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THE ASSOCIATION EXPO MANAGEMENT PLAYBOOK

How to Plan, Sell, and Run a More Efficient and Profitable Exhibition

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Introduction

Expos and exhibitions help associations generate revenue, give sponsors visibility, and connect attendees with valuable products and services. But managing booths, floor plans, sponsorships, payments, and exhibitor communication can quickly become complex.

This playbook provides a simple framework to manage the full expo lifecycle — from planning and selling booths to collecting payments, marketing, and preparing for the next event.

1. Start With the Expo, Not the Tools

Before choosing or configuring technology, map out the complete expo lifecycle.

A typical association expo includes six key stages:

1. Plan



Design the exhibition space, halls, booth inventory, pricing, sponsorships, and policies.

2. Promote



Create awareness through email campaigns, early-bird offers, and promotional campaigns.

3. Sell



Let exhibitors browse booths, choose locations, purchase sponsorships, and register with ease.

4. Collect

Manage payments, invoices, outstanding balances, cancellations, and refunds.



5. Deliver

Keep your floor plan, exhibitor information, sponsorship commitments, and event logistics organized.



6. Repeat

Review performance and use what you learned to improve the next expo.
The goal: Build one connected process instead of managing six separate workflows.



2. Build an Exhibitor-Ready Floor Plan

Your floor plan is more than a map of the exhibition hall.
It is one of your most important sales tools.
Before opening booth sales, make sure your floor plan clearly identifies:

- Booth numbers
- Booth dimensions
- Available booths
- Reserved booths
- Organizer spaces
- Lounges and networking areas
- AV or technical areas
- Food and beverage areas
- Entrances and exits
- Other non-sellable spaces

Sellable vs. Non-Sellable Inventory

Not every space on an expo floor should be available for purchase. Create clear inventory categories so your team knows exactly what can and cannot be sold.

Sellable inventory could include:

- Standard booths
- Premium booths
- Island booths
- Specialty spaces

Non-sellable inventory could include:

- Organizer offices
- Lounges
- AV areas
- Storage
- Walkways
- Service areas

Quick check

Before launching booth sales, ask:

- Is every booth numbered?
- Is every space categorized?
- Are reserved spaces clearly marked?
- Is available inventory accurate?
- Can your team see what has been sold versus what remains?

3. Create a Pricing Strategy That Supports Your Sales Goals

Your booth pricing should do more than establish a price.
It should help you sell inventory strategically.
Consider offering different pricing structures for:

Early-Bird Pricing

Encourage exhibitors to commit early by offering a limited-time rate.

Member Pricing

Reward association members with preferential pricing.

Premium Locations

Charge more for high-visibility or high-traffic spaces.

Promotional Pricing

Use limited-time offers to create urgency when inventory needs a sales boost.

Package Pricing

Bundle booth space with sponsorships, branding, Wi-Fi, signage, or other services.

A flexible pricing strategy allows your team to respond to demand instead of relying on one fixed price throughout the sales cycle.

4. Make Booth Selection Self-Service

One of the biggest opportunities to improve the exhibitor experience is to remove unnecessary back-and-forth.

Instead of:
Exhibitor emails → Staff checks spreadsheet → Staff confirms availability → Exhibitor chooses booth → Staff updates spreadsheet → Invoice is created → Follow-up begins

Aim for:
Exhibitor views floor plan → Selects booth → Adds services → Completes booking → Receives confirmation/invoice

A self-service booking experience can help exhibitors make decisions faster while reducing manual work for your team.

The ideal exhibitor experience

An exhibitor should be able to:

- View the exhibition floor
- See available booths
- Understand booth size and pricing
- Select a booth
- Add sponsorships or services
- Choose a payment option
- Complete the booking
- Receive confirmation and invoice



The fewer steps your team needs to manage manually, the more scalable your expo sales process becomes.

5. Turn Sponsorships and Add-Ons Into Revenue Opportunities

Booth sales are only one part of expo revenue.
Associations can also generate revenue through:

- Sponsorship packages
- Wi-Fi sponsorships
- Branded signage
- Charging stations
- Networking areas
- Lounge sponsorships
- Digital advertising
- Promotional opportunities
- Additional exhibitor services



The key is to make these opportunities easy to discover and purchase.
Instead of managing sponsorships separately from booth sales, consider creating a connected purchasing experience.

Example

An exhibitor selects a booth for $5,000.
During checkout, they can also add:
Wi-Fi Sponsorship — $1,500
Branded Signage — $750
Networking Lounge Sponsorship — $2,500
The exhibitor gets one streamlined purchasing experience.
Your organization gets a clearer picture of total expo revenue.

6. Give Exhibitors Flexible Payment Options

Not every exhibitor wants to pay the full amount immediately. Depending on your policies, consider offering:

Pay Now

The exhibitor pays at the time of booking.

Pay Later

The exhibitor receives an invoice and pays according to your organization's terms.

Why this matters

Your sales process and your finance process should work together. Every booking should have a clear financial status:

- Booked
- Paid
- Partially paid
- Invoiced
- Outstanding
- Cancelled
- Refunded



This makes it easier for event and finance teams to work from the same information.

7. Establish Clear Cancellation and Refund Policies

A clear cancellation policy protects both your organization and your exhibitors.

Before opening booth sales, define:



· Cancellation deadlines
· Refund eligibility
· Refund amounts
· Administrative fees, if applicable
· Transfer policies
· What happens if the event changes or is cancelled
· Deadlines for requesting refunds

Make these policies visible during the booking process.
Clear expectations reduce confusion and help prevent disputes later.

8. Market Your Expo Before the Floor Is Full

Expo sales should not depend entirely on exhibitors discovering your event organically.

Create a structured marketing plan around key moments.

Suggested campaign timeline

Launch

Announce booth sales and open inventory.

Early Bird

Promote discounted pricing with a clear deadline.

Sales Milestone

Highlight demand, remaining inventory, or popular booth locations.

Flash Sale

Use a limited-time promotion to accelerate sales.

Final Push

Create urgency around remaining inventory.

Event Countdown

Keep exhibitors engaged as the event approaches.

Your marketing should answer three questions:

Why should I exhibit?

Communicate the audience, business opportunity, and value.

Why should I book now?

Use deadlines, limited inventory, or early-bird pricing.

Why should I choose this booth?

Highlight location, visibility, traffic, or package benefits.

9. Create a Dedicated Expo Destination

Your expo should have a clear online destination where exhibitors can find everything they need.
A strong expo landing page should communicate:

The Opportunity
Who attends and why exhibiting matters.

The Floor
What booth options are available.

The Pricing
How much different spaces and packages cost.

The Extras
Which sponsorships and add-ons are available.

The Process
How exhibitors can book.

The Policies
Payment, cancellation, and refund information.

The Next Step
A clear call to action to view the floor plan or reserve a booth.

The objective is simple:
Give exhibitors one place to learn, decide, and act.

10. Keep Your Team Working From One Source of Truth

As booth sales increase, information becomes harder to manage.
One spreadsheet might contain booth inventory.
Another might contain payments.
Email might contain cancellation requests.
A separate document might contain sponsorship information.
And your marketing platform might contain your prospect list.
This creates a visibility problem.
Your team should be able to answer questions such as:

- How many booths are available?
- Which booths are reserved?
- Which exhibitors have booked?
- How much revenue has been generated?
- Who still has an outstanding balance?
- Which sponsorships have been sold?
- Which inventory should we promote?
- Which exhibitors need follow-up?

The fewer places your team needs to check, the easier the expo becomes to manage.

11. Measure What Matters

After the expo, don't only look at attendance.
Evaluate the commercial and operational performance of the exhibition.

Revenue

Track:

- Total booth revenue
- Sponsorship revenue
- Add-on revenue
- Outstanding payments
- Refunds
- Average revenue per exhibitor

Sales

Track:

- Total booths sold
- Sell-through rate
- Time to sell inventory
- Early-bird conversion
- Promotional campaign performance

Exhibitor Experience

Consider:

- Booking experience
- Payment experience
- Communication
- Satisfaction
- Likelihood to return

12. The Expo Technology Checklist

When evaluating an expo management platform, look beyond basic booth booking.
A complete solution should help you manage the full lifecycle.

Floor & Inventory

- Interactive floor map
- Booth inventory management
- Sellable/non-sellable spaces
- Multiple halls
- Booth status tracking

Sales

- Online booth booking
- Self-service exhibitor experience
- Flexible pricing
- Early-bird rates
- Discounts and promotions

Revenue

- Online payments
- Pay-later options
- Automatic invoicing
- Outstanding payment tracking
- Sponsorship sales
- Add-on services

Marketing

- Email campaigns
- Prospect targeting
- Flash sales
- Early-bird campaigns
- Event announcements

Operations

- Cancellation policies
- Refund management
- Exhibitor information
- Event-level controls
- Centralized reporting

Scalability

- Multiple events
- Multiple exhibitions
- Reusable processes
- Centralized visibility
- Reduced spreadsheet dependency

13. Is Your Expo Ready to Scale?

Ask yourself:

Can our team manage the expo without relying heavily on spreadsheets?
Can exhibitors see and select available booths themselves?
Can we manage booth sales and sponsorships in one workflow?
Can finance easily see what has been paid and what is outstanding?
Can we change pricing without rebuilding our entire sales process?
Can we launch an expo-specific marketing campaign without switching between multiple systems?
Can we manage multiple events without creating a separate process for each one?

If several answers are "no," your challenge may not be the size of your expo. It may be the way your expo is being managed.

Bringing It All Together

A successful expo requires more than a great floor plan.
It requires a connected process across:

Planning → Pricing → Marketing → Booth Sales → Sponsorships → Payments → Operations → Reporting

When these activities are managed separately, your team spends valuable time moving information between systems.
When they are connected, your team can spend more time focusing on exhibitors, revenue, and the overall event experience.

Poweround Expo Management System

Poweround brings the core components of expo management into one platform. From interactive floor planning and booth inventory to promotional pricing, booth booking, sponsorships, payments, invoicing, marketing, and dedicated expo landing pages, Poweround helps organizations manage the expo lifecycle from one place.

For Admins

Get visibility and control over halls, booths, bookings, inventory, pricing, payments, and campaigns.

For Exhibitors

Give exhibitors a clear, self-service journey from discovering available booths to booking and payment.

For Your Organization

Create a more professional exhibitor experience while building a scalable system for expo revenue and repeat events.

Stop managing tools. Start managing your expo.

Final Checklist

Before your next expo goes live, make sure you can answer "yes" to these questions:

- Our floor plan is accurate.
- Sellable and non-sellable inventory is clearly defined.
- Pricing and promotional rules are ready.
- Exhibitors can easily browse and book booths.
- Sponsorships and add-ons are available.
- Payment options are clearly defined.
- Invoices and outstanding payments can be tracked.
- Cancellation and refund policies are clear.