

# **Guidelines for NIRSA Regional and State/Provincial Conference Exhibit Coordinators**

March 2015

## **Purpose**

The purpose of these guidelines is to improve the Exhibit Coordinator's ability to secure sponsors and exhibitors for NIRSA's Regional and State/Provincial Conferences by developing and sharing business best practices. Continuity between Exhibit Coordinators will enhance the efficiency and experience for all involved.

## **The Importance of Exhibitors & Sponsors**

NIRSA's Associate Members are committed to the profession of collegiate recreation and recognize the importance of participating in NIRSA events, at all levels including Annual, Regional and State/Provincial Conferences. In return, NIRSA's Associate Members anticipate a return in investment through sales, exposure, and leads generated.

Since their products and services are used throughout collegiate recreation, the presence of NIRSA Associate Members as sponsors and exhibitors provide many benefits including:

- New product offerings in a face to face setting
- Engagement with Members at a personal level while strengthening their Association ties.
- Assistance in underwriting the cost of Conferences

## **The Need for a Unified Approach**

In the past each NIRSA Region and State/Provincial Association has developed its own set of guidelines to engage with sponsors and exhibitors. These guidelines often vary greatly among the regions, which can be confusing to potential exhibitors and sponsors, particularly when they attempt to support more than one NIRSA related program effort.

## **Associate Member Benefits**

NIRSA Associate members have made a commitment through annual membership dues to support the Association and our Members. All sponsors are strongly encouraged to maintain active Associate Membership status. At the National level, Associate Members are given priority booth placement and a 10% discount on booth space. Providing Associate Members additional benefits is an important consideration when developing Sponsorship and Exhibitor packages.

## **How to Initiate Contact with Potential Sponsors & Exhibitors**

Many NIRSA Associate Members distinguish between the national sales and regional sales. They recommend that local dealers should participate in NIRSA Regional and State/Provincial Conferences. This strategy provides local dealers with the important opportunity to develop personal relationships within their region.

- Utilize the NIRSA Annual Conference Expo to make in person connections with potential sponsors/exhibitors
  - Secure local or regional salesperson contact information from major companies
  - Often the local dealer has a separate budget from the parent company and can therefore support in a bigger way
- Utilize NIRSA's Buyers Guide to identify potential sponsors/exhibitors
- Solicit Non-Associate Members– attending a regional event might be just what they need to experience a NIRSA event and see the benefits of continued involvement with NIRSA.
- Utilize your local resources! Reach out to your local companies that could become a national level supporter.
- Don't forget your local/regional vendors who are not associated with NIRSA, but have products or services that would be a benefit to your state/provincial/regional members.

### **Basic Package for a Conference Exhibitor:**

Suggested price is \$400 which includes:

- One conference registration (additional personnel add full conference registration price).
- A 6' table top exhibit space,
- A listing of their Company Name in the conference program
- An established exhibit schedule designating contested and uncontested hours of operation (hours when only the exhibit area is open), and
- Thank you announcements mentioning exhibitors in general sessions.

A highly attended regional event could expect to price the package at \$500 while a smaller event might consider a \$300 price tag.

### **Sponsor Package:**

Sponsor opportunities may be extended to exhibitors as well as non-exhibitors. Sponsorship carries a higher price and provides greater visibility at the event.

Recommended pricing ranges from \$1,000-\$5,000, which includes:

Company logo in program and conference website

- Printed media exposure in inserts & conference packets
- Poster or other signage recognizing sponsor at the place of sponsorship (sign on the buffet table of sponsoring a meal)

Higher priced sponsorships should also include:

- Poster or company banner display (provided by the company) in meeting areas
- Complimentary exhibit space (including conference registration)

Add-on pricing to the basic package might include:

Keynote speaker

- Meal or social event
- Attendee giveaways

Handouts; Entry-level Option

Some companies may wish to have a presence at a conference but be unable to exhibit. One option for these companies is to designate an area for published materials or handouts.

Recommended pricing ranges:

- \$100 (for placement on a resource table)
- \$250 (for packet stuffing-ensuring every attendee receives a handout) including all printed handouts and shipping to the coordinator

NOTE: If a company wants to attend the Conference, pricing should make the Exhibitor booth space the most attractive option. For example:

- If Exhibitor booth space is \$300, and Conference registration is \$200, price handouts at \$150.
- Then, if a company wants a representative to attend, the conference registration fee of \$200 would be added to the handout fee of \$150 for a total of \$350.
- The Exhibit Booth then becomes the more attractive option at only \$300.

## **Demonstrations**

If space or location permits, an area setup for product demonstration may enhance offerings. This may be provided as another benefit for exhibitors, or it may be a fee service (suggested fee is \$100-\$150). If a fee service is implemented, it is important the demonstration area is in a visible location to all attendees and is offered during unopposed time.

## **Trade Outs**

Trading goods and services between conference event and companies is often done. The value of a company's product might enhance the event while enhancing the company's visibility and market position. It is best practice to extend this opportunity to NIRSA Associate Members first.

- You might provide free exhibit booth space to a company in return for providing conference notebooks and tote bags.
- Be sure to match value with value.
- Companies may be willing to donate goods or services in exchange for exhibit space or advertising.

## **Locating and Attracting Exhibitors**

It is recommended that regional and state/provincial events pursue local businesses which seek engagement with campus professionals. While NIRSA Associate Members are often happy to contribute and attend, the market tends to get oversaturated with requests. Reaching out to local dealers rather than pursuing a corporate company will often receive greater returns and opens opportunity at the National level.

## **Show Evaluations**

Participant feedback, positive and negative, can only improve efforts for a better conference and show. Work to include exhibitor and sponsor questions in your conference survey: ask both attendees and exhibitors for their input. Pass those results along to the next regional conference host.

Potential survey questions for show attendees:

- Amount of time spent in exhibit area?
- Exhibits that attracted your attention the most?
- Main reason for remembering them (e.g. demonstrations, promotional items, product samples, product interest).
- Other industry shows attended.
- Other suggestions to improve the show.

Potential survey questions for exhibitors:

- Rate floor traffic, exhibit management, exhibit area facilities and services.
- Were attendees the right target market?
- Number of qualified leads?
- Why exhibit in this show?
- Plans to exhibit next year?
- Plans to exhibit at other NIRSA Regional/State/Provincial and/or the NIRSA Annual Conference?
- Other suggestions to improve the conference and exhibit.

## **After the Show**

Follow up, follow up, and follow up! A note of thanks goes a long way in retaining exhibitors. The key to perpetuating good relationships is through communications. Don't forget to make introductions and facilitate initial conversations between volunteer Exhibit Coordinators as positions change hands. Compiling good notes, sharing ideas and information, and highlighting what works (and what doesn't work) positions the next Exhibit Coordinator for a successful next Conference season. And always remember your NIRSA Headquarter office is here to help with advice, contact information and encouragement.