Exhibitor Success Guide

Maximizing Your Return at the Mat-Su Outdoorsman Show and the Alaska Farm & Garden Show

Prepared for our valued exhibitors by MATSU Events LLC

These specialty trade shows bring together thousands of interested Alaskans over just two or three days. For the majority of our exhibitors—small, locally owned businesses with careful marketing budgets—this concentrated face-to-face opportunity often delivers more qualified conversations and sales potential than months of traditional advertising or relying solely on brick-and-mortar traffic.

Why These Shows Deliver Strong Value

Attendees come specifically looking for outdoor gear, farm and garden products, local services, and solutions they can see, touch, and discuss. That self-selection makes the audience far more relevant than a general advertising campaign.

Compare the options:

- Trade show: Thousands of potential customers in a short window, in-person trust building, product demos, and immediate feedback. One successful conversation can turn into a long-term customer.
- Brick-and-mortar: Steady but limited daily foot traffic. Most days do not bring the volume or focused interest of a show weekend.
- Traditional or digital advertising: Broader reach but lower engagement. Many impressions never convert into conversations. Follow-up is harder without the personal connection made on the show floor.

Industry research consistently shows that active exhibitors who engage visitors, capture quality leads, and follow up promptly generate meaningful pipeline from shows. Passive booths that simply sit and wait see much weaker results. The difference is preparation and execution—exactly what this guide is designed to help you achieve.

1. Registration and Choosing Your Booth Space

Both shows fill quickly. Early registrants receive the best selection of locations. Corner booths, end-of-aisle spots, and positions near high-traffic areas or similar vendors are usually claimed first.

Tips for registration:

- Register as soon as applications open. Waiting even a few weeks can limit your options.
- Review the floor plan carefully. Consider traffic patterns, neighboring exhibits, and whether you need power or extra space.
- Standard booths are 10' × 10' or 10’ x 8’. If you need more room for equipment, displays, or multiple products, request adjacent spaces early.
- Confirm exactly what is included (tables, chairs, draping, electricity) so there are no surprises.

Once assigned, review your space dimensions and any height or material restrictions before designing your layout.

2. Communication with the Event Promoter

Clear communication prevents problems and helps us support you. MATSU Events is here to make the shows successful for everyone.

- Read all emails and exhibitor packets promptly. Important deadlines (deposits, final payments, etc.) are easy to miss.
- Ask questions early—about load-in times, parking, shipping, electrical needs, or special requirements.
- Update us if your contact information or booth needs change.
- Share any concerns about neighboring booths, noise, or access so we can address them before the show.

A quick call or email is usually all it takes to clarify something. We would rather answer a question now than solve a problem on show day.

3. Planning Your Display Layout

A 10' × 10' or 10’ x 8’ space is small but effective when organized thoughtfully. The goal is an open, inviting layout that encourages people to step inside and talk with you.

Layout principles:

- Keep the front of the booth open. You may want to avoid placing tables or racks across the entrance that create a barrier.
- Position a table or counter toward the back or side so staff can stand in front of or beside it and greet visitors face-to-face.
- Place your most eye-catching products or a simple demo where they are visible from the aisle.
- Leave room for people to stand and browse without crowding. A few chairs are useful for longer conversations; too many can make the booth feel closed off.
- Literature and brochures should be easy to reach but not the first thing visitors see. A neat rack or tabletop holder works better than stacks everywhere.
- For multiple adjacent booths, treat the space as one continuous area rather than separate rooms. Consistent flooring, lighting, and branding help.

Sketch your layout in advance. Walk through it mentally: Can someone see what you offer from 15–20 feet away? Can they enter easily? Is there a natural place to talk?

4. Signage, Banners, Colors, and Standing Out

In a crowded hall, visitors decide in seconds whether to stop. Clear, attractive signage and a cohesive look make that decision easier.

Practical visual tips:

- Make your company name and what you do readable from a distance. Large, high-contrast lettering on a banner or backdrop is more effective than small logos alone.
- Use a short benefit statement or product category (for example, “Alaska-grown bedding plants” or “Custom knife sharpening”).
- Choose colors that stand out against typical hall backgrounds (often neutral or dark). High contrast (dark text on light, or light on dark) improves readability.
- Limit fonts to one or two clean, bold styles. Decorative fonts are hard to read quickly.

- Vertical banners, feather flags (where allowed), and a solid backdrop help define your space and draw the eye.
- Keep clutter off the floor and walls. A clean, uncluttered booth looks more professional and inviting.
- Lighting can help if available—spotlights or well-placed lamps make products pop.

You do not need an expensive custom exhibit. Consistent colors, a clear message, and neat presentation often outperform elaborate but confusing displays.

5. Staffing Your Booth

The right people and the right number of people make a large difference.

- Have enough staff so no one is alone for long stretches, especially during peak hours. One person can handle a quiet period; two or more is better when traffic is heavy.
- Choose staff who know the products or services well and who enjoy talking with people. Enthusiasm is contagious.
- Brief everyone on key messages, pricing, current specials, and how to capture contact information.
- Schedule breaks so the booth is never left unattended. Rotate so people stay fresh. If you are staffing the booth alone, contact our staff, as we are happy to stand in while you take a short break.
- Dress consistently with your brand—clean, comfortable clothing that looks professional for your industry. Name badges or branded shirts help visitors know who to approach.

For many small businesses, the owner or a key employee is the best booth presence. Customers like meeting the people behind the company.

6. Engaging Visitors: From Eye Contact to Closing the Sale

The most common reason people walk past a booth is that no one greets them. Simple behaviors change that.

Do:

- Stand up, face the aisle, and make eye contact. A smile and a simple “Good morning—what brings you to the show?” works better than waiting to be approached.
- Ask open-ended questions: “What kind of garden are you planning this year?” or “What are you looking for in new outdoor gear?”
- Listen more than you talk at first. Find out what they need before presenting a solution.
- Offer a quick demo or let them handle a product when possible.
- When there is interest, move toward a next step: take an order, schedule a follow-up, or capture contact details for a quote.

Avoid:

- Sitting behind the table the entire time, looking at your phone, or having private conversations that ignore visitors.
- Hard-selling before understanding what the person wants.
- Letting the booth look closed or unattended even for a few minutes during show hours.

Many sales at these shows happen on the spot or within a few days afterward. Being ready to complete a transaction or book the next conversation increases your results.

7. Capturing Contacts and Using Them Year-Round

The conversations you have at the show are valuable. The contact information you collect turns those conversations into ongoing relationships.

Simple, effective methods:

- Raffle or giveaway entry forms (name, email, phone). Make the prize relevant to your products.
- Show specials or discount offers in exchange for signing up for a mailing list.
- Tablet or phone form, business-card scanner app, or simple paper sign-up sheet. Digital is faster for follow-up.
- Ask permission to follow up and note what they were interested in.

After the show:

- Follow up within a few days while the conversation is still fresh. A short email or text with a reminder of what you discussed works well.
- Add contacts to your regular email list, customer database, or Customer Relationship Management program. Segment by interest when possible.
- Share useful seasonal tips, new product announcements, or invitations to your shop or next event throughout the year.
- Track which leads came from the show so you can measure return and improve next time.

Even a modest list of engaged local customers can be more valuable than a large purchased list. These people already met you and expressed interest.

8. Packing Up and Loading Out

The official close time is when packing begins—not earlier.

- Packing early signals to remaining visitors that the show is over and can discourage last-minute sales or conversations.
- It also creates safety and traffic issues while other exhibitors and attendees are still present.
- Plan your load-out materials and vehicle access in advance so you can work efficiently once the show ends.
- Leave the space clean. Remove all materials, tape, and debris.

Following the published load-out schedule keeps the process orderly for everyone and helps us maintain a professional environment through the final minutes of the show.

9. Post-Show Evaluation

A short review while details are fresh helps you improve results next year.

Questions to consider:

- How many meaningful conversations did we have? How many contacts did we collect?
- What products or messages generated the most interest?
- Which booth location, layout, or signage choices worked well? What would we change?
- How did staffing levels and energy hold up throughout the show?
- What follow-up actions are planned, and when will we complete them?
- Overall, did the show meet, exceed, or fall short of our goals? Why?

Write a few notes and save them with your other show materials. Next year’s preparation becomes much easier.

10. Registering Early for Next Year

Each year is a brand-new event. Participation in this year's show does not automatically guarantee your return next year or to the same booth location.

We offer a 30-day "grandfather period" after the close of the show for current exhibitors who wish to return to the same booth. During this window, returning exhibitors have first opportunity to secure their previous space.

After the grandfather period ends, all display spaces become available on a first-come, first-served basis to any applicant.

Important requirements:

- Exhibitors must still formally apply for the next show and submit a completed application form.
- A deposit (minimum $50) toward the next show is required.
- A simple verbal request, or an email without the completed application form, does not secure space.
- The space is not guaranteed until the application has been approved and the deposit has been received.

Additional tips:

- Popular locations fill months in advance. Many exhibitors rebook during or immediately after the current show to take advantage of the grandfather period.
- If you want a different location, larger space, or other changes, discuss them as early as possible while options are still open.
- Early commitment helps us plan the floor layout and promotional calendar more effectively.

We appreciate the loyalty of returning exhibitors and work to reward those who complete their applications and deposits promptly.

11. Pre-Show Marketing

You can increase the number of people who specifically look for your booth by promoting the show to your existing customers and followers.

- Post on social media (Facebook, Instagram), and on your company website in the weeks leading up to the show. Mention the dates, location, and any specials or new products you will feature. Don't forget to tag the appropriate official show pages: facebook.com/matsueventsllc, https://www.facebook.com/matsuoutdoorsman/ and https://www.instagram.com/matsuevents/
- Email your customer list with an invitation and a reason to stop by (demo, discount, free sample, raffle).
- Share on local radio, community calendars, or with related groups if that fits your business.
- Encourage customers to bring friends or mention the show when they visit your shop beforehand.
- Use simple graphics with the show logos (available for download on our show websites: https://matsuoutdoorsmanshow.com/ and https://akfarmandgarden.com/) and your booth number once assigned.

Even modest promotion can bring additional targeted visitors who already know and trust you, raising the quality of traffic at your booth.

Quick Pre-Show Checklist

1. Registration confirmed and payment complete.
2. Booth layout sketched and materials ordered (banners, literature, tables if needed).
3. Staff scheduled and briefed.
4. Lead-capture method ready (forms, tablet, raffle).
5. Pre-show social posts and emails prepared.
6. Load-in details and vehicle plan confirmed with the promoter.

We look forward to another successful show with you. Questions? Contact MATSU Events LLC—we are happy to help.

matsuevents.com | matsuoutdoorsmanshow.com | akfarmandgarden.com