



Virtual Commercial Promotional Opportunities: Tip Sheet

Virtual exhibit halls and other commercial promotion opportunities can provide similar benefits to traditional live meetings, with an added benefit of reaching a larger audience (i.e., more attendees, including a larger international audience) than in-person formats. In all cases, learners must be able to engage with Continuing Medical Education (CME) content without encountering the promotional activities.

TRENDS IN VIRTUAL COMMERCIAL PROMOTION

- According to findings from a funding workgroup of the Society of Academic CME (SACME) in 2020, many groups seeking promotional funding offer commercial companies tiered opportunities to provide commercial promotion (i.e., silver, gold, and platinum levels related to marketing/exhibiting).
- A survey distributed by Thomas Jefferson University to 300 of its past exhibitors received 39 responses. Results indicated that \$2,000 appeared to be a reasonable price point to fund an accredited virtual program.
- Of those companies that responded, 72% indicated an interest to meet and interact with attendees outside of the educational programming.

POPULAR PROMOTIONAL FORMATS AND COMPLIANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- Virtual satellite symposia: Offer sessions for exhibitors to showcase their offerings through a promotional education session.
 - Compliance considerations: Satellite symposia and other promotional sessions must be held before/after CME content (i.e., cannot compete with accredited educational programming) and must have a 30-minute window between CME and promotional content). Any mention of these sessions (in program schedules or marketing materials) must be labeled as promotional in nature. For instance, *"Industry Satellite Symposia – No CME Credit Provided."* When clicking on a link to promotional activities, a disclaimer must appear (either as static text or a pop-up) that informs learners that they are leaving the CME activity. For instance, *"Please note that by clicking on this link, you will be leaving the CME activity."*
- Virtual interactive exhibit hall: During breaks or mealtimes, create a separate stream in which exhibitors can interact with learners at their virtual booths. Encourage participants to visit these booths on slides during breaks.
 - Compliance considerations: To maintain a separation between CME and promotional activities, the booths must be held on a separate stream from the CME content (separate



hyperlink from the educational programming). The showcases and opportunity to visit with a company representative must not be held concurrent to CME programming.

- Advance exhibit hall: Open a virtual exhibit hall a few weeks prior to the launch of the educational activity. Use registration e-mails to highlight this option and encourage participant awareness and interest.
 - Compliance considerations: Even if CME content is not yet available, the virtual exhibit hall should be held on a separate stream from the upcoming educational activity. Any mention of exhibits (information about hours, etc.) cannot be listed on pages with educational content (i.e., scientific program agenda).
- Commercials/advertisements from commercial companies: Promotional opportunities such as commercials or advertisements can only appear before or after the CME content airs for the day.
 - Compliance consideration: “Commercial breaks” are not permitted in between CME content. For instance, a commercial cannot air in between sessions that carry CME Credit on the same stream to ensure that learners can interact with CME content without engaging with promotional messages. Similarly, advertising is prohibited within the educational content of the CME activity, such as banner ads, subliminal ads, pop-up window ads, etc.
- Corporate logos: Commercial companies who provide commercial promotion may use logos only if they are placed on non-CME-related pages.
 - Compliance consideration: If logos will be used, they cannot be visible on any item or webpage related to the educational materials and CME content (i.e., slides, abstracts, scientific program agenda, disclosure listing). Consider building out a tab separate from CME-related components on the website dedicated solely to promotional content, which can include logos in addition to links to the commercial companies’ web pages. This works to best highlight your promotional partners in addition to ensuring the required separation between education and promotion.
- Attendee e-mail or mailing lists: In exchange for funding, another promotional opportunity is the sale of attendee e-mail or mailing lists to commercial companies. Commercial companies may then use the lists to send promotional items.
 - Compliance consideration: Learners must explicitly consent to the sharing and release of their contact information to commercial companies. Consider including an attestation as part of the registration process to meet this requirement.

For more detailed information regarding commercial funding across educational formats, please review the [Commercial Promotion Guidelines](#) and the [Commercial Support Guidelines](#) on the [CPDA Resources page](#).

Please contact the [ACS Continuous Professional Development Accreditation \(CPDA\) Section](#) with any questions or for advice specific to your educational activity.