

HOW-TO GUIDE

COVID-19 &
VENDOR
FAIRS

How-To Guide: Virtual Vendor Fair

This guide includes considerations for hosting a virtual vendor fair as well as information from the ASDA Louisiana chapter on how they managed a virtual vendor fair.

Before your chapter starts planning, connect with your dental school administration to understand the program's rules and process.

For more information on organizing a vendor fair at your ASDA chapter, contact ASDA at Membership@ASDAnet.org.

1. Connect with administration

Reach out to the appropriate contact at your program and verify the approval process. Ask for guidance. This will help you work successfully with the program. Work with administration to determine if a virtual or socially distant vendor fair is possible.

2. Decide on the scope of your event and set realistic goals

When hosting a virtual vendor fair consider what is realistic for your chapter. If the chapter vendor fair typically has 40 vendors, you may expect half of those vendors to participate in a virtual fair.

ASDA Louisiana's vendor fair occurred over five days, Monday – Friday. This allowed for two time slots over lunch for a 25-30 minute presentation per vendor. While the chapter let vendors select their preferred time, the chapter spaced out vendors with similar products throughout the week.

The chapter used Zoom accounts they have through the school. A reoccurring Zoom meeting was set up for all vendors.

3. Constructing vendor lists and creating packages

Start a list with vendors who have attended your chapter's vendor fair in the past. If your chapter had to cancel the vendor fair due to COVID-19 be sure to include those vendors who had confirmed or were talking with the chapter about attending prior to cancellation.

Connect with sponsors and vendors at ASDA's national events. Introduce yourself and send follow-up emails promptly with sponsorship opportunities at your chapter/district. From there, you can expand your list of potential donors:

- Consider which new and existing companies to contact. Don't forget about sponsors from prior years.
- Reach out to local companies as well as national companies.
- Reach out to alumni, especially those who were involved in your district/chapter.
- Don't forget about the government or military: each branch of the armed forces provides a sponsorship opportunity.

- Always be on the lookout for new potential sponsors.
- If your administration has restrictions on vendors, look to your state dental association; they may have approved sponsors your administration will have fewer reservations about.

Next, put together your vendor fair packages. Vendors want to connect with dental students. Consider the type of event and the potential number of dental students in attendance. Your chapter may need to change the sponsor packages from previous years to support the new format.

Find additional package options below from 2020-2021 District 1 Trustee, Alia Osseiran, for the District 1 Virtual Meeting. Information has been tailored to fit potential chapter vendor fair options.

Activity	Description
Vendor Fair	1 to 1.5 hours*, private Zoom room, personal code for students who attend, up to 10 team members in your booth, inclusion in program
Sponsored Talk	Restrictions apply - 45 min max including. Must include CE credit.
Virtual background	Sponsor provides virtual Zoom background for one of the student hosts to use all day
Mailer (in RSVP letter)	Option to include a letter sized page in our snail mail letter to each member who registers.
Swag	Open to conversations with vendors about.
Scholarship to National Conference	Includes social media posts thanking vendor for donation and announcement during fair.

3. Develop the contract

- Contracts must include all details about the level of sponsorship and corresponding incentives. If the sponsorship includes a presentation or session with students, be sure to outline the expected topics and estimated time allotted.
- Negotiate certain sponsorship terms, benefits, etc. but always be fair, reasonable and respectful. Once an agreement has been reached, follow the terms in the final signed contract.
- Sponsors must sign the contract and return to be countersigned by the student representative. Keep copies for your records. Signatures are important documentation.

4. Contacting vendors

Below are some common types of communications to vendors.

- **E1) Save-the-date:** Introduce yourself, provide the date, mention if the fair is virtual or socially distant, how much it costs, and get them to consider placing it on their calendar.
- **E2) Official invitation:** A more official version of the save-the-date. The body can include a letter of invitation, vendor contract, and school policy form. You can also use resources such as Evite. Be sure to set a deadline for vendors to register and submit their payments.
- **E3) Call vendors:** Calling can make all the difference. Vendors appreciate the opportunity to ask questions, but more importantly, it makes the drive to register and send in the check seem much more immediate and real.
- **E4) Registration not received:** Reminder that we were still waiting on the check to arrive. Often serves to stir a representative into action.
- **E5) Check received:** Provide a prompt reply whenever the vendor's check is received.
- **E6) Set-up information:**
 - Include virtual platform information. If you need presentations prior either for logistical reasons or for administration to review, be sure to request with enough time for the vendor to provide. Consider offering a rehearsal time for vendors to experience virtual platform. See an example in the Appendix.
- **E7) Thank you:** Thank the vendor for their support and informally invite vendor to next year's event.

5. Be professional and organized

Setting a standard of professionalism will serve your chapter well as you connect with sponsors.

- Use chapter letterhead and write professional emails. Well written materials give the appearance of a well-managed organization.
- Consider having permanent email addresses (asdapresident@yourschool.edu) that vendors can use.
- To draft a formal letter to potential sponsors:
 - ✓ Display official letterhead from the organization(s) hosting the event.
 - ✓ Provide a clear description of the event and planned use for the donations.
 - ✓ Explain how the sponsor benefits by supporting the event/district/chapter.
 - ✓ Provide a date for the event and date for receiving donations.
 - ✓ Ensure you have a direct point of contact (i.e. a Sponsorship/Fundraising Chair or yourself) with accurate contact information. Keep it simple for sponsors to reach your chapter/district.
- Document all correspondence and pass on to next year's leaders. This will help with continuity and ensure that your fundraising efforts continue to be successful.

- Consider creating a “Vendor Chair-Elect” position or designate someone who is assigned to be included in all communications with vendors to create a good transition for next year’s student-sponsor relationships.
- Make note of contacts that are no longer valid or of representatives who no longer work with the company. Update your contact sheet/Google Drive with this information.

Calendars, deadlines and timelines

- Keep a centralized calendar for leaders to avoid overlap of events. Make sponsors aware of any potential conflicts.
- Create a timeline for every step: initial contact, follow up, contract signing, payment due dates, presentations due, etc.
- Set clear deadlines for sponsors and send reminders. You may have to follow up to ensure sponsors respect your deadlines.

6. Publicize event

Publicity is paramount. Design posters to advertise to students, and formally invite faculty and staff to attend through printed and digital formats. Publicize any prizes you plan to give away. With virtual learning, consider asking your administration if your chapter can send a dedicated email to students, particularly D1s.

ASDA Louisiana held their virtual vendor fair in July prior to the selection of the D1 representative. The chapter got approval from the administration to send a dedicated email to D1s. In addition, ASDA Louisiana used donated raffles from vendors to encourage attendance in marketing the event. Find an example in the Appendix.

7. During the event

Vendors may have logistical questions before and during the event. Be available to address concerns and questions.

8. Send thank you letters

Follow up with vendors and sponsors shortly after the event to thank them for participating and to see what could be improved for the next year’s vendor fair. Send a thank you to all involved faculty members and the administration for supporting the event. Include the president-elect’s contact for the following year in this letter.

Katherine O’Friel, 20-21 President, Louisiana ASDA Reflections on Virtual Vendor Fair

- Consider conducting a virtual vendor fair once a week every month instead of just one week.
- It was helpful to be strict with the deadlines with vendors so you could make decisions and move on to the next step.
- Having one chapter person responsible for everything was a lot. Hard to see how it could be divided. Vendors had lots of questions. Having one person as the contact

meant that the vendor questions were being answered in a unified manner. If possible split vendors among two people.

- Vendors were very interested in contact information.
 - Options to consider: sharing back information, link for attendees to opt-in to vendor communications, or opt-in during registration.
 - Louisiana did not do pre-event registration.

Appendix

ASDA Louisiana Outreach to Vendor for Virtual Vendor Fair:

Hi _____,

Thank you for choosing to participate in our first ever LSUSD ASDA Virtual Vendor Fair! The event will run from Monday, July 20th – Friday, July 24th during the 12pm-1pm hour each day via ZOOM. You will have approximately 25 minutes of isolated time to present your information; please be mindful of this time limit to be respectful to other vendors. I will be able to screen-share with your company's presenter if you would like to show a presentation.

Below you will find the date and time of your presentation as well as the ZOOM meeting invitation link.

Date:

Time:

ZOOM Meeting Link:

We understand that some vendors typically have pamphlets, informational packets, or other promotional items to distribute to students at in-person events. If you would like students to receive those items, please mail them to the school (address below) and our representatives will distribute them on your behalf.

Additionally, in order to promote student attendance, we are asking companies to consider providing a supplementary raffle prize(s). This can be a gift card, a higher-end product from your company or another item of your choice! We understand the financial implications of this request and are offering to reimburse the cost of the raffle prizes up to \$150 with proof of purchase or proof of market value.

If you plan to submit promotional items/information or supplementary raffle prizes, please notify me before the event so as to plan accordingly.

Your support of our community during this time is greatly appreciated!

We look forward to having your company participate in this event!

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any additional questions.

Best,
Katie O'Friel
LSUHSC School of Dentistry
LSUSD ASDA President
lsud.asda@gmail.com

To send additional promotional items for distribution, please mail to:
LSUHSC-School of Dentistry
Office of Student Affairs
Care of Katie O'Friel (ASDA)
1100 Florida Ave.
New Orleans, LA 70119

Day Before Email Reminder for Each Vendor:

Hi _____,

I am looking forward to your presentation tomorrow during the Virtual Vendor Fair!

I simply wanted to touch base with you and let you know that if you have any questions or concerns that arise in the morning, please feel free to call me! It will be easiest to communicate via phone.

Below is another copy of the Zoom Link for the meeting. You will be presenting beginning at 12:30pm and will have about 25 minutes.

However, many vendors have been finishing their presentation early, so your presentation may be able to start sooner than 12:30pm!

Zoom Link: xxxxxxxx

Best,

Phone Number: _____

Please join LSUSD ASDA

for our first ever



Monday, July 20* – Friday, July 24*

12:00pm – 1:00pm each day via ZOOM
(meeting invite included in the email)

*Raffle Prizes
will be given
out each day
to those in
attendance!*

ADS South • Aspen Dental • Brown & Brown Insurance
Dental Depot • Louisiana Dental Center • MedPro Group
Pacific Dental Services • Patterson Dental • Ultralight Optics

Sample Email (Warm Lead) – District 1 Meeting

Good Afternoon Dr. **!

I hope you have been doing well and staying safe.

[ASDA District 1] is hosting a virtual Annual Meeting this year to allow students the opportunity to learn from and meet the organizations they will soon work with post-graduation. As we are all saddened that we cannot meet in person this year, I am confident in our Events Team in keeping this virtual Annual Meeting just as engaging!

Our current plan is as follows:

When? September 12th & 13th

Where? Zoom

Outline: Saturday will be around 5* hours. We plan to have a speaker in the beginning, an hour of CE/lecture, two hours of vendor fair activities, and lastly an hour “social” to end the day. Sunday will be 2.5 hours of back-to-back “socials” as well as another hour of CE.

We are asking for your interest in continuing this event virtually, as we all welcome our new classmates, DMD 2024's, into ASDA. If you would like to join us and sponsor this event, I'd love to talk further with you about our sponsorship packages. I'm available through email or by phone at your convenience. I have attached the details of our sponsorship packages here for your information!

I appreciate your feedback and I look forward to hearing from you!

[Contact Information]