

THE BOARD

10 Tips for Making the Most of IFEA's 60th Anniversary Convention & Expo



DEAR FRIENDS,

I'm gearing up for the IFEA 60th Anniversary Convention & Expo in a few weeks. How about you?

As I prepare to learn and tap into the latest and greatest event strategies, I can't help but reflect on what has and hasn't worked for me in the past. I'm constantly asking myself, "What are my greatest challenges and my greatest rewards?" and "What can I do personally and professionally to improve my event and support my team?" I know I'll find the answers to these questions at the Convention.

If you attended the IFEA's 58th Annual Convention in Pittsburgh, PA in 2013, you most likely heard Steve McClatchy's keynote and his invitation to take action personally and professionally. Our Convention is the perfect place to take that step or take the next one by taking advantage of this experience.

As your Board Chair, I would like to help you prepare by offering 10 tips on how to make the most of your time in Tucson:

1. Get Up and Get Energized!

Let's face it, we'll be staying in a gorgeous resort, so staying in bed will be a natural tendency, but as I always say, "You can sleep when you're dead!" This is your time to be the early bird that catches the worm and fly into new possibilities. So, pour a cup of coffee, take a walk to get your blood flowing and prepare to be inspired.

2. Dress for Success

I know, it's a cliché phrase, but it's been used for a long time because it's as true now as it was decades ago. Looking and feeling confident are key to taking you to the places you want to go yourself and where you want to take your event. This doesn't mean you have to wear an expensive designer suite, simply dress in appropriate business attire that positions you as the leader that you are.

3. Come with a Positive Outlook and a Quest for Knowledge

Believe that you're going to discover something important at this event and open your mind to new ideas and familiar strategies with a new twist. To avoid being overwhelmed, I usually set my sites on just one "takeaway" from each session and speaker. When I do this, I'm never disappointed, and typically enlightened. After all, lots of great things can stem from one good idea.

4. Own this Opportunity

Let's face it, you may have been told that you must attend this Convention and you may be having some reservations. However, if you take ownership of the experience and determine what's in it for you, chances are you'll come out with some tried and true tips of the trade that could not only improve your event, but also boost your career. And, you will walk away with new contacts, new information, and new insight into how your role impacts your event.

5. Venture Outside of Your Comfort Zone

Don't hang out with your colleagues at every turn. Instead, reach out to someone new at a session, shake their hand, sit down and strike up a conversation. In addition to the speakers at the convention, there are a lot of people there with good ideas too, share ideas. One of the greatest tips I once received was to ask a new connection out for coffee. If you do, you'll learn something new and most likely discover that you've shared some of the same challenges.

6. Bring Your Elevator Speech

What would you tell someone about your job and your event within the time it takes to go from one floor to another in an elevator? Don't be tongue tied when you meet new connections. Prepare a 30 second introduction, rehearse it, and perform it for your peers before you head to the Convention. If they don't have a clear idea of what you do, change it up and try it again until it's clear and concise. Your elevator speech is your first impression and a valuable public relations tool.

7. Unplug!

Turn off your phone and be present in the moments of each day. Make a promise to yourself that you will only check email at the end of the day because breaks are the best time to engage with your peers and people who can help you get where you want to be. And, who knows, you may have an opportunity to learn something

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8. Admit That You Don't Know Everything!

Attend sessions that make you uneasy. Safe sessions will be more comfortable, but they won't challenge you or open the door to new opportunities. And, don't sit in the back hoping that someone else will ask the pressing question that's on your mind. Ask it! Everyone there is coming to learn, not to appear to know everything!

9. Visit the *dfest*[®] (Dixie Flag Event Services Team) Hospitality Suite at Least Once

Big things happen here, like they do on the golf course. You will make some of your best connections at this "after

hours" event, so take advantage of it. Bring your business cards, meet as many people as possible, and set a goal to walk away with one major connection.

10. Follow Up and Pay It Forward

You will walk away from the Convention with a pocket full of business cards and potentially no memory of what face went with each name, so when you receive a card, write a note on it that will help you remember. For example, "Invited me to call her to talk about jury selection." Then, strike while the iron is hot by following up with your new connections via email and/or Facebook within one week. And, if you learned some valuable things at the event, share them with those contacts, your co-workers, colleagues, and friends.

Consider these tips as you prepare for the IFEA's 60th Anniversary Convention & Expo coming up in a few weeks. Seize this opportunity to learn, connect, share, motivate yourself, and go to work with new ideas and strategies for 2016.

See you in Tucson!

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