

## A Baker's Dozen: Ideas for BEA

By Carolyn Howard-Johnson, author of *This Is the Place, Harkening, Tracings* and the How To Do It Frugally Series of books for authors at [www.howtодoitfrugally.com](http://www.howtодoitfrugally.com)

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Book Expo, www.bookexpoamerica.com, is probably the most exciting tradeshow ever for anyone who has anything to do with the publishing industry.

This huge show (in New York this year!) is really for the publishing industry only, but I've seen just plain readers there in the past. If, as a newbie, you can't get in, think: How can you qualify for acceptance? Begin to write reviews, as an example? That's my first hint. Once in the door, here are some other hints for you that will help make BEA, book fairs or any other kind of show work better for you.

1. Authors might consider NOT getting a "table" (I hate the term because that's what too many authors do, they come, bring books and sit down at the table supplied by the show director) or booth of your own.
2. If you really want to sign, utilize a cross-promotional effort sponsored by the likes of Span, Book Publicists of Southern California, your distributor, your publisher or Authors' Coalition. Not all organizations have a presence at every show.
2. Bring copies of your book to sell or give away as opportunities present themselves but carry only one or two. Instead bring a catalog (like the one offered by Authors' Coalition, your sell sheet, a flier or a pile of lightweight promotional chapbooks or brochures.
3. Use the tradeshow/conference directory, handouts, website or whatever they offer to help you find your way. Someone has gone to lots of trouble to provide you with what you need for success. Trust them. They likely know something you don't.
4. Forget being shy. Work at being friendly. Schmooze with people everywhere. Elevators, lunch counters, the subway.
5. Ready for a nap after lunch? Resist the temptation. Instead attend one more panel or seminar or visit one more booth you've picked out from that directory. The one you snooze through could be the one that can make a difference.
6. Think about how you can connect others who might have something in common. When you're doing that, you automatically have your networking hat on. When you network (yourself or others) everyone benefits.
7. Jacqueline Church Simonds suggests offering to take a contact to lunch. That's a nice thing to do but it's even better if you always make an effort to do return favors to those who have given you information -- over lunch or on the net or by phone.
8. Take a notebook. Use it. Tape business cards into it. And, mostly, follow up on everything when you get home--the more quickly the better.
9. Make notes on business cards you take. What did you talk about? What ideas did you share? How does what the person on the card do relate to what you do? Most business cards don't give you enough information to remind you of the reason you connected after you've flown back across the nation (or even driven across town in traffic).

10. Take business cards of your own that give the receiver more information than your name, company name and URL. If they have ten cards or a hundred, they will not have time to look up your website to jog their memory. You card should at least attempt to do that for them with blurbs, visuals, even a bribe to come to your website! Use Vistaprint.com freebie offers for printing (but watch their prices--their shipping costs fluctuate depending one the offer they make. Nothing every comes really free, now does it.)

12. Get in on a press badge. If you write a column that is associated in some way with the publishing industry, freelance or if you own a website that disseminates information related to that industry's product, you may qualify. If you do, you will be eligible to frequent the media room (lots of networking goes on there!) and you may also qualify to install a stack of your media kits for your fellow media types to take with them. (If you do, be sure to provide kits with the kind of content that will make them want to lug a copy back to their office.)

13. This tip--the one that makes it a baker's dozen--is several mini-tips in one. Wear comfortable shoes. Pack an extra pair. Use a badge that hangs around your neck to stow extra cards. Women! Wear clothing with pockets. Pockets can work as filing system that is more easily accessed than your purse or briefcase. If the show will allow it, use a briefcase on rollers. And pack an extra bag inside your suitcase so you'll have extra space for brochures, books and samples you'll collect during the show.

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These tips from Carolyn Howard-Johnson are taken not only from her experience at BEA but also inspired by her nearly three decades experience as a retailer attending gift tradeshows around the world. Carolyn's first novel, *This Is the Place*, won eight awards. Her book of creative nonfiction, *Harkening: A Collection of Stories Remembered*, won three. An instructor for UCLA Extension's world-renown Writers' Program, her book *The Frugal Book Promoter: How to Do What Your Publisher Won't* was named USA Book News' "Best Professional Book 2004," and was given the Irwin Award. Her second book in the How To Do It Frugally series is *The Frugal Editor: Put Your Best Book Forward to Avoid Humiliation and Ensure Success*. Her chapbook of poetry *Tracings*, was named to the Compulsive Reader's Ten Best Reads list and was given the Military Writers' Society of America's Silver Award of Excellence. She is the recipient of the California Legislature's Woman of the Year in Arts and Entertainment Award, and her community's Character and Ethics Committee awarded her work promoting tolerance with her writing. She was also named to Pasadena Weekly's list of 14 "San Gabriel Valley women who make life happen." Her website is [www.HowToDoltFrugally.com](http://www.HowToDoltFrugally.com).