



20 TIPS FOR A GREAT CONFERENCE

Conferences and conventions are an incredibly effective (and often fun) means of networking with people who share your interests and goals, and may also be a great source of new business opportunities.

Here are 20 tips that will help you make the most of any business event you attend!

PRESHOW

- 1. Identify your goals.** Sit down and outline your goals from a company and individual standpoint. Are you going alone to evangelize your business or do you have multiple members of your team that will be there for staff development as well?
- 2. Establish meeting targets early.** The “Who?” is the most important question you should ask before attending a conference. Use your own network, [LinkedIn](#), or the conference sessions and speaker list to see who is going to be attending this year.
- 3. Prioritize.** Don’t book “meetings for meetings sake.” It wastes your time and the time of those you meet with. Tier your targets into three groups and start from the top. That way you know you’ll get the worthwhile meetings you need.
- 4. Don’t wait; Act now!** Schedule meetings immediately in Outlook or Google (or whatever you use) and make sure the other attendees are notified. Make sure you include the location (in the correct time zone), mobile numbers for all parties, pictures if possible.
- 5. Location, Location, Location.** Not all of your meeting will be at the show itself so you need to be aware of that when you’re booking them. Many people will want to meet at the closest hotel to an event. While this is certainly convenient, is it also usually packed with other people who had the same idea. Nothing is going to get done if you and your attendees spend the entire time saying “Hello” to everyone walking by. Try to find somewhere a little quieter for your meetings, whether it’s a hotel just a slightly farther distance away, or a nearby cafe.
- 6. Manage your timing.** If your meetings are in close proximity a half hour slot should suffice for an introduction meeting. Use your own discretion if this is a client or you have specifics to discuss. Also check your walking times between meetings and make sure you have time to get from one hotel to the show or another hotel.

7. Confirm meetings. Two days before the start of the show is generally recommended.

8. Be prepared. MAKE SURE YOU PACK A LOT OF BUSINESS CARDS!!!!!!ONE1
(Have I made my point?)



9. Don't rely on technology. Make sure you print out a hard copy of your meeting schedule. Google Calendars and smartphones are awesome, until an entire trade show is taxing a Wi-Fi connection and deep in the bowels of a convention center there is no cell service. A physical copy will always be ready for you.

10. Make notes for yourself. Jot down a few key points for each meeting on your schedule to maximize the time you have together. If you only end up with a few minutes to chat, this ensures that your key points are expressed and important questions get answered.

DURING THE EVENT

- 11. Engage in social media.** Using conference hashtags on Twitter can and will net you new followers. It's also a great opportunity to strike up "conversations" with fellow attendees and perhaps even generate last-minute meetings.
- 12. Hand out and collect business cards.** Do this with everyone you talk to. You never know where a good lead will come from.
- 13. Write it down.** Make sure you jot a note down on the back of any card you receive. I've been doing this for nearly 20 years now and I STILL get home with that one card and ask myself "Who the hell was this?" Take a moment at the end of the day to write yourself a reminder on the back of the card "Met with George – iOS developer." Easy enough.

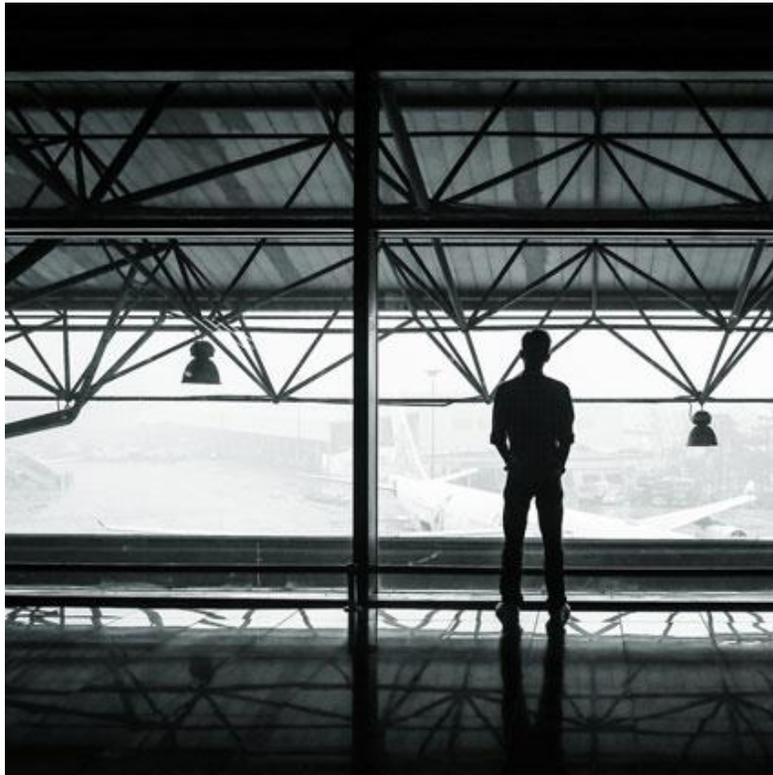


- 14. Collect information.** Make sure you are picking up any industry and trade magazines. Some of national organizations provide brochures and booklets about companies in their country; you can often acquire good contacts and leads there.

- 15. Introduce people** that you know, but who aren't acquainted with each other. And when you do so say more than their name: "Rick, this is Jay, he is a business development consultant. Jay, Rick is with XYZ company and they just started making widgets."
- 16. Use your team members wisely.** If you have staff, use events to educate your junior team members by having them attending sessions or on an expo floor demoing new tools. Don't have them in meetings where they are adding no value; that's where your executives and business development people should be.

POST-SHOW

- 17. Schedule follow-ups immediately after the show.** In the first week after the conference, follow up with everyone with whom you met via email and/or phone. This is also the time to outline upcoming opportunities and deliverables that may have come from your meetings.
- 18. Take time for data entry.** Enter the information from all your business cards into your CRM ([you DO have a CRM](#), right?). Make sure to include your notes on that contact or company (see tip #13).



19. Make personalized connections. Connect on LinkedIn to everyone you met (Evernote Hello is great tool to help with this). Instead of using the default introduction blurb, take 20 seconds and write a one-line note to your potential contact. It is more personal and it makes a world of difference.

20. Pay it forward. Take time to introduce people via email, Twitter, LinkedIn or otherwise that may not have met at the conference. *Give and Take* author Adam Grant has a great exercise to help you make this a habit:

“Ask people what they need and look for ways to help at a minimal personal cost, such as giving honest feedback and making an introduction.

Here’s a simple exercise to get started as a connector: Start by going through your Rolodex, LinkedIn, or Facebook network. Identify pairs of people who share an uncommon commonality. Then, pick one pair a week and introduce them by email. You might also reconnect with dormant ties—not to get something, but to give.

Once a month, reach out to one person with whom you haven’t spoken in years. Find out what they’re working on and ask if there are ways that you can be helpful.”

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