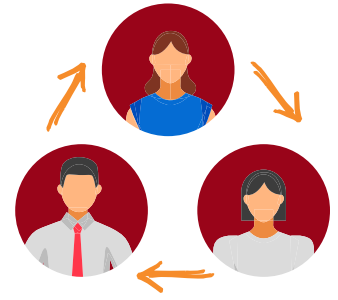


Networking at Conferences: A Checklist



Use this checklist to maximize the value you can get from conferences.

Before Registering

- Research your options.** Choose a conference that your target market will attend and make sure that the right “level” of people will be there. Ideally, you want people who can make the decision to hire you (often marketing directors).
- Look at the attendees.** If a list of registrants is available, see who and which companies are listed. What are the titles of people attending? What industries are represented?
- Look at the sponsors.** Are they in your target market?
- Look at the reviews.** Sometimes people will post reviews on the conference website. Are they in your target market?
- Look at the session topics and workshops.** Would they appeal to your target market?
- Look at past sessions.** Some conferences will post summaries or slide decks of past conference presentations. Would they appeal to your target market?
- Talk to your network.** Do you know anyone who’s attended this conference before? Do they recommend it? Who do they think will attend?
- Consider the timing.** Some industries work on the same budget cycle. If the conference occurs after budgets have been approved for next year, that can be useful.
- Look for networking opportunities.** Does the conference have pre- or post-conference social events? Is time available for networking during each day?

Before the Conference

- Pack business cards.**
- Pack suitable clothing.**

- Make sure you're well groomed.**
- Memorize some conversation starters.**
- Get caught up on industry news.** This will give you more to talk about.
- Prepare your elevator pitch.** Be prepared to tell people what you do (without pitching your services).
- Confirm the conference dates, times and locations.**
- Map the conference location.** Make sure you know where to go and how long it will take to get there.
- Reach out to attendees (if a list is available).** Follow attendees on LinkedIn and Twitter. Ask questions. Engage in conversation online. Behave as an interested colleague who's interested in what they do.
- Reach out to vendors.** As above.
- Reach out to speakers.** As above.
- Reach out to sponsors.** As above.
- Follow the conference's hashtag.** Re-tweet and participate in conversations.

During the Conference

- Arrive early to sessions.** This is a good way to meet people.
- Visit vendor booths.** Talk to any vendors you've engaged with online.
- Scan name tags.** If name tags are laid out on the registration table, scan them to find people you know or want to meet
- Limit your consumption of alcohol.** Remember, you're there to work. Pace yourself to keep your energy up.
- Ask for introductions.** If you already know someone at the event, ask them to introduce you to people they know.

- Approach people.** When people are alone or in small groups (three or less), it's easier to break into the conversation.
- Introduce yourself.** "Hi, I'm Joseph, may I sit with you?"
- Use conversation starters.** Have some of these prepared in advance. Look at warm email prospecting subject lines for inspiration
- Ask people about what they do.** Express a genuine interest. Eventually, they will ask about what you do.
- Raise common industry issues or topics.** This shows you have some understanding of the industry. Most people will have something to say about them, which eases the conversation.
- Ask about something specific.** Raise something about their organization that you've read about. "I heard about your new CEO! How's that going for you guys?"
- Ask open-ended questions.** This will help keep the conversation going.
- Borrow from other people's expertise.** "I wrote for a guy who's familiar with this topic. He says...."
- Ask for (and give out) business cards.**
- Take the pressure off.** Remember, you're not trying to convince anyone to hire you. It's about having a conversation.
- Sit up front.** If you want to engage the speaker in conversation, sit close to the front.
- Ask the speaker questions.** Asking a question gets the attention of the speaker and makes it easier for others to approach you afterwards.
- Change where you sit.** Don't sit with the same people every time.
- Use line ups.** Look for other opportunities to start conversations, such as line ups.
- Record your contacts.** Each evening put contacts into your CRM along with notes about the person and your conversation.
- Ask about other conferences.** Ask people what other conferences they would recommend.
- Attend social events.** These are great opportunities to network.

After the Conference

- Be patient.** Give people time to settle back into work before following up with them.
- Send information.** If you had promised to send information, don't forget to do it.
- Follow up.** Start following up with the people you put into your CRM system, following warm email prospecting guidelines.
- Start nurturing.** If prospects aren't ready to hire you, put them in your nurturing bucket and follow your nurturing sequence.

Bonus tip: Volunteer or pitch yourself as a panelist

Participating on a conference panel gives you exposure and elevates your credibility.

It takes minimal preparation because you're mostly speaking to your own experience.

You can also volunteer as an assistant or timekeeper for a breakout session. It's an easy way to develop a relationship with the panelists and the moderator.

To pitch yourself, go to the conference website and follow their application process. Keep your focus on what you can do for them and their audience. Talk about your experience. Let your personality come through.

Contrary to what you might think, conferences are always looking for people. You don't have to be a guru or published author.

