

25 Tips to Make the Most of Your Conference Attendance in 2025

Are in-person conferences on your calendar for 2025? If so, how are you preparing to make the most of your time, conversations, and connections? Don't leave your outcomes to chance; set yourself up for success with these actionable steps before, during, and after your conference.

BEFORE YOU GO

Strategic preparation is the difference between simply attending a conference and truly leveraging the investment to drive growth. These 10 pre-attendance conference tips will help you show up prepared, intentional, and positioned for success.

1. **Make a plan.** Know why you're attending the conference and what you hope to achieve. Start by answering, What is the purpose of my attendance? Who do I want to meet? What outcomes would make this conference a success?
2. **Download the app.** Most conferences now have apps with session schedules, speaker biographies, attendee lists, and real-time updates. Download the app early and use it to build your agenda, identify possible connections, and engage before you arrive. If you have the ability to customize your app profile, include a professional headshot and contact details.
3. **Organize a gathering.** Begin planning early by identifying priority contacts, clients, and speakers with whom you wish to connect. This is where a conference app can come in handy. Invite contacts to an informal dinner or coffee meetup. Early outreach can create stronger connections even before you arrive.
4. **Engage on social media.** Join or create a social media group of attendees. Use the official conference hashtag to share posts, ask questions, or coordinate informal gatherings before the event begins. These small actions build familiarity with your brand even before you arrive.
5. **Prepare a small gift.** A small, thoughtful gift, such as a regional treat, to share with others can leave a lasting impression. Keep it simple, personal, and relevant. For example, if you're from Philadelphia, you could bring Tastykakes and put them in small gift bags with your business card and a note. If you're from Vermont, it could be maple syrup. Regardless of where you are located, there is something unique that you can share with select attendees.
6. **Target your outreach.** Review the attendee list to identify high-value connections. Reach out beforehand to schedule informal touchpoints such as shared transportation or arrange a quick chat between sessions. A 10-minute conversation with the right person can be more valuable than time spent watching an entire panel. There is always a way to meet, even when attending a conference with little downtime.

7. **Plan your agenda.** Use the session descriptions to build a personalized agenda. Prioritize sessions that align with your business goals. Conference apps typically give you the ability to create a personalized agenda, which often syncs with your personal device calendar. Prior or after each session, introduce yourself to the speakers. Share your expectations for their program and express your appreciation for their presentation.
8. **Update your LinkedIn profile.** With more than 950 million members in more than 200 countries, LinkedIn is the leading professional networking platform. It provides an effective way to connect with other professionals and stay in touch. A current, professional LinkedIn profile makes you easier to find and remember. Make sure your photo is up to date and your headline reflects what you want people to know about you.
9. **Prepare talking points.** Anticipate networking opportunities. Know how to introduce yourself in a way that resonates with your audience. Focus on your “why” and how it aligns with conference themes. For example, is there a unique aspect of your professional journey or a current project you are working on that aligns with the conference theme or current industry trend? Authentic, purposeful talking points are more memorable than a rehearsed elevator pitch.
10. **Plan for media engagement.** Identify attendees who are members of the media or those located in the same market as the conference. Usually, this is best achieved in partnership with your in-house communications team or outside public relations agency. Members of the media who attend conferences often have beats aligned with subject matter and/or the industry. Thoughtfully connect with journalists in the local market to develop opportunities to become a source for their future coverage. Media opportunities in key markets where you may not reside still could benefit from your expertise.

Conference attendance is as much about business development as it is about professional development and relationship development. Spend time preparing to get the best return on your conference investment.

WHILE YOU ARE THERE:

The conference has begun. You've arrived prepared. Now it's time to show up intentionally, create connections, and capture value in real time.

1. **Track key themes and takeaways.** Look for consistent themes across sessions and keynotes. Do they align with your clients' needs or your organization's priorities? These takeaways can shape post-conference content and future strategy.
2. **Connect with speakers.** The speakers at a conference are considered thought leaders. They often welcome conversations, so don't hesitate to introduce yourself. Share a specific takeaway from their session and connect on LinkedIn while your experience is fresh.

3. **Quote with purpose.** Mention or quote speakers in your social posts about the conference. Doing so shows attentiveness, increases engagement, and opens the door to continued conversation.
4. **Capture visual content.** Snap photos of panelists, sessions, and other meaningful moments. Visual content adds credibility to your online presence and extends the conference conversation.
5. **Leverage session recordings.** If you're presenting, request a copy of the recording, or create your own using AI with the permission of your co-panelists. Transcripts and video snippets can be turned into blog posts, client updates, and more.

AFTER THE CONFERENCE

The value of a conference doesn't end at the closing session. What you do in the days and weeks following will determine its long-term impact on your business and relationships.

1. **Debrief immediately.** Consolidate your notes, identify high-value contacts, determine what you want to accomplish as a result of your post-conference follow-ups, and then take next steps to accomplish these goals.
2. **Document success.** Capture your feedback immediately following the conference, including wins and suggested areas for improvement. Metrics such as new contacts, follow-up meetings scheduled, or insights gained for internal knowledge-sharing is helpful to build a business case for future attendance if your organization undergoes an annual budget approval process.
3. **Update your CRM.** Add or update contacts in your company's Contact Relationship Management (CRM) tool, including any information about your interaction. Be specific with notes, including who you met, what you discussed, their participation in the conference, if any, and next steps. Context is what transforms a contact into a relationship.
4. **Send personalized follow-ups.** Send personal notes via email, a handwritten card, or LinkedIn private messages. Use details of your interaction to emphasize your memory of the experience and communicate your gratitude for the opportunity to meet. If you have a resource to share, such a podcast episode or an introduction you can make as a result of your conversation with the individual, offer that information as way to keep the conversation going beyond your initial follow up.
5. **Connect on LinkedIn.** If you haven't already, send a LinkedIn connection invitation to your new contacts with a personal message. If you are on other social media networks, follow them and their organization there as well. While there are many platforms on which to connect, a best practice is to wait to connect on Facebook until you've established a more familiar relationship.
6. **Contribute feedback.** If post-conference surveys are provided, share honest feedback about your experience and ideas. This helps organizers understand and meet the audience's preferences and requirements. Your insights can inform decisions for upcoming conferences and sessions, ensuring a better alignment with attendees' needs and expectations.

7. **Publish thought leadership.** Write and share a recap, blog post or LinkedIn reflection with insights and practical applications of what you've learned. Tag speakers, peers, and use the event hashtag to extend your reach. This practice fosters goodwill and boosts engagement.
8. **Reshare and engage.** Comment on, repost, and share high-quality content from the conference. This keeps you visible in conversations beyond the event. Again, remember to use the conference hashtag when searching for and sharing content.
9. **Extend invitations.** Invite new contacts to opt into your company's content or events or subscribe to your podcast. Let them know why the information would be a helpful resource to them. If you sponsor a future event or conference, invite them to join you as a guest, using a conference guest pass, sponsor discount, or simply let them know you are planning to attend and find out if they are as well.
10. **Reconnect with intention.** Don't let strong conversations fade. Schedule follow-up calls or virtual meetings with individuals with whom you wish to develop a more productive relationship. For example, you can ask individuals to meet over a virtual coffee to continue a great conversation that you had at the conference.

Successful participation at conferences requires careful planning and dedication of time. Incorporating these suggestions into your plan will yield a more favorable return on your investment of time and energy and help you stand out from the competition.