

# 10 Tips for Attending a Professional Conference

By Tamer Abouras

**ALTHOUGH FEW THINGS ARE UNIFORMLY** agreed upon across the broad spectrum of the healthcare industry, it's safe to say it never hurts to learn new things and add additional letters and acronyms after one's name. Making the most of advancement opportunities like a professional conference, however, can be tricky with the overwhelming efflux of information, scores of people, and breakneck pace of back-to-back sessions. Whether you've yet to attend your first one or you're a frustrated veteran, here's a short primer on how to make the most of a professional conference without running yourself ragged:

## 1. NETWORK

Conferences are a great place to meet and network with colleagues from all over the world. Everyone in attendance is there to share and learn, so don't hesitate to strike up a conversation about the session that just concluded or the keynote address from earlier that morning. There's no telling who you might meet, what you might learn, or what it might do for your career.

## 2. ASK QUESTIONS

Conference presenters have an intimate knowledge of their given field, and there is no better time than at a professional conference to obtain the answers to pertinent questions. Don't miss the opportunity to learn from someone who stands out in the field enough to share their knowledge in a professional setting.

## 3. STAY CLOSE

The inconvenience of traveling a long distance to and from the conference will limit your ability to get the most out of it. So plan to stay as close to the conference as possible, whether that's the actual hotel and conference center where the conference is being held or a nearby hotel. If you stay further from the conference center, check with your hotel to see if they have a courtesy shuttle to the event.

## 4. SIGHTSEE

A conference usually is not considered a vacation, but you will often find yourself in a fantastic location with plenty to see outside of the

conference center. Take advantage of a slower afternoon or the evenings to see what your destination has to offer, especially if it happens to be your first visit. If you want to do a lot of sightseeing, try to plan an extra day before or after the conference to do so.

## 5. SHARE INFORMATION

It may seem archaic in 2014 to distribute paper forms of literature about yourself or your organization, but effectively networking means having quality conversations and a healthy quantity of them as well. While there may not be time to have full discussions with everyone, giving and receiving business cards and pamphlets is useful and professionally productive, and may lead to connections that extend beyond the conference.

## 6. THE EXHIBIT HALL

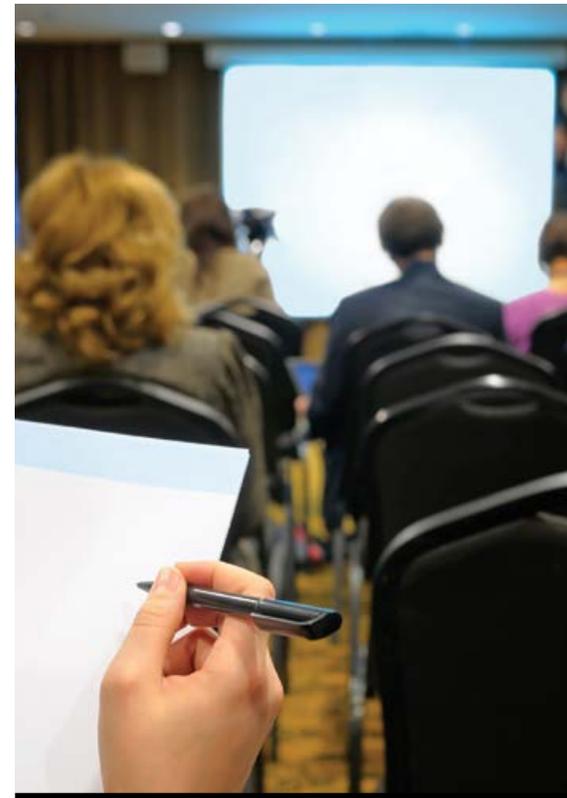
At nearly all healthcare conferences, the exhibit hall is an excellent place to network and connect with colleagues, vendors and presenters. From displays of new products, facilities sharing their research and innovations, or companies making their hiring needs known and available, the hall can be every bit as informational as the seminars. While networking and sharing contact information, don't miss out on the free goodies such as pens, bags, or stress balls organizations often hand out.

## 7. BRING BACK WHAT YOU LEARNED

Not everyone from your workplace can attend the conference, so take the opportunity to share what you learned when you get back. Your new knowledge can be extremely informative for your co-workers and beneficial to your department. It also helps you retain what you learned, not to mention the fact that it demonstrates leadership qualities, too.

## 8. ALWAYS HAVE YOUR (UPDATED) CV

Conferences are often as much of an opportunity for professional relocation as they are for professional enrichment. Digital editions of your curriculum vitae such as LinkedIn should always be up-to-date and reflecting any and all recent developments in your career. Prepara-



tion is key, no matter what you happen to be looking for at any given time.

## 9. TAKE NOTES

Because conferences can be whirlwinds of information, taking clear, concise, and organized notes will help you walk away with the most information, both in the moment and after you depart. You're attending the conference to become more educated — and possibly more credentialed — so it's to your advantage to be an active participant in the learning process.

## 10. DRESS BUSINESS CASUAL

For those whose work attire includes a suit and tie, conferences are a nice time to relax ever so slightly. While suits aren't necessarily surprising to see, standard business casual attire will suffice for most conference-goers. If the conference involves a decent amount of walking between sessions, be sure to wear comfortable shoes.

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