an ADVANCE rate and a FLOOR rate. Save significant money by ordering your booth essentials prior to the discount deadline.
22. **Treat your ALA Exhibit Plan as a Project:** Exhibiting at ALA is a multi-vendor project from dealing exhibitor services, to ALA Promotions to third party vendors (Library Journal, caterers, for example). Most of these interactions are in discrete conversations including sale to operations staff. Remembering to look at an ALA insertion order for materials due ("Where do I send that ad?") or Exhibitor Prospectus for ordering deadlines can drive you nuts if you're not organized. When you're planning your exhibit presence, treat it as a project. Put all of your dates, deadlines, tasks, and contacts (emails, phone number) in a single place for easy reference. Use it to manage your "to do" list and deliverable dates. (I've found Google Documents and Google Sheets especially good for this purpose as sharing among staff and vendors is particularly easy.)
23. **Remember You Are in Control of Your Own Destiny:** Just because you "build" an exhibit space doesn't mean "they will come". If you're going to invest in coming to the show, you need to take the time (and maybe spend some money) on promoting your presence. There are multiple promotional opportunities from print, email, and online both from ALA and other vendors that you might want to consider. Take the time to investigate. Give attendees a reason to come to your booth and learn about your products and services. Raffles with coupon for example is a relatively inexpensive way to get folks to your booth. And, don't be afraid to offer promotional items to passers-by. Use a "give to get" approach...get them to fill out a contact card before they get that prized item. Remember, sales leads start with awareness so don't be afraid of doing the necessary steps to make awareness grow.