



## Planning for a Wildly Successful Conference Experience

Smart, successful people don't just "show up" to conferences. They are thoughtful about which conferences they attend, who they would like to meet, and what they would like to learn.

Keith Ferrazzi has a wonderful chapter, "Be A Conference Commando," in *Never Eat Alone; And Other Secrets to Success, One Relationship at a Time*. Some of his ideas are summarized, below.

- ◆ Make a thoughtful plan; don't just show up. Know who, what, where, when, and why. Be clear in your thinking; including what you'd miss by not attending. That "opportunity cost" has to be more compelling than what you'd have to give up to attend. This will also make it easier for you to get into action, even if you're nervous and inclined to stay in observer mode. Don't be a wallflower!
- ◆ Know who your targets are and gather intelligence about them before hand. You will be more effective in starting a conversation with them that they'll want to participate in! You may have even "linked" with them before hand in anticipation of the conference!
- ◆ At the conference, keep your eyes open for your targets and others who you believe would be great to get to know but please, when you're engaged with a new contact, be sure to give them your full attention!
- ◆ Be a "speaker" even if your name is not on the program. Ask a thoughtful, on-point question, speaking clearly and sharing your name. If you're nervous, ask your question out of generosity for others who might also have the same question. (They will notice you and remember your helpfulness.) The speaker will likely be more open to speaking with you afterwards, as well.
- ◆ Know what you have to offer; everyone has something to share. The trick is to focus on what you have that can be shared (thus identifying your "currency") rather than what you don't have, that you want or need. Generosity is incredibly powerful and you'll get more back if you are a Giver versus a Taker. (Check out *Give and Take* by Adam Grant and also the discussion of generosity in *Who's Got Your Back* by Keith Ferrazzi.)
- ◆ Be memorable by sharing something to help people relate to and care about you. Let your guard down and let people in to know the real, authentic you. You're worth knowing.



## Powerful Women

PAVING THE WAY

- ◆ Master the “deep bump.” You won’t get more than a few minutes with each new person so have a plan to quickly and memorably connect and commit to later follow up. Take notes about them so you can remember what you connected about easily and draw them back into the conversation, later.
- ◆ “Hijack” the conference by arranging and inviting your target contacts to breakfast, coffee, or post-conference drinks, before the conference even starts!
- ◆ Get a wing woman to support you in achieving your goals! Studies show that when you share a goal with someone, you exponentially increase the likelihood of achieving it. Check in and encourage each other during the conference.
- ◆ Draft off the keynote speakers or conference organizers, choosing a seat at their table and engaging in conversation with them. It will be easier to meet the speaker BEFORE they speak. Not sure what to speak with those big wigs about? That’s something to address in your planning! Keep the conversation brief (no stalking!) and make a plan to reconnect later. And remember, it’s not just about them... you’ll get to meet the people who wait in line approach them, too!
- ◆ Be an info-hub – be a useful go-to resource re: who, what, where and when for PWPW, even the sessions you’re not attending!
- ◆ Work hard on break spending that time meeting and connecting with other conference participants versus eating (you can eat quietly during the session!) or checking your messages (you should have already cleared your calendar so you can be present!). Keep at least one hand free to share and accept business cards and shake hands!
- ◆ Mix it up. You might meet a person who is absolutely remarkable and be inclined to spend a lot of time with them. Resist the urge. Connect, make a plan to continue the conversation post conference, and move on!
- ◆ Finally, let people know that you are enjoying the conference experience. Draw them in by keeping open, inviting body language. Direct eye contact and a smile is a great way to start a new conversation and if you’ve been thoughtful in your preparations, it’s likely that you will meet exactly who you hoped to!

Remember, a successful conference experience is not about handing out or collecting the most cards. It’s about stepping out of your day to day comfort zone, learning new things and making strong initial connections with people who will both be in a position to help and happy to continue a meaningful conversation with you when the conference is over.