

Dealer Bourse Manager

Dealer booth fees pay for the show and they are the single largest draw for the show. Thus, the care and feeding of dealers is of critical importance to the survival of your show. The job of selling dealer booths should be a year long effort that culminates in selling next year's booths at this year's show. If your show is just starting up, trying to grow or operating without a waiting list of dealers, the time to build that list is now. The bourse manager has the responsibility to recruit new dealers, keep the current dealers satisfied and coming back and replace dealers lost to illness, age or death. Visit all local/regional shows to recruit dealers face to face. The APS maintains a list of about 2000 dealer members. A mailing, emailing and phone follow up should help fill any dealer bourse in 2-3 weeks.

The Bourse Manager has to work in close cooperation with the Security Manager, Show Chairman (especially on site selection), Facilities and Staging Manager and Finance Manager. At a new site the management of the facility will usually have information regarding layout of booths, fire marshal regulations and show floor access. Once the booth layout is established pricing must be set to ensure enough revenue to finance all the money losing aspects of a show. It is best to refer to prior year budgets and adjust from there based on pricing increases. Decreases are so rare! Then the logistics of moving in and setting up the frames, setting up the dealer booths and establishing security must be coordinated. Until you have experience with regular sellouts of the dealer bourse, it is prudent to project selling about 85% of the booths.

The bourse manager should maintain contact with the dealers throughout the year. This is best done by compiling an email list and sending quarterly updates about the show. This helps insure that the dealers remain aware of any changes in show plans and remain committed to attending the show. They also have advance notice to participate in cooperative show advertising in the philatelic press and can bring any material they have that might be of interest to convening societies. It is also important to reserve 2-3 booths for dealers that convening societies would like to have invited to the show.

Move in and setup

The bourse manager should send explicit directions to all dealers regarding moving their stock into the show facility. This includes maps, directions from highways and airports, show entrances, date and times of day, availability of carts, assistance, security and parking. As the dealers move in, be available to welcome them, solve problems, offer information on local restaurants and provide coffee, donuts and water or other refreshments. Some shows do this each morning. Remind the dealers that you will be coming around on Friday and Saturday to take their deposits for next year. Have a packet ready for them when they check in containing badges, this year's show program and information and contracts for the show next year. Try to greet each dealer and make note of any requests by dealers to change locations. If a dealer knows that other dealers are on a waiting list to change locations, it encourages prompt renewals.

Some shows allow bona-fide dealers who are not booth holders at the show to get in early during setup or the morning before the show opens. If they do this they issue badges and charge a fee. This generates revenue, maintains control and security and gives the booth holders a chance to get a quick start to the show with some wholesale business.

During the show go to each dealer, thank them for attending the show and ask if they need anything for their booths. Have a small supply of paper towels, glass cleaner, tape, extension cords, lights, light bulbs, and trash bags. Ask them for a deposit for next year. Start with the prime locations and work back. These dealers know that if they don't give a deposit their booths will surely go to some other dealers who want better locations. If this is done in a friendly, efficient manner, you should be able to make an announcement by noon on Saturday that the bourse for next year is sold out. Be sure to have several extra contracts with you, since dealers are notorious for misplacing paperwork, especially if it involves paying out money instead of collecting it.

As the show is winding down, make the rounds again to ask how the dealers have been doing. You will quickly find that some are never satisfied, some are always pleased and some will give you useful, detailed feedback. Be sure to cultivate these dealers and talk to them each day. Ask other show committee members to talk to dealers they have good relations with and get additional feedback. The more you cultivate your dealers the stronger your show will be financially.

Some of the shows make rooms at the show hotel a part of the bourse contract. This is very useful in maintaining a good relationship with the hotel if you are also using their convention facilities. It is also a practice at some shows to package a couple of \$10 breakfast and/or lunch coupons each day with the booth. They arrange for a special buffet or sandwich station close to the show entrance so the dealers can get food without leaving their booths empty. It helps to have some of the younger relatives of the show committee circulate around to the dealers and take orders for the dealers. The more enterprising kids can do very well on tips.

A few of the shows have ballots that they pass out to people entering the show, encouraging them to vote for the most popular dealer at the show. To avoid having a local dealer with a large following win every year, you can limit eligibility to dealers who have not won in the past 3-5 years. You can list all the dealers on the ballot and note that those who have a year date in the spot where you would vote for them are not eligible, since they have already won it recently.

At takedown it is critical to monitor the dealer booths carefully. People are tired and many thefts take place during or immediately after takedown. Keep the show committee on alert and make sure the general public is out promptly. Discourage dealers from leaving early, as this increases security risks and gives the show a poor image. Police the area to be sure none of the dealers has left anything behind. About a week after the show is over send the dealers a thank you email and confirm to them that you have a deposit for their booth for next year. Repeat the process each year and master the care and feeding of dealers. Try selling a \$50 dealer booth deposit on ebay to recruit new dealers.

Suggested sample documents:

Dealer bourse package for current year (same to be ready at show to take deposits for next year)

1. Bourse contract
2. Bourse layout with booth numbers and prices
3. Hotel information
4. Show location, dates and map
5. Publicity releases that the dealer can reproduce

Announcements of convening societies

Announcements of advertising sections in philatelic publications

Publicity releases, especially ones featuring the dealers

Invoice for booth balance due

Announcement of the next show with dates, location and booth prices

Reminder that all booths must be paid in full before setup

Email updates to keep the dealers informed of show progress