

## MAXIMIZING YOUR CONFERENCE INVESTMENT 10 WAYS TO GET MORE FROM CONFERENCES, CLINICS, AND SEMINARS

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Most coaches understand the importance of conferences, conventions, clinics, seminars, and forums. The knowledge a coach can pick up from some of the best minds in the game can lay the foundation for a new program or shore up weak points in established programs. And more important still are the networking opportunities that present themselves in these types of settings. Most coaches, however, go into these meetings with no strategy other than to listen to the speakers and meet as many people as they can. Just as surely as you wouldn't go into a game, series, or season without a game plan, the same should be said for your conference attendance. Taking just a few simple steps will help you to maximize the benefit of your next conference.

1. **ATTEND WITH SOMEONE WHO'S AS INTERESTED IN LEARNING AS YOU** – Consider this your “buddy system”. Or better yet, treat it like the study groups you had in college. This is a great way to bounce ideas off of someone. Doing this simple exercise helps you to retain a great deal more than you would by just writing it down.
2. **GET TO THE SESSIONS EARLY** – Go early and take the opportunity to chat with your fellow coaches. If you don't see someone you know, introduce yourself to a stranger. Talk about the upcoming session or the one that just completed. This is another great way of making sense of what you just heard or framing what you're about to hear.
3. **CREATE A LIST OF NOTES AND QUESTIONS** – Research shows that retention is increased by 70% by the simple act of taking a few notes. Additionally, write down questions for parts that you didn't understand or points on which you want further clarification. After the session is complete, quickly glance over your notes to increase the chance of retention.
4. **LIST THREE SPEAKERS YOU WANT TO MEET AND WHY** – Most conferences and clinics have 5-8 speakers, with the larger conventions having as many as 30. Target 2-3 speakers you'd like to meet and why it is you'd like to meet them. Make a point to track them down in the hallway. Be prepared with specific questions. Don't just ramble or gush. And please don't pin down a speaker before he is set to give a presentation. This is a time speakers use to go through their speech in their mind and would rather not be interrupted.
5. **THANK THE SPEAKERS FOR THEIR VALUABLE INSIGHT** – Speakers appreciate feedback for presentations they've given. Additionally, little courtesies such as this don't go unnoticed. Taking the extra few seconds to be gracious or say a kind word pays dividends in the long run.
6. **THANK YOU NOTE POSTCARDS** – Take ten pre-stamped postcards with you to use as thank you notes. As soon as someone says or does something that impacts you, write a thank you note and drop it in the mail immediately. *A handwritten note puts an exclamation point on your gratitude and stands out in a world of electronic communications.* You shouldn't have any trouble immediately finding a mailing address. As noted in the previous point, little things like this don't go unnoticed.
7. **CRAFT AN ELEVATOR PITCH** – Those of you who spent any time at all in business school have no doubt heard the old adage about creating an elevator pitch – that 30-second presentation that sums up *who you are, what you do, and why you're here.* Don't get caught in the hallway with a coach you've always wanted to meet only to stumble over your own tongue as you attempt to say something – anything – to someone who could have some impact on your career down the road. *What is going to make you stand out in the mind of the coach in whose presence you currently find yourself?* These coaches have been right where you are and welcome the opportunity to meet you.
8. **IDENTIFY FIVE PEOPLE THAT YOU WANT TO STAY IN CONTACT WITH** – Networking -- you either love or hate it. You're going to accidentally meet someone at almost every conference that you will be in contact with for a long time. Don't leave it to chance, though. Make a point to identify five people throughout the conference with whom you'd like to stay in contact. Don't approach it as, “What can they do for me?” *Connect with people that you think you might be able to help in some manner.* You might have a resource that will help them with a current problem or issue. Get their email address and follow up with them after the conference.
9. **REACH OUT** – The coaching fraternity is tight and the family tree is vast. The only reason that the guy sitting across the way in the purple baseball cap is not sitting with you is because you haven't yet met. Plenty of coaches attend these conferences by themselves. Ask him to have lunch or coffee with your group. What could he possibly do for you if you just talked to him? Better yet, what could you do for him?
10. **POST-CONFERENCE REVIEW** – After the conference, take time to list and prioritize ten ideas that you picked up. Carve out three hours to review and evaluate your notes and to assimilate the ideas that you find most valuable. A recent statistic points out that 78% of all conference attendees don't ever look at the information they gathered once they've left a conference, including material that they've purchased. You made a valuable investment of time and money to attend this conference. Don't waste your investment by not taking the time to review and incorporate what you learned.