



7 Ways to Optimize Your Participation At Conferences

Improve your interactions. Strengthen relationships. And ultimately win new work

1. Know before you go.

Solid pre-conference research can really enhance the time you spend at events. Find out who will be attending. Is anyone you met last year going? Which of your prospects will be there? How about your network partners?

Reach out to them beforehand to see if they will meet for coffee, lunch or dinner. If you learn as much as you can about what they are up to, their pain points, their concerns, you will find great conversation starters.

2. Do your “homework”.

Refresh your memory about the interesting things your firm is doing. It is particularly important to learn about other departments. This shows your knowledge of the firm and desire to help. Your marketing department can be an amazing resource. But don't shy away from speaking to people from other departments to learn more. This can also cement relationships within your firm and make you stand out as a team player.

3. Fill your back pocket.

Be sure you have a few crisp stories about what you are up to that relate to the event. It's always good to reinforce the 3 W's: what you do, who buys your services and what results you deliver.

One of the biggest lost opportunities in networking is when people ask “what have you been up to?” and the response is: “Oh. The same old thing”. Don't let this happen! Share what's interesting.

4. Meet the speaker.

Research the speakers before the event. They can be excellent connections. You will be more memorable if you say hello before their talk. Afterwards, they will be swamped with everyone who wants to speak to them.

5. Ask the first question.

Come prepared with a question that's interesting to the audience and puts the speaker in a positive light. There is nothing more uncomfortable for a speaker than waiting for that first question. Let them relax. Raise your hand immediately. They will remember you kindly and it will reinforce the perception of you as a thoughtful and curious professional.

6. Make it easy for network partners

Remind your partners about what you do, for whom, and the results you deliver. It will be easier for them to introduce you, tell people what you do or find you potential opportunities. And don't forget the power of stories. Let them know what you are doing that is new and relates to the event.

7. Have fun.

Conferences are in beautiful places and interesting cities. They are great ways to meet people, reconnect with your network and learn about your industry.

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