

# Conference Attendance Checklist

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**So you're attending a professional conference.** Whether or not you've attended a conference before, this checklist will help ensure that you have the best experience you can while making the most of the opportunity. We here at Powerhouse wish you an absolutely fantastic conference season!

### While You're There...

- Register early to avoid lines. Seriously, plan to get there early before the bulk of attendees arrive. No one likes waiting in line; plus, then you'll be freed up to network with others.
- Review your schedule the night before. Check to make sure your priorities on what sessions to attend hasn't changed. Maybe there's been a last-minute speaker change, and you really want to hear what that person has to offer. When attending conferences held in smaller venues, you may even want to walk the conference room to identify where everything is located.
- Focus on making connections. Conferences are designed to be major network centers. Make the most of the time to meet and chat with other attendees and current and/or future clients and to find out what the competition is doing.
- Stay connected. Most conferences have a hashtag or at least some sort of social media presence. Follow the conference on social media and ensure your contributions are appropriately tagged. Think of social media as a digital extension of the conference itself.
- Stay organized. You'll receive a slew of business cards and make a ton of contacts. Take time to jot down on the corresponding card a few salient points of each conversation as well as a brief note on how/where you met. Consider using an app like CamCard or Evernote to digitally capture cards and keep notes on whom you meet.
- Put your smartphone away. Yes, you will need access to it. However, when you are in the heart of the conference, engaged with other people, set the phone down and give them your full attention. Nobody likes feeling as if (s)he is sharing your attention with an inanimate object. Knowing you are focused solely on the conversation gives contacts a positive feeling that you will put them first.

- Attend social events. At the end of each day, you're probably going to feel drained. Don't make the mistake of heading straight for your room. Attend the social events planned for the conference, even if only for a little bit. These events allow you time to interact with contacts in a more relaxed setting and usually result in more in-depth and worthwhile conversations.
- Stay well-rested. The above being said, avoid the temptation to stay up late into the night with other attendees. Getting good sleep while attending a conference is crucial to ensuring you bring your "A" game each day.
- Scope out the competition. Take time to check out what your competitors are doing. Visit their booths, engage them in conversation, and find common ground. You may just come away inspired by possibilities.
- Summarize the top trends of the conference. Take a few moments to jot down the trends you're seeing, items you might want to do more research on, and what the conference says about where your industry is heading.

### After You've Left...

- Do some "housekeeping." Once you return, organize all business cards and conference items you picked up. File as appropriate or discard what you don't need. Be sure to retain any new contacts and update existing ones.
- Write up what you learned. Take some time to flesh out those notes you took into a more formal document. Incorporate what you learned, how beneficial the conference was, and what your recommendations are as to whether the conference would be worth attending again. You may even include suggestions for the best person(s) to send to the conference next time, just in case your opinion is solicited. Be sure to share your insights, experiences, and impressions with your boss.
- Follow up. Follow up. Follow up. The number one piece of advice from seasoned conference goers everywhere is to follow up quickly once the conference ends. Send personalized LinkedIn invitations that include a little bit about who you are, where you met the contact, and what you and those individual(s) discussed. Send emails or call each new contact you made. Even if there's no immediate next step with a contact, reach out now to ensure that line of communication exists when it is time.
- Teach. Chances are your company sent you to the conference to learn something and that they didn't send everyone who could have benefitted from attending. Set up a time to go over what you learned and observed with those in your office who could most benefit. Brainstorm ideas on how to implement what you learned within your company.

