

Why Your Company Should Exhibit at the Midwest Booksellers Association Trade Show

MBA Member Independent Booksellers say:

Dear Publishers,

I am planning on bringing as many of my staff as I can to the regional trade shows. As a new bookstore, I can't afford to send many people to BEA. The regional shows will be an opportunity for my staff that I feel is invaluable. The contacts that we make, the publishers that we talk to and what we learn is a great asset to how we do our jobs. Just like our interactions with our sales reps, the chance to speak with you about the books you have coming out and how they are being marketed arms us with the information we need to sell to our customers. This personal interaction is not something that can be accomplished through a catalog or online. I know that it is expensive to represent yourselves at these shows, and it is difficult to measure any return. Please know that the more exposure my staff has to the books you want to sell, the more likely we are to sell them and recommend them to our customers. You do not need to give us tons of galleys or freebies. Let's just meet and talk about the books!

Lanora Hurley
Owner/Children's Buyer/Accounts Payable
Next Chapter Bookshop (formerly Harry W. Schwartz)
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In addition to operating our bookstore, we also owned a publishing company for eight years. In this time of economic downturns, it's easy to carry cost cutting too far on the wrong things. It's my opinion that it's best to cut back on production costs and size of your book lists but increase marketing so you become more competitive.

The regional trade shows are absolutely vital because, unlike the BEA where one primarily shows one's flag but is too hectic for booksellers to place many orders, the regional tradeshows are book buying shows for several reasons:

- 1) The shows are less hectic and there is more time dedicated to buying.
- 2) The regionals are not so overwhelming, making it easier for book buyers to compare choices and make decisions.
- 3) The timing is much better, because September/October is when the preponderance of our holiday season orders are made

I would urge you to consider the above as you restructure this year's marketing plan. The regional shows and catalogs are necessary for publishers who are seeking the best bang for their marketing bucks. Remember, most independent bookstores depend on the regional organizations to help shape their buying from distributors and direct from the publishers.

Bob Spear
Owner, The Book Barn
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Dear Publishers,

I am writing to tell you how very important it is that you come to the Midwest Booksellers Association trade show. I own a small bookstore in a small town (population 4,000) in rural Iowa. We have been open almost 2 years. Our monthly sales are up from last year. People in Iowa are buying books in a recession!

I am solely responsible for all the buying for our store. I learn about new books from catalogs and online reviews. But the books that make the biggest impression on me and then my customers are the ones I hear about at the trade show in Minneapolis/St Paul. I will never travel to NYC for BookExpo and I have yet to see any sales rep cross my door. The MBA trade show is so vital to my education and sales. Please keep that in mind when planning your agenda.

Sincerely,
Sara Beahler
Prairie Moon Books
Sheldon, Iowa

It is most important that you and your reps attend the Midwest Booksellers Association Trade Show because that is the only time my staff has the opportunity to see and learn about your new offerings. I've seen and heard the proof: They are much more likely to come back to the store and hand-sell books that they've actually seen at the show. We tend to place several orders at the trade show also, larger orders than I'd make if I were just looking at your catalogs or viewing books on Edelweiss. In short, your presence at our trade show makes you more money from us!

Nancy Simpson
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The MBA trade show is a very important part of my fall business strategy. I don't have many reps that call on me down in Winona, and use the trade show to help build my purchase strategy for the fall shopping season. Although not every publisher will get an order from me that day (and I do place upwards of 20 orders each year at the show), I make title lists and order later, either direct or through wholesale channels.

I truly believe that as the business gets more and more competitive and difficult to navigate, the regional trade shows become an even more viable outlet for publishers to make their mark on booksellers. Actually, I thought that this year might offer opportunities for some publishers to actually increase their presence at the MBA trade show as other publishers might diminish their own, as this affords an even bigger impact in the minds of booksellers. Be aggressive and excited. This is still a wonderful time to be in the book business!

Chris Livingston
The Book Shelf
Winona, MN

Our regional trade show is the touchstone of our book buying year and the MBA staff does an incredible job of putting booksellers together with publishers. BookExpo is too big and too costly for many of the small independents and so we depend on the annual regional show to stay plugged in to what is going on in the industry and to add our two cents to what will be the *it* books for the upcoming season. Since we are in the age of the telephone reps, no one calls on us in-store anymore and MBA gives us a chance to get to know you and your lines. Without that one-on-one contact we'd be lost. Stick with us, we are still very much *in the game*.

Laura L. Hansen
Bookin' It
Little Falls, MN

Hello,

As the owner of a small, indie bookstore, I look forward to the MBA trade show each year. My day-to-day responsibilities at the store make it difficult to skim all the catalogues I receive on a daily basis. The trade show is a great opportunity to slow down, to take a good look at the content and quality of the newest books, and to establish relationships with sales reps. Each year I return home with sample books and ARC's that my staff reads. We discuss which books would be a good fit for our store, and order accordingly. Publisher's sales reps do a wonderful job of editing book selections to those that are most appropriate to the Midwest, and I appreciate being able to see a number of product lines in a single location. I always discover two or three new publishers from whom I now order regularly. Last year, I know that at least one rep group sent a sales rep to MBA, but did not have a booth. Although it was nice chatting with him, I felt my time was better spent with those publishers who had a visible presence at the show. Please remember that the many Midwest booksellers who support you make it possible for you to continue discovering and publishing authors.

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The annual MBA trade show is the highlight of the year for me. It's a chance for me to connect with others - booksellers, authors, sales reps, and others. The educational sessions have been invaluable in the running of my store. I admit, my favorite part is meeting the authors. I get so excited to meet them face-to-face. It motivates me to read the books of the authors I meet before other books (and we all know, there's a lot to choose from!) I carry my enthusiasm back to the store. When I say to customers, "Oh, I've met so-n-so, s/he is wonderful!", my customers feel a special connection. On several occasions, a meeting at a trade show has led to an event at the store.

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The presence of publishers at the Trade Show is a very important part of the experience for me and for my staff. For me, it's an opportunity to meet face to face with the reps I deal with by e-mail and on the phone the rest of the year. Building relationships with these people is critical for me. I want to deal with reps who know me, who know my stores, and will make appropriate recommendations for my setting. For much of my staff, the Trade Show is their one opportunity to be a part of the wider world of bookselling. For all of us, opportunities to share in educational seminars, meet authors, and talk books make the Trade Show an essential part of our year. We are influenced by these experiences when we decide what Advance Readers Copies to read, what books to order, and what books to put energy into promoting. The presence of publishers is a critical part of the Trade Show, and I urge you to continue your participation

Sally Wizik Wills
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We at Once Upon A Crime are distressed to learn that publishers may pull away from the Midwest Booksellers annual event. This is the only time that we independents have an opportunity to speak with representatives of the publishing houses. We need to have questions and concerns answered and need to have this done with a real person rather than an electronic voice or through Internet access.

Our biggest concern is that the larger houses especially; are discontinuing catalogues which are a mainstay for us as we just do not have staff to take care of online orders that require hours of looking up and determining if they are new titles, back list or even still in print. Most web sites I have tried to work with have been a complete nightmare. A picture of a book, little description and no ISBN on that particular page, so on to another page and more time consumed. I would far rather be paying attention to a customer and nurturing their further business with us.

Further we little guys seem to manage to pay our publishers bills on time and feel like we are being punished because the big box stores don't pay on time. With the economy being what it is, perhaps more effort to establish good relationships with people and not machines might be a good idea. Common sense is not very common anymore, but I sure would like to see some of that archaic idea come back.

Patricia (Pat) Frovarp
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