

HOT CHIPS SPONSOR TABLE GUIDE

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1. Overview

Thank you for sponsoring Hot Chips this year! As a benefit of your sponsorship, we usually have sponsor tables in the breakfast/breaks area adjacent to the auditorium. In this time of pandemic, the virtual conference format is forcing us to modify this procedure. Instead, we will help you to set up a “virtual display table” and link it in with the rest of the conference’s online presence. In past years, there have been a number of different types of displays at the “normal” tables:

- Arrays of marketing materials or books
- Business card raffles
- Static displays of hardware
- Live demos of hardware or software

The “virtual” reconfiguration will require some serious adjustment to any display plans. Displays involving attendees touching the table and items upon it will obviously be impossible, while ones involving collection of data from attendees or distribution of information electronically may actually be easier. Perhaps the most significant difference will be that you will need to adjust how you attract people to your “table,” since it will no longer be something that attendees pass by automatically every time they head out to get some food.

2. Table personnel

If you have any personnel dedicated to running the table, but who will not be attending conference sessions, then they may register as “table minders” instead of normal attendees, in order to get access to the private side of the Hot Chips website and to the Slack channels that we will provide for all sponsors. Of course, any table attendants who will want to attend any sessions should either register normally or use one of the free registrations that comes with most sponsorship levels. As a sponsor you will receive instructions on registering your table staff from our registration chair (Registration@HotChips.org)

3. How We Will Encourage People to Visit You

In a normal year, we post sponsor logos on the public part of the Hot Chips website (complete with a link to your company's home page) and on the "interstitial" slides that we show onscreen between talks, but the sponsor tables largely market themselves simply by being very close to the food served during breaks. Without the guaranteed attraction of nearby food, making attendees aware of your table is going to be more of a challenge in this "virtual" year. We are going to do it using a two-pronged approach.

The main way that we will drum up interest is my mentioning the sponsors regularly in the main conference livestream. Session chairs will mention it at the end of their sessions, and a list of all of the sponsors with "virtual tables" will be included in dedicated "interstitial" slides that play in the stream between sessions. Unlike in a normal year, they will get central positioning in a slide, in addition to the usual logos on the side.

The other key element is the private, attendee-only side our website. In a normal year, this is usually fairly limited, but with the virtual nature of this year's conference it will be more extensive. In addition to the logo visible to the public, any sponsors with "virtual tables" will have an additional listing on a dedicated "sponsors" page (or pages, if necessary) in this private area. Here, you will be able to reach out exclusively to people who have already paid to attend Hot Chips, which should limit the people seeing your information and link(s) to professionals in the field of chip design.

4. The Hot Chips "Virtual Tables" Website

Your portion of the "virtual tables" website hosted on the Hot Chips server is effectively the "front door" to your virtual table. This page should be thought of as sort of an "elevator pitch" for why attendees should take time to engage with you further. When attendees read/see this information, they can learn the basics about your company and then decide whether or not they want to investigate more. Note that there will be other sponsors, posters, and other attractions vying for their attention too, so you will want to keep this short and to the point.

There are several kinds of information that we can put on this site for you:

- **Basic Info:** Your company's name and logo
- **Text Abstract:** A brief text introduction to what you will have on display. Are you focusing on a particular product? Offering a raffle? Have any particular employees present to talk with attendees? Let people know *why* they should come and "visit" you. Brevity is key; something in the range of 50-150 words should be enough to give attendees enough to determine whether or not they might find your "table" interesting enough to investigate further.
- **Video Abstract (optional):** A link to a brief (1-3 minutes only) online video of yourself giving a general introduction to the "table" display. You can use your own video server or a third party video sharing website like YouTube, but we *cannot* host your video directly on the Hot Chips site. Please make any Hot Chips-specific YouTube videos "unlisted," and not "public," so we can limit access to conference-goers only. As we suggest in "online meetings," below, you may want to shoot this showing yourself at a real table as you give your introduction, although a head shot will probably be sufficient.

- **PDFs (optional):** If you have PDFs for any marketing materials available, we can put links to them here so that attendees can download them right from the Hot Chips website.
- **Slack Channel:** Link to your Slack channel in the Hot Chips workspace (see [Section 5](#) below).
- **Meeting Links (optional):** Link to one or more general online meeting(s) where you can discuss your “table” verbally with attendees (see [Section 6](#) below).
- **Schedule:** Times when you plan to be available on Slack and/or in online meetings. See [Section 8](#) of this document for suggestions about what times might be best to target.
- **Web Links (optional):** Note that all of the other items listed here are fairly static. You should be able to supply them to us in advance with just an email or two. If you want something more dynamic on your virtual table website, then you are free to create and host your own mini-website for Hot Chips attendees, as described in [Section 7](#). Just create that website and give us the link(s) to it so that we can put them we can put the additional link(s) here.

If you supply us with pretty much all of the information above, then an entry for a sample company is likely to look something like this:

[LOGO] WidgetsRUs

WidgetsRUs makes lots of chip design widgets, and we think that you would find them helpful! We are here to talk with you and discuss how our widgets can make your chip design efforts more productive.

—> *Hot Chips attendee intro video:* www.youtu.be/BLAH

Documents: Check out information on our products here!

—> [link to MarketingDoc1PDF]

—> [link to MarketingDoc2PDF]

—> [link to MarketingDoc3PDF]

Slack: We will be available to chat with you *anytime* throughout the conference!

—> [Link to Slack channel—SP-widgetsRUs]

Live Meetings: We will be online to talk with you live during breakfast, lunch, and breaks on Monday and Tuesday! We will also have a special session on Monday evening from 7pm–8pm to present our new SuperWingDing.

—> [link to main Zoom meeting]

—> [link to special Zoom meeting]

More Hot Chips Specific Stuff: Click here to learn more about our widgets or play with a working demo!

—> www.widgetsrus.com/hot-chips-2021/info-pages/

—> www.widgetsrus.com/hot-chips-2021/demo/

Of course, there are no fixed rules on what you should or should not send to us to include. Depending upon how much you want to rely upon our website vs. your own internal website design and development, your entry on the Hot Chips-supplied virtual table page can be information-packed or very minimalist. Realistically speaking, it will probably be something on a spectrum between the following two endpoints:

- **Full Listing:** If you give us most/all of the information listed above, then we can build up a fairly substantial web page, with many links and pieces of information, to act as a base for your

virtual table. Combined with interactive elements from your Hot Chips-supplied Slack channel ([Section 5](#)) and a video conference or two ([Section 6](#)), you should be able to build a fairly comprehensive table “experience” with only a modest amount of work on your part, and with no custom web development needed.

- **Front Door Only:** If you want to have total control over your “virtual table,” then you can just supply us with the basics — name and logo at a minimum, although at least a small abstract would probably be a good idea — and we will just link off to a mini-website of your own design ([Section 7](#)). This will give you complete control, but will probably require significantly more work on your part.

We are expecting different sponsors’ experiences to fall anywhere between these two extremes. Feel free to pick a spot that matches your own needs and development budget.

As noted previously, the pages we supply will be on the password-protected, attendee-only side of the Hot Chips website. As a result, you should be able to post information here without worrying about it being visible to just anyone (or any search engine bot) with an Internet connection. For example, you should be able to post Zoom meeting links without worrying about Zoom-bombers.

Once you have decided what you would like us to include in your entry on our website, please pass the information that you would like us to post to the sponsorship coordinator (sponsor@hotchips.org) when you have it available.

5. Your Slack Channel

To allow attendees to ask you quick questions or let you make little announcements, we will set up a chat channel using Slack for your “table” in a dedicated Hot Chips workspace. Every virtual sponsor table will have its own channel, and they will all be grouped together in Slack so that attendees will be able to switch from one to the next very quickly and browse around, sort of like how they can quickly walk around the tables at a normal conference. While some will post questions to you, expect many more to glance through to see what is happening on the channel. Try to make your contributions engaging and interesting, but not overwhelming. You can also try to push people to skip over this step and go right to something like an online meeting, but because it takes a couple of minutes to join an online meeting you will probably be able to “chat up” greater numbers of attendees more quickly using this channel.

There are a few main ways this can be used:

- **Web Listing Info:** To start the channel off, post the information from your web listing, including abstracts, meeting links, web links, and PDFs. You may want to pin and/or repost this information from time to time to keep it front-and-center if the chat gets lengthy.
- **Blog-Style Entries:** Post small facts and figures about your company, products, or even just interesting random facts every once in awhile to give people browsing through the channels something to read. Each should just be a sentence or two. Don’t overdo it ... this is just to get people who might be browsing interested in your “table” display, not to give them a complete story. You might want to type up a list of these blurbs in advance, and then copy-and-paste them into the channel periodically to stir up interest.
- **Q&A:** Attendees will be able to toss out quick questions to you here, based on what they might have seen in your abstract or on your company’s website. Type up some brief answers here so that everyone browsing through can see the interaction and get a feel for what kinds of

information you are trying to convey to attendees. We recommend that you “start a thread” as you make each answer, instead of answering inline in the main channel, in order to keep questions and answers grouped together.

- **Email and Other Contact Information Collection:** Feel free to ask attendees to submit information about themselves to you via Slack direct messages (and NOT in the channels themselves). If you are really interested in collecting lots of data, you may need to motivate attendees with something like
- **Raffles and Other Group Interactions:** After collecting information from attendees, run a raffle and give prizes to the winners! In addition to encouraging attendees to voluntarily give you contact information, this will tend to encourage them to return in order to find out if they have won. If you are collecting lots of data, you may want to have multiple winners, announced periodically over the course of the conference. Otherwise, just announce the winners during the final afternoon break. Note that you will need to solicit mailing addresses in order to ship prizes to winners, either when they enter or after they learn they have won.
- **Meeting Invites:** If you want to have 1:1 meetings with any attendees, in order to have very in-depth discussions, this is a great way to send meeting links. (See the next section for more information.)

You do not need to become a Slack expert to work here; just post enough information to get your audience engaged and interested enough to ask basic questions and then join you for

6. Online Meetings

The next step, for attendees who really find your “table” interesting, is to engage you in an online meeting. (It is also the best way for you to engage with them if you’re not a fast typist.) It takes attendees more time to join a meeting and engage with you than it does to look at a Slack channel, but can allow much higher-bandwidth communication once the connection has been opened. There are a few ways that you can structure this:

- **Open Meeting:** The simplest way is to just set up a meeting that conference attendees can enter or leave at-will. (While you can use your “personal room” in Zoom, you might want to create a Hot Chips-only account if you do it that way. Scheduling a meeting with a unique, Hot Chips-only ID is probably safer.) If you set this meeting up and give us the meeting link, we will post it in the “enhanced” (and attendee-only) virtual table list page so that any conference attendees who want to talk with you directly can pop in for a few minutes, at any time. Sometimes this meeting may end up being a 1:1 session, while at other times you may draw a large crowd. This is the closest analogy to how real tables work at the conference, so we expect that the large majority of “table”-related online meetings will use this format.
- **1:1 Meeting:** If you get to talking with someone in your Slack channel or an open meeting, you may want to break off for a 1:1 to talk with them privately. This may be necessary if you would like to discuss elements of your products that may have legal ramifications, for instance. When this is desired, schedule a special meeting and then send the link to them. To perform this in Slack, note their Slack identity and then send a direct message to that identity with the link. In an open meeting, you can ask for their email address (verbally or by chat message) and send it to them via an email.
- **Group Talk:** You can even schedule group meetings or webinars (which are just meetings where most attendees do not have speaking privileges) at particular times, and then post these

times in your web schedule or on your Slack channel so that everyone will arrive at that time to hear a fixed talk. The main reason why you might want to do this is if you have something like a complex demo that is difficult to repeat many times as attendees come-and-go. Because it can be difficult to get many people to join at the right time, however, we *strongly* suggest that if you want to do something like this, that you instead create a video in advance (using your own video server or a third party like YouTube). We can include this demo link, along with any introductory video, as a part of your web introduction block and you can post it occasionally in your Slack channel. We also recommend that you keep any of these talks or videos in the 3–5 minute range, maximum; attendees will probably just move on to other displays if you try to monopolize their time with videos that are too long.

We will be happy to post links to any meetings that you create, but will *not* be setting up these meetings for you. Our volunteers simply do not have time to manage all of these side meetings that may be occurring over the course of the conference. As a result, feel free to use whatever web conferencing platform you like, as long as general members of the public can join you without going through complicated security hurdles to get into your meeting. Zoom is simple and inexpensive, but other platforms like Skype, Cisco WebEx, and numerous others are OK, too. Take your pick! Downloads for Zoom are available at: <https://zoom.us/download>, using the “Zoom Client for Meetings” button at the top of the page. This software works on pretty much any platform, and there are even mobile versions for iOS and Android. If you have never used Zoom before, you should start with a free basic account (using <https://zoom.us/signup>) and use it to call a few friends to test it out. Before the conference, you should upgrade to a paid account. For the purposes of Hot Chips even the most basic paid account is probably sufficient (about \$15 for a month).

Please note that you should NOT post links to any of these meetings in public forums, since those are basically an invitation for “Zoom-bombers” to enter your meeting and make trouble. In contrast, attendees who have given us their contact information and paid the attendance fee should have a professional interest in the material. Note that we will only be posting your links to pages that are viewable by conference attendees, and *not* on any public-facing part of the Hot Chips website. Of course, if an attendee takes your link and posts it to a public location, either intentionally or by accident, please reschedule the meeting and let us know the updated meeting link and, if possible, how the original link was leaked to the public, so that we can follow up in an appropriate manner to prevent it from happening again.

Instead of just a usual “head shot” meeting with you sitting in front of your computer, looking straight into the camera, we suggest that you turn your remote office into a “virtual table” area! Arrange your webcam so that it is pointing at a large table in your kitchen or dining room, and then decorate that table much like you would if we were offering you a table at a normal conference. That way, you can stand beside or behind your table and point at objects on it as you discuss its contents with attendees. They obviously won’t be able to see fine details of what you’re pointing at in the video, but if you post high-resolution photos and/or PDFs of the artifacts and documents in your display, then they can pull these up while (or at least after) you’re talking. Seeing you move around and interact with the materials on a real table will make the meeting much more visually interesting, and will give people a visible preview of what they might see in your additional materials or photos, if they want to see things in more detail.

Another way to generate interesting shots, particularly if you have something like a display model of something like a server or piece of machinery to show people, is to start the meeting using mobile Zoom, from your phone. Show a head shot at first, but switch to the main camera

and point it at your table of gear while you discuss the details of particular items sitting on the table. Since you can move your phone around (and maybe even inside of) your equipment as you talk, you can focus attendees' attention right on the part of the equipment that you are talking about! Because a constantly-moving viewpoint can be visually tiring and possibly even disorienting for some viewers, do not overdo this. You probably want to alternate with a colleague who is using a more conventional static shot. (Both of you can log into the same meeting, and alternate who talks.) Also, don't forget to charge up your battery ahead of time!

A third way to handle this is to assemble all of your promotional materials (PDFs, photos, etc.) onto one computer and then use your videoconferencing tool's screen sharing mechanism to share that computer's desktop. Keep all of the documents minimized, and then pull each document up onscreen as you discuss its contents with your audience.

While you could just use the speakers and microphone in your computer like a speakerphone for these videoconferences, please remember that the sound quality of typical computer microphones is not particularly good during conference calls, especially if you are attempting to listen using your computer's speakers at the same time. Poor sound quality, significant background noise, or echoes in the sound can cause distractions and deter attendees from listening to you for long. At a bare minimum, we suggest that you at least listen to attendees using headphones, instead of relying upon your computer's speaker, since this will dramatically reduce the risk of horrible-sounding audio feedback. Even better, you can wear some sort of headset while you talk, since a microphone placed close to your mouth will pick up less background noise and echoes. This can be as simple as a set of headphones or phone earbuds that have a microphone mounted near your mouth on the cord or stem (e.g. AirPods), but we recommend that you use a headset designed for teleconferencing. Many models are available from manufacturers like Logitech, Plantronics, Jabra, Cyber Acoustics, JBL, Audio-Technica, Sennheiser, and many more. A basic model should cost about \$30-50, or wireless models for about \$100 more. (Search for "headset" to get started finding one.) Another great alternative, unless you are using a mobile device, is to combine headphones with a separate external microphone, such as a USB microphone designed for podcasting. (Search for "USB microphone" to get started finding one.)

7. Your Own Hot Chips-Specific Website

While your Hot Chips-provided portion of the "virtual table" can list a fair amount of information, it will be an inherently static set of text, links, and perhaps small graphics. You will provide us with the information before the conference, we will post it, and that's pretty much it. Hot Chips is a volunteer-run conference, and we do not have the bandwidth to manage anything more complex for you, especially during the conference itself. For many "virtual table" setups, this should be sufficient when combined with attendee interaction through your Hot Chips-supplied Slack channel and any video conferences that you set up. However, we are aware that some sponsors may prefer additional / different methods of interaction.

As a result, we do not want to limit you to just what Hot Chips supplies, if you have a large enough budget and enough time to create your own customized experience. In particular, we would encourage any sponsors who want to fully customize their "virtual table" to create their own mini-website customized for Hot Chips attendees, and then give us link(s) so that we can send attendees off to it from the "virtual table" entry hosted on the Hot Chips website. There are a number of reasons why you might want to do this:

- **Too Much Information:** To keep the Hot Chips-supplied “virtual table” area small enough so that it is reasonably easy for attendees to browse rapidly, we need to keep the information from each company limited to a fairly modest amount. If you hop off to your own pages, of course, you can supply as much information as you like, although we would recommend that you try to limit it to around 10 or so pages, since attendees will only have a finite amount of time to “wander around” through the sponsor area.
- **Dynamically Changing Content:** We will post your information and links on the Hot Chips-supplied page before the conference, but will be too busy during the conference to do much more than make minor updates or adjustments. Hence, if you want to make regular changes to your material over the course of the conference, it would be best to host it yourself.
- **Your Own Interactivity Options:** Prefer a different chat mechanism than Slack? Need to hook into a variety of social media services? Want to embed videoconference or streaming links right into a page? Making your own custom page(s) will allow you to do this.
- **Scripting and Databases:** Do you want to have a form to automatically collect and track attendee information? Run a raffle drawing using an automated script on a web page instead of Slack-based data collection? Display an interactive online demo of some of your software in action? If you said “yes” to any of these questions, then you will definitely need to host your own mini-website that includes the necessary hooks. We just do not have the staffing to support development and debugging of complex pages involving things like extensive Javascript, database engine interactions, or the like.

You could host any mini-website as a separate section of www.your-company.com that isn't cross-linked with the rest of the site (e.g. www.your-company.com/hot-chips-2021/) or create a wholly separate website with its own domain name (e.g. www.your-company-hotchips2021.com). Since these pages will be served by your own web server, you will be able to include any elements that you may want, without worrying about any limitations on what we can or cannot support.

Please note that these links should link to a Hot Chips-specific mini-website, and not just your company’s home page. (Anyone who wants to get there can just click on the logo in the public part of our website.) These mini-website links should be to material that is *specific* to Hot Chips attendees, since they will be the only ones who can access “virtual table” links on the private part of the Hot Chips website. For security purposes, you should not need to worry about requiring passwords to access your mini-website, since anyone arriving at it from the Hot Chips website will already have gone through our own password screening process. However, this will only work if you do *not* post links to this mini-website on places like social media or public parts of your company’s website, because those side paths will allow random people to bypass our security and find the pages anyway, defeating the purpose of a Hot Chips-specific area.

8. Schedule

Now that you know how virtual tables work, a logical question is *when should I staff my table?* The simple answer is: whenever you want, during the three days of the conference. During a normal year, usually only about a quarter of tables are staffed for the tutorial day on Sunday, while all sponsors show up during the main conference days on Monday and Tuesday. Because of the online nature of the conference, there are likely to be quite a few attendees, especially ones in other time zones, watching a delayed version of the main livestream. As a result, it may be

fruitful to start earlier and you may continue to get attendees checking out your table for another day or two afterwards. You will need to decide which days to support.

Of course, we do not expect you to wait on the Slack channel or to sit in front of your webcam all day over the course of multiple days. Instead, some times are more important than others, in order from (probably) most to least significant:

- **Morning and Afternoon Breaks:** Traditionally, the most important time for sponsor tables has always been during the mid-morning and mid-afternoon breaks. While these times will probably not be as predominant in the “virtual” setting, we will make sure to push the tables heavily in the main livestream just before each of these breaks, and of course there will not be any talks occurring at these times. As a result, we still expect that these will be peak times for activity.
- **Lunchtime:** Since attendees will not be able to talk with each other over lunch, like usual, they might instead check out your table while they eat. This probably depends a lot on how much they eat at their computer!
- **Before/After Daily Streams:** During the hour or so just before and just after each daily livestream starts/ends, there are likely to be people who check out the sponsor tables while waiting for the first session to start or before heading off to other tasks afterwards.
- **During Sessions:** Each attendee will probably have some talks that they really want to see ... and others that they do not. If there is only a short gap between talks that they want to see, they may wander off to look at sponsor tables for a little while to kill some time. This is much more likely in a virtual environment, where they will not have to stand up in the middle of an auditorium and crawl over their neighbors to get out and see you.
- **Overnight:** Since this is a virtual conference, it does not have a hard-and-fast schedule. Attendees will be able to watch delayed versions of the livestream later. As was noted above, this will particularly be the case for attendees in other time zones. As a result, you may get attendees wanting to interact with you at odd times, like the middle of the night in the US.

Note that these estimates of the various times that you are likely to get more traffic are just educated guesses, because our experience with virtual conferences is still slim.

The unusual scheduling of the virtual conference makes knowing when to “staff your table,” keeping an eye on the Slack channel and hosting any virtual meetings, a little difficult. We suggest that all sponsors with “virtual tables” try to have table minders active during the “prime times” of morning and afternoon breaks, at least. Start about 5–10 minutes before each break, and plan to run into the following session by several minutes. You may find it helpful to invite individuals who need more attention to come back later for a 1:1 session of some kind. If you want to let attendees know when you will be available, just give us a copy of your intended schedule so we can post it in your web listing and thereby help attendees know when it is best to talk to you. (Of course, they can also post questions to your Slack channel anytime, even if you do not answer right away.) Note that it is fairly easy to keep a Slack window open for most of the day and answer occasional questions that pop up there while doing other work, so you could quite feasibly keep discussions ongoing in Slack all day. It is far more tedious to hold lengthy web meetings, so we would recommend that you only schedule these for shorter periods of less than an hour. You may also want to offer to start them on-demand based on requests received via Slack.

If you have multiple “table” minders, then we recommend dividing up the work. During the main breaks, have some of your minders staff an online meeting or webinar while the others keep an eye on your Slack channel. To keep up a presence on Slack for a longer period of time, divide up each day into shifts, and have different minders take turns staffing the channel. This will allow you to be responsive to attendees for a larger percentage of each conference day without it being too much of a burden on any one person.