

FOUNDATION



Making the Most of Your Convention Experience

Can you believe that summer is almost over? Where did the time go?

The IFEA convention is only a couple of weeks away and the abundance of contacts and information it offers, is too great a benefit to pass up. Just this week I was reminded of the importance of attending professional enrichment programs. I received a phone call from someone needing advice regarding a program. I knew the event she was connected with, but couldn't recall whether we had met personally. As we were finishing our call, she asked me "Will you be in Pittsburgh for IFEA?" I remember meeting you in one of your sessions."

Instantly I was reminiscing about all the people I have met, and have stayed in contact with all because of IFEA. I started to think about my first IFEA convention, and how excited I was to attend. I didn't know they had a scholarship program. So for a year, I convinced the people I worked for, that it was important for them to send me. I paid room and board, used my

vacation, and they paid the convention fee. I remember getting my convention brochure and reading it from cover to cover (Okay I am kind of a geek, I read manuals also!) and getting up early to be sure I would get a seat in the session.

Little did I know that the individuals I sat next to would be the people who I call my professional network. I never thought I would be able to call someone from a nationally acclaimed festival, and feel so comfortable asking a question that had kept me up at night.

So many of the topics that I have encountered at the convention, have ended up playing a major role in the events I produce. For example, marketing strategy and tactics, operations, fundraising ideas, sponsorship leads, sponsorship proposals, food and beverage methodology, insurance needs, volunteer recruitment, board management conflict resolution, utilizing interns, using social media, security trends and requirements, are just a few of the topics I have learned about in depth. When I share the ideas I see or hear at the convention, with my board, staff and city government, and implement them, I look like a star!

As you prepare for your trip to Pittsburgh, I have a few things I am going to ask you to do.

1. **Venture out of your comfort zone**
- Network, network, network. Don't be shy to talk to people at the conference. Talk to people between sessions, while you're in line for coffee, or waiting for the elevator. People are passionate about their work and love to share it with others. Don't feel intimidated, they're just people! Take plenty of business cards, to help new acquaintances remember you. Tactfully collect as many business cards as you can, so you can follow up with post cards, E-mails, phone calls and appointments

2. **Keep an open mind** - I bet you can get one idea out of every session and even more ideas from visiting the hospitality suite.

3. **Visit the trade show marketplace** - Here you can connect with vendors, learn from other buyers, and gain insight on industry trends.

4. **Finally, commit to supporting your professional organization** - Attending and participating in the IFEA Foundation's 20th Anniversary Night Party & Auction at The Hard Rock Café is a way for you to show your support and passion for an industry that we are fortunate to work in. The IFEA Foundation raises money to connect people dedicated to the advancement of our industry. The Foundation awards scholarships to event professional, so they can expand their skills and expertise. The money comes from the auction and from donations to the "Fund for the Future." Please do your part to keep IFEA the leader in the festival and event industry.

With so many presentations and events going on at the conference, you might feel like you are missing out on something. But with a little planning and preparation before you go and making most of the time you have while you are there, you will walk away with new knowledge, new friends, and maybe even new opportunities.

I look forward to meeting you.
See you in September!

Cindy Lerick

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