

Exhibiting at the 2024 National Conference on Education: Pre-Show Preparations and Promotions

Set Clear Goals

Starting with clearly defined goals will help lead all your efforts, keep you on task, and allow you to allocate your resources effectively at AASA's National Conference on Education. Make your goals specific and measurable and consider using SMART goals as a framework—Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timeline-bound.

Create an Action Plan and Designate Roles

How will you reach your goals? Who will be responsible for different parts of the equation? When will you begin executing your plan? Where will you conduct your marketing and which channels will you use?

These are all great questions to help you start laying out your NCE marketing plan based on the goals you established earlier. Additionally, laying out your plan will also help you determine your marketing budget and which promotional tools you want to implement, including [sponsorship and advertising opportunities](#), which provide immediate brand recognition and open up sales opportunities with new customers.

At this stage, you'll also want to draft a timeline to for executing your NCE marketing plan and begin designating roles for your team. One of the first items on any show timeline is to announce your plans to exhibit and promote your show floor presence to current and prospective customers (another great time take advantage of [advertising opportunities](#), as they keep your brand front and center before, during, and even after the show).

Determine Your Marketing Channels

When you were drafting your overall plan, you likely considered the channels through which you would promote your presence at NCE and the products or services you want to showcase, but now is the optimal time to determine your marketing channels.

In addition, make sure you're using all the available NCE resources available through the [Exhibitor Marketing Toolkit](#). These tools can be customized for your brand and booth to get customers and prospects excited and engaged before NCE starts.

Also be sure to follow AASA on social media and stay engaged by sharing, commenting, and reposting with your own unique spin. And don't forget to step up your own social media marketing! Create fun and exciting content leading up to NCE by giving teasers of what you have in store for attendees or going behind the scenes as you prep your booth or swag. We have even created [sample social media posts](#) for you to use.

Additional Planning Items

In addition to the items mentioned above, consider the questions below to prevent any last-minute scrambling on site or after NCE.

- **What is our post-show follow-up plan?** Develop a post-show plan for following up with leads, sending thank-you notes, and nurturing potential customers who show interest on site.
- **How will we collect contact information?** Decide on the system you'll use to collect attendee contact information, such as a lead capture app or physical forms. This will help you follow up with potential leads after NCE.
- **Are there any important meetings we want to have?** Reach out to potential clients, partners, or leads in advance to schedule meetings during NCE. This ensures dedicated time for meaningful conversations.
- **Do we have backup supplies?** Carry extra supplies like stationery, charging cables, and basic tools in case of any unexpected needs.

Design Your Booth and Handle Logistics

To ensure a successful show, it's important to have all the bases covered when it comes to booth logistics.

- **Determine your booth plan:** When planning your booth, make sure to consider accessibility, visibility, and your location on the show floor. And to stand out from the crowd, your booth should be visually appealing, aligned with your brand, inviting to attendees, and functional for all. Use attention-grabbing signage, banners, and lighting and consider interactive displays, product demos, and multimedia presentations to capture attendees' attention and help them better understand your offerings. Remember to organize your booth layout for easy flow and navigation, and create spaces for discussions, demos, and private meetings if needed. Look back at your goals and make sure you're highlighting the right products/services and meeting the wants and needs of the audience while creating an in-booth experience that will not only draw people in but keep them there for more than a few minutes. Ensure you are up to date on the [2024 exhibitor rules and regulations](#).
- **Technology Setup:** Ensure all your technical equipment, such as screens, projectors, and demo setups, are functioning smoothly before the event starts.
- **Comfort:** Keep the comfort of both your staff and visitors in mind when planning your booth design. Provide seating, refreshments, and a welcoming environment.
- **Ordering Booth supplies and services:** Reference the Exhibitor Service Kit, which launches in October 2023, for live chat assistance from Freeman.
- **Logistics and Shipping:** Coordinate logistics such as shipping your booth materials, product samples, and any equipment you'll need. Confirm any shipping needs and requirements, and if possible, ship early to avoid any unexpected delays. When planning, keep in mind that surprises do happen—you'll want to have a backup plan in case of delays or damage.
- **Key dates and deadlines:** Make a list of all important dates and deadlines around NCE and consider adding reminders to your calendar so nothing gets missed. Tip: create a key dates and deadlines checklist for a quick at-a-glance reference.

- **Review NCE Show Policies:** Read and review all NCE rules, regulations, FAQs, and show contacts so you're aware of the basic event information.
- **Review your budget:** Make sure to include travel, exhibit space rentals, show services, marketing giveaways and promotions, sponsorships, etc., and be sure to earmark additional funds for miscellaneous needs that may arise on-site.

Prepare Marketing and Promotions

- **Prepare Marketing Materials:** Prepare a range of marketing materials, such as high-quality brochures, flyers, business cards, and items that provide relevant information about your products/services. Make sure these materials clearly reflect your brand identity and are easily accessible to visitors.
- **Promote your Presence:** Use social media, email, website, SMS et. al. to let your audience know you'll be exhibiting at NCE. Use the graphics provided in the [Exhibitor Marketing Toolkit](#) to help spread the word and start creating a buzz leading up to NCE. Share teasers, event details, and sneak peeks of what you'll be showcasing to help build up anticipation.
- **Promote your presence at NCE!** In addition to all the opportunities mentioned above, make sure you're also promoting your presence on your own website and through all your digital channels. And when talking or corresponding with existing and potential customers, make sure they know that you'll be at #NCE2024 in February!
- **Giveaways and Contests:** Consider offering small, branded giveaways or hosting contests to attract visitors to your booth. Make sure these items are relevant and useful to your target audience.

Prepare your Team

- **Designate and Train Staff:** If you have a team, assign specific roles, such as greeting, demoing, and lead capture, to ensure smooth booth operations. Your booth staff should be knowledgeable, approachable, and well-trained to answer questions, engage in conversations, and handle various attendee interactions professionally. Equip them

with product knowledge, effective communication skills, and a friendly demeanor. Booth staff should be able to engage attendees, answer questions, and capture leads.

- **Dress Code:** Ensure booth staff is dressed appropriately and in alignment with your brand's image by reviewing well in advance of leaving for NCE.
- **Elevator Pitch:** Prepare a concise and compelling elevator pitch that clearly communicates what your company does and why it's valuable (make sure all booth staff have their own elevator pitch at the ready as well).
- **Pre-Show Meeting:** Schedule a pre-show meeting with booth staff and any company representatives who will be on-site or handling logistics to review show schedule, priorities, and activations and conduct any pre-show training to help set your team up for success.

The success of your expo participation largely depends on the effort you put into planning, execution, and engagement. With thoughtful preparation, you can make a positive impact and achieve your goals.