

Engagement Guidelines When Not the Host Sponsor

Over the last few years, we have been seeing more and more of ALA's Chapters inviting their business partners to attend their educational luncheons/meetings even when not the host sponsor of the event. ALA's Business Partner Relations Team is happy to see this trend catching on within our chapters. It is an excellent opportunity with which our business partners can increase their credibility and build better relationships by showing interest in the challenges our members face with their firms and organizations. Because we are seeing this more and more, the BPRT thought it might be useful to provide our business partners with some engagement guidelines specifically for these types of situations.

1. If this is your first ALA meeting, introduce yourself to members, share that you are a BP new to engaging with ALA and excited to learn more about the legal management profession.
2. No selling, no soliciting – you are there to meet and make connections and hopefully to learn something, just like the members.
3. Smile and make good eye contact.
4. When having a conversation with someone, resist the urge to look around the room to see who else might be there.
5. Connect, don't collect – make connections and have discussions but don't spend time collecting names and trying to force relationships.
6. Discuss, don't disparage – refrain from making negative comments about other companies or different points of views.
7. Participate, don't sit back – contribute to conversations and find people with similar interests.
8. Listen and respond, don't give speeches – take the time to listen and then respond to other people's comments. Never go on a rant, give a speech, or state a position and leave.
9. Don't interrupt others who are in conversation even if it's just for a quick hi or a wave hello.
10. Be on time and don't leave early.
11. If given the opportunity to introduce yourself to the group (maybe because it's your first time attending), state your name, title and the company you represent...that's it!!! Remember you are not the sponsoring BP for this event and to elaborate for even 10 seconds about what you offer or do is tacky and a huge no, no!!!
12. Resist the urge to rescue – you may overhear someone discussing a situation and it is evident that you have a solution, resist the urge to ride to the rescue on the spot...especially if you have not formally met. It's a big turn-off and the person you are offering your services to won't generally be open to hearing what you have to say. Take the time to build rapport at the meeting. Make a mental note and follow up after the meeting to continue building the relationship & discuss your possible solution.
13. Practice good manners – if you are seated, stand when being introduced to someone; don't reach across the table; say please and thank you, etc....
14. Put your cell phone away, all the way away – do not place your telephone on the table. Having it in front of you is a distraction to both you and those around you and if it is not visible you will be better able to resist the urge to check emails, texts, etc. until after the meeting.
15. Don't be caught without a business card and if by chance you have an off day and this happens, ask your new connection for their business card so you can send them an email with yours.

16. If you exchange business cards with someone, do not add that person to your mailing list. If you have further contact, ask their permission to sign them up to your list or ask them to sign up on their own by providing a link.
17. Treat others the way you want to be treated. This means it's not about you, it's about them. Listen for opportunities to tell your potential clients what they do right and not what they are doing wrong.
18. When the presentation begins, focus on the speaker and listen intently to the information being shared. Although your priority is likely to make connections and build relationships, most of the members are there first and foremost for the education. Be respectful of this and who knows, you might just learn something valuable for the future.
19. Finally, and arguably most important, post meeting, do not send a blanket email to all in attendance and if you send a LinkedIn connection request be sure to include a personal message.

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