

## **How to network outside of the booth**

Believe it or not, collecting valuable leads and contacts doesn't only happen in the booth, and if you're not prepared, you could be missing big opportunities. Here are some tips to maximize your time outside of the booth at a conference or tradeshow:

### **1) Meet customers and prospects off of the floor**

Just as you have a plan for your booth operation, make a plan for the off-hours. If you have done your event planning, you'll have an idea which of your customers and prospects will be attending the event. Make sure you use every breakfast and dinner opportunity at the event to meet and build rapport with customers, and get to know prospects. If you can afford it, arrange a special outing with your best prospects and customers while at the event

Make sure you take a look at the list of attendees and exhibitors if available and proactively contact others with a view to setting up opportunities to chat at the event.

Here are some other tips to remember when meeting:

- Focus on the relationship, not on selling specific products during the conversation;
- Be an active listener, just don't wait for your time to speak;
- Don't rush eating and make sure you pick something 'easy' to eat;
- Don't drink alcohol;
- Turn off the cell phone;
- Pick up the tab!

### **2) Network at functions**

Make sure that you are always in the center of the action, whether it be at the hotel, or any of the show functions. Don't be afraid to approach people and start up conversations, you never know where they might lead!

Other tips for having a maximum effect at an event:

- Stay at the main hotel not an out of the way place;
- Bring business cards;
- Wear a name tag or badge if appropriate;
- Have an elevator pitch ready
- Actively listen(as mentioned above);
- Move around at functions, ie don't talk to the same people all night, make sure you mix and mingle.

### **3) Talk to partners**

If the event is an industry event, chances are that there will be all kinds of people there who can help your business directly or indirectly. As I mentioned before make sure you

have eyeballed the attendee and exhibitor list and have made meetings with the applicable people if you can. Remember also not to plan your schedule so tightly that you can't fit a meeting with someone you 'uncover' at the event.

#### **4) Seek out competitors**

Part of your activity should also involve getting to know your competition, both directly and indirectly. Some of the indirect things you should consider:

- Check out their booth;
- Check out their products;
- Speak to their staff;
- Look at their marketing materials.

Don't confine your activities to the spying mission, you should also consider making contact with competitors directly as you never know, competitors of the present can become partners of the future!

I hope that you consider doing many of the above things even though the last thing some of you will want to do after you have been in the booth all day is doing more sales and marketing activities. Hold back the urge to head for the hotel room and maximize your time for a top impact!

*Warwick Davies is the Principal of The Event Mechanic!, a consulting company which helps event organizers realize greater revenues and profits by fixing 'broken' events and launch new ones both in United States and internationally . His clients include event organizers in the information technology, healthcare, biotechnology construction and design engineering and executive event markets. Previously, Warwick was responsible for internationally recognizable event brands such as Macworld Conference and Expo, LinuxWorld Conference and Expo, and the Customer Relationship Management Conference and Exposition worldwide. For more information on The Event Mechanic! and past ROI-Q The Event Mechanic! columns please visit <http://www.theeventmechanic.com/resources.html> . He can be reached at [Warwick@theeventmechanic.com](mailto:Warwick@theeventmechanic.com) or at 781 354 0119.*