

## 4 Steps to Getting the Most Out of Attending a Seminar

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By Beth Schneider



There it is. The event you've been waiting for. It's all the big name speakers you've been drooling over, it's in a city you've been dying to visit and it's just the perfect information you need right now to take your business to the next level.

You grab your plane ticket, pack up the laptop, ship Rover off to the doggie sitter and are off. Three days later, it was a fantastic event. You met great people, you learned a ton of new things. You're pumped up and ready to go.

Three weeks later somehow you can't remember the name of that great contact you'd made and you really haven't changed the way you do business. Here are some steps to take to set yourself up for success before you actually fork out your hard earned dollars.

### **Figure out the Why**

Way before you head out the door ask yourself . . . WHY are you going? What do you want to achieve? Is it to meet people? Get specific information? Get motivated? Get new business? Or maybe it's because you want to corner a speaker for 15 minutes to pick their brain. Why, why, why? Determine why you are really going in the first place. This is called a desired outcome. Write out your desired outcome so you know ahead of time what you want to accomplish.

### **Go in Prepared**

Now that you've determined why you are going. Determine what you need to do to achieve your desired outcome.

What preparation do you need to do before hand? If one of your desired outcomes is to talk to a certain speaker, maybe there is a VIP lunch you buy a ticket for. If you want to pick up some new business, maybe you bring some samples with you, so you are prepared for an impromptu sales meeting. Maybe there is a contact you want to spend some time with so you fly in a day early. Whatever it is, think about it ahead of time and go in with a plan.

### **Play 6 Degrees of Separation**

As a kid, my mother always said, "never say anything bad about anyone because you never know who they know". Well, she was right. Someday, two people will be having drinks on Mars and one will say to the other, "Oh you're from Earth, do you know Bob?" And they will.

Once you are at the event, be prepared to meet people and figure out who you know in common. It never fails to amaze me how you can randomly meet someone in an elevator, who lives in a different city than you and it turns out you know a ton of the same people. Or you can sit down for lunch with someone you don't know and find out that they grew up with your out-of- state cousins. And no, I am not making this stuff up, these are actually things that have happened to me.

This is important because it helps you quickly bond with people and form a relationship. I've landed new clients because it turned out we knew several of the same people, which gave me instant credibility.

### **Create a plan of action**

So when you're not out in the hallway chatting it up with someone who could recite your rolodex, you're probably listening to speakers and soaking up a ton of information. All too often I've had people tell me that they are so overwhelmed with the amount of information they are getting that they have no idea where to start.

Here are a couple of ways to manage your information so you can implement what you've learned.

Forget your American Express card. Never leave home without a packet of post-it notes. In your notes or handouts, mark pages with action items or ideas that you want to revisit with a post-it note. Then, when you go home, revisit all the post-it note pages first and add those ideas or action items to your day-to-day activities.

Or create a master action list. Take a couple of pieces of paper and put them at the very front of your seminar notebook. As you learn new things that you want to incorporate or you get ideas, jot them down on the list. Don't censor yourself, just jot it down. This way you come home with a targeted list of action items to explore. Review your list. Decide if and how you want to move forward with each item and then simply check them off once you've tackled them.

Seminars can be a great way to learn the latest and greatest techniques, get motivated and build your network. Being prepared before you walk through the door will give you that extra edge to make it even better. See you at the next event.

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