

The Ultimate Conference and Event Checklist

It seems that each year as the crisp, fall air starts to move in, our calendars start to fill up with industry conferences. It's that time of year again, and before we head out for some good, ol' fashioned, in-person networking, we thought we'd share a few tips that we've compiled to make conferences just a little bit easier to manage.

BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

1. Perfect your elevator pitch

You get to a conference session early and are waiting for it to start when someone sits down next to you and starts chatting. Chances are, one of the first questions will be: "So what do you do?" It's a pretty typical question, and one that should be expected, but once in a while it will stumble even the most seasoned veteran if they're not ready for it. Make sure that you've practiced and perfected a short, but engaging description of what you do, who you do it for, and why you're at the conference. And don't forget to engage back and ask what your new conference buddy does – that's how relationships are made!

2. Take the time to pick the right sessions

Many industry conferences these days are large-scale events with thousands of participants. Scaling a conference to that size means being able to appeal to a variety of people at different levels of abilities and needs in their fields. Make sure to do your research ahead of time and sign up for the events that fit your needs the best – you won't want to be a marketing expert that attends a "social media for dummies" session, or a data guru attending a creative writing session.

3. Don't forget to schedule some panels and attend keynotes!

While sessions are useful for picking up tips, tricks, and actionable items, attending panels and keynotes are important because that's usually where you'll find out about all the newest trends in the industry and where companies will announce all the shiny, new features that they will be providing.

DURING THE CONFERENCE

4. Collect information from the sessions

This may seem obvious – everyone at a conference has their laptop, iPad, or at least a notebook to take notes on what they've learned at a conference. But there are a couple ways to hack "note taking" at conferences. If you're lucky enough to attend a conference that provides all the decks, or even better – VIDEOS – of the sessions, you're golden. Check those out online to refresh your memory on the sessions you attended, or to catch up on the sessions you missed. You can also jot down the email address of the presenter and email them post-conference to ask them for a deck of their presentation. This way – two birds, one stone – you're getting the content you need, and you're making new networking connections.

5. Market yourself by participating

Just about every conference and networking event these days has a hashtag where they post important information for participants and facilitate conversations. Jump on there and let people know what you're up to at the conference. Make it a mix of fun and informational, and make sure to tag your company for a little bit of promotion. Don't forget to write a blog that talks about your experience once you get back from the conference.

6. Schmooze – but not too much

Conference after-parties and networking social hours are a fun way to network with people outside of the learning environment. The after-parties are definitely a time to loosen up your tie, let down the hair, and get a bit more casual – but don't get too crazy... remember that there may be potential clients, employers, or business partners there that are observing your behavior, so make sure to have fun but keep it professional.

7. Be ready to connect

No matter what kind of event you're attending, exchange information with the people that you chat with, but make sure that it's a natural exchange – don't just ask for a business card, then walk away. Have a conversation, and start building a relationship with your new connection. Make sure that you have an easy and convenient method to exchange information with people that you connected with so that you can follow up with them after the conference and build your network.

Did I mention that our tool Convey is the perfect way to easily and conveniently exchange information in an instant! (I couldn't resist the shameless plug.) Seriously though it's a really simple yet powerful way to make a connection. Give it a try for free [here](#).)

8. Wear good walking shoes

This is the most practical, but also probably the most useful advice for attending an event. You will likely be doing a lot of walking or standing, and you will probably have a busy day without many breaks to be able to go to your hotel to change if you're uncomfortable. Plan to dress professionally, but comfortably for the duration of the event.

AFTER THE CONFERENCE

9. Don't forget to follow up

You will likely meet many people, and it's the perfect opportunity to build your network. Make sure to follow up with everyone that you exchanged information with and keep in touch – you never know who may become a valuable contact in your network.

10. Share the wealth

You gained a lot of new information, inspiration, and contacts – don't keep those resources to yourself! Make a plan for how you will present and share your most useful tactics, insights, and information with your coworkers.

11. Reflect on your experience

Conferences are a whirlwind experience with lots of information and events crammed all into a short period of time. The most important thing to do post-conference is to sit down and reflect on what your most important takeaways were and decide how you will use them to make your organization better. Define at least 2-3 actions that you want to take based on what you've learned at the conference, and put them on your calendar so you don't lose momentum.

Conferences are fun, but they can also be intimidating – check out our blog [Conference Networking with No Expectations](#) to see how we handled a recent conference experience and what we got out of it.