

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Conference Etiquette Tips

By Rachel Wagner, August 2007

Conferences are a nice change of pace from the regular workday world. Not only do you learn cutting-edge information in your industry, but conferences also provide a great opportunity to network and develop new relationships. These etiquette tips will help set you apart as a confident and polished professional when attending your next conference, and will give your company a winning image, too!

In the exhibition hall:

- Smile and say hello to vendors as you pass their booth.
- Avoid grabbing giveaways without learning about the business.
- Introduce yourself to the vendor and shake hands when stopping by to get information.
- Be courteous to vendors; don't interrupt.
- Thank vendors for their time and again, shake hands.
- Don't block a vendor's table when talking to a friend.
- If you need to put a cup of liquid down for a moment, do it elsewhere, but not on the vendor's table.

At the conference:

- Network!
- Do not spend your time with coworkers.
- Set a goal for who you want to meet.
- Read name badges constantly.
- Introduce yourself.
- Give a firm handshake and make eye contact.
- Learn to small talk.
 - "So, what is the most interesting thing you've learned here this week?"
 - "What are your favorite conferences for people in our field?"
 - "What does your company think of (name a new product or new focus in your industry, etc.)?"
 - "What did you think of this morning's speaker?"
- Use discretion when giving out business cards: wait until someone asks, or ask if you may give yours. Make sure your cards are clean and up to date with no information crossed out.

At a breakout session:

- Introduce yourself to persons sitting on either side of you.

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- Ask questions at the appointed time rather than interrupting the speaker.
- Ask questions appropriate to the topic at hand.
- Personal conversations with the presenter should be held afterward or scheduled for another time.
- Use breaks for returning phone calls and emails.

At lunches or dinners:

- Shake hands and introduce yourself to everyone at your table before sitting down.
- Know your dining Dos and Don'ts; poor manners can create a negative image of you and your company.
- Remember that your bread plate is on your left; your water glass is on your right.
- Engage in conversation with diners on both sides of you.

At parties and receptions:

- Keep food or beverage in your left hand; your right hand should always be free for shaking.
- Know your alcohol limits: remember that "loose lips sink ships." You represent your company at every event.

And last, but not least...Dress for Success:

- Pack professional clothing—business or business casual—whichever is appropriate for your particular conference and corporate culture. It is better to be overdressed than underdressed.
- Have your clothes pressed and shoes polished by the hotel's services if necessary.
- Carry a quality leather portfolio.
- Keep business cards in a classy leather or monogrammed metal card case.
- Choose conservative accessories.

These tips you will help you to be a "first class" savvy professional when your business takes you "on the road again" to your next conference.

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