

PREPARE FOR SUCCESS

Get The Most Out of Your Conference Investment



Protecting and Saving Lives Made Easy.™



Getting the Most from Your Conference Experience

Conferences and tradeshows are excellent opportunities to reconnect with your passion for your career. Networking with like-minded people, learning about innovations in your industry, and discovering new ideas you can apply in your own work life — a conference takes you out of your daily routine and helps you refocus on all the aspects of your business.

They can be a great investment of your time and money, but only if you're willing to “meet them halfway.” In other words, what can **YOU** do to ensure you have the best conference or show experience possible?

This eBook offers some tips and suggestions for making the most of any industry event.





The Tradeshow or Conference State of Mind

- Pick Sessions
- Business Cards
- Prepare Questions
- Set Meetings
- Ask For Handout or Power Point of Event

There's nothing like setting yourself up for success. The CEO of NCET, *Nevada's Center for Entrepreneurship and Technology*, posted some food for thought for all the attendees of their annual expo about how a little advanced prep can go a long way:

PREPARE FOR THE EVENT.

Plan your show experience and decide which sessions you want to attend in advance. Make sure you have those professionally printed business cards ready to hand out during the networking opportunities.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK ON THE EXHIBITORS.

They've paid for that booth space and want to get a good return-on-investment by meeting as many people as possible. If you know who the exhibitors are in advance, you'll make the most of your time and theirs by coming prepared with your questions. If your conversation starts going a little long, make plans to continue it at a later date. Or, if you already know you need some serious face time with a company's representatives, contact them in advance and set up a meeting at the show that's convenient for all of you.

GET IN "BACK TO SCHOOL" MODE.

Have your pen and paper ready when you attend a show's education sessions. Take a look at the agenda and make of a note of the questions you would like answered on the topic. Not a good note-taker? Ask the speaker if there is a handout you can have, or see if the slide presentation could be sent to you after the event.

Getting to the Event

Attending industry events usually involves travel, and travel often involves hassles. You can't control the weather delays or lost luggage, but you can make things a little easier for yourself by following some simple tips from Business Insider, American Express, and The Business Journals:



PACK LIKE A PRO.

Organize your items carefully and never forget that less is more when it comes to travel. Can you get everything into one carry-on bag? That helps avoid the dreaded moment at the baggage carousel when you realize your suitcase isn't on the conveyor belt. Also, prepare a "go bag" that's packed with the things you always need on your trips and restock it when necessary. Keep it somewhere in your closet to grab and go as needed to cut down on your business travel prep time.



SYNC YOURSELF WITH THE LOCAL TIME ZONE.

Get up when you're supposed to, not when you "would have at home" and avoid the temptation to nap once you're there. Try getting into your destination's time zone even before you leave home. Set your watch for your destination's time as soon as you get on the plane.



THE PLANE RIDE IS YOUR BUILT-IN BREAK.

We love our devices and airplane wifi, but that down time on the plane is an excellent chance for you to chill out before the fun and excitement of the show or event. Keep the jet noise at bay with ear plugs or headphones.



KEEP YOURSELF HEALTHY.

Hand sanitizer is the traveler's friend. Plan to have it easily accessible as you ride in taxis, move through airports, and change planes. That airplane tray you have your food on could probably use a swipe with an antibacterial wipe, too.



GO FOR THE UPGRADE.

If you can spring for an upgraded seat, then go for it. You'll enjoy a better in-flight experience and arrive at your destination in a much better frame of mind. If possible, book your flights far enough in advance and reserve your seats closer to the front of the plane and in an aisle or window seat for added room and comfort. This is especially important if you're going right from the arrival gates to a first event or client meeting.



GIVE THE AIRPORT AND TRAVEL STAFF A SMILE.

Remember, they deal with the travel craziness every day. Make their day, and yours, by being that one nice traveler they actually enjoyed helping.

Once You're There — Network, Network, Network

You've arrived at your destination and have made your way to the exhibit or lecture hall. You're surrounded by people you don't know who are probably just as ill at ease as you are about this whole networking thing. But the handshakes, the exchange of contact info, and that opportunity for your two-minute "elevator speech" about you or your company all lie at the heart of the conference experience.

***Entrepreneur* and *Forbes* have a number of suggestions to help you navigate the social stuff:**

MIX IT UP!

No fair hanging out exclusively with your co-workers. If you traveled with someone or have teammates at the same show, resist the urge to socialize only with them. Sit with strangers in the breakout sessions and introduce yourself to the people on both sides of you.

THEY'RE COMPETITORS, NOT ENEMIES.

Visit your competitors' booths and see what they're bringing to the table for their customers. Again, introduce yourself. You never know when you might need their services, or they might need yours.

GIVE A PRESENTATION YOURSELF.

Presenting at an event is a high-profile way to make sure you're on the other attendees' radar. Your presentation gives them a reason to engage with you afterwards with their questions, or even just say hello to you later at a social event. Too late to be a speaker at the next show you're attending? Make it a point to meet the coordinator of next year's event and find out how you can set that up.

IT'S TRULY A GIVE-AND-TAKE.

You're at the show to help yourself and your career, but it's good to remember you have something to offer as well. Not every pass through the social event is about you getting a new lead. Sometimes you're the lead for someone else, so add listening as well as talking to your networking repertoire. Added bonus: you might realize someone you spoke with at yesterday's session is just the person that today's new contact needs to find. Be the hero and make that introduction. Chances are, they'll both remember you for it and want to do you a favor in the future.

FOLLOW UP MEANS FOLLOW UP.

Don't let a hard-earned connection fade once you're back at your busy day-to-day routine. Email those new contacts; even if it's just to say, "it was a pleasure to meet you." Remind them you are here to help them if they ever need your services or expertise.



Networking for the Shy at Heart

CIO.com posted a helpful article addressing a significant portion of the tradeshow and conference audience. If you're shy and would prefer hanging out alone by the pool during your next conference trip, this section is for you.



Here are some highlights from “How to Network: 12 Tips for Shy People”

START SMALL.

It's ok if your first move at the next industry mixer is to say hello to someone you already know. Maybe your buddy can introduce you to someone else at the event, and so on and so on. Once you've got your chit-chat engine warmed up, you can move on to widening your circle by introducing yourself to strangers. Just remember not to spend all your valuable conference time with someone you already know.

STOP APOLOGIZING.

“Hi, I'm sorry to interrupt” is not your opening line. Asking questions to learn more about your conversation partners, or asking if their products or services can help you, isn't inconveniencing them. It's what they're there for.

SAY THEIR NAME.

You already DO know one thing about that intimidating stranger. Because of the ubiquitous conference name badge, you all know each other's names. Use them when you talk to your new acquaintances.



BE YOURSELF.

Don't put on your fake extrovert armor and charge into the crowd. Always be your genuine self. As the article puts it, "In other words, it's OK if you're a little awkward. Just don't keep apologizing for it."

BE PREPARED.

It never hurts to have a little stockpile of friendly questions, ice-breakers, or a few responses prepared to fall back on as you move through the event.

REJECTION HAPPENS, AND THAT'S OK.

If you just don't hit it off with someone, let it go and move on to the next. Everyone at the event is there to network, and not every encounter will be a success. Keep trying, and you'll most likely find someone who will appreciate you, your business, or your connections.

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Why It Matters

Whether it's our HSI International Conference or any industry event you attend, we want you to get the most for your show and conference investment. Preparing in advance, taking full advantage of all the opportunities, and participating with an open mind and a smile will make the event that much more useful and memorable. You never know when a contact or idea you got at the show might make a positive impact on your business or career.

For our HSI International Conference attendees, you can start the networking party early by joining our **Conference Connections Group on LinkedIn**. You'll find us by searching LinkedIn Groups; "HSI Conference Connections."

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October 24-26, 2016

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