

## Tips for Getting the Most from Conferences

### Before the Conference:

- Review the roundtables and scheduled sessions and register.
- Confirm that your travel and hotel arrangements are in order.
- Print 500-1,000 business cards to bring along.
- Cancel or reschedule all your coaching client sessions for the week of conference.
- Inform your teleclass leaders that you'll be missing classes, and find someone to take notes for the classes you'll miss. (Offer to share conference highlights with your note taker as a thank-you.)
- Block out as much of the week after the conference as you can to assimilate what you learn there and even schedule a special recap/planning session with your coach or buddy coach to implement ideas right after the conference.
- Review each conference day schedule, and develop an index card listing times and sessions you definitely don't want to miss (example below).

**ICF Conference:** \_\_\_\_\_ day, \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ /00

Time	Session	Leader/Other Info

- Touch base with your friends, clients, buddy coaches, and coach to determine when you'll meet with them during the conference; consider taking a list of their names.
- If any SIG group you participate in is meeting, be sure you have the date, time, and location for that meeting on your schedule.
- Plan your conference budget. Take into account that there is an Exhibit Hall, and you may want to purchase coaching related items offered there.
- Select a comfortable wardrobe for the conference, and consider a distinctive accessory which would help people remember you. (Example: One coach



# Wind Beneath Your Wings

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wore a lovely western style hat throughout the conference last year. I've remembered her name quite easily all year.)

- For sessions you plan to attend, take a few minutes to list what you'd like to learn or get from that session.
- During your travel time to the conference, clarify or establish what you want to get from the conference overall and how you'll know that it was a successful conference for you.
- Consider bringing a small or one-use camera.
- Bring a notebook of your choosing to take notes in. I recommend a spiral notebook or binder with a pocket. If you take notes from all sessions in one place, then you don't risk losing notes afterwards, and they'll be more accessible and easier to file once you return home.

In that notebook, title one section "Great Ideas I Plan to Implement Immediately" and block off another section for "Impressions, Feelings, and Insights". Include a section on "New Friends and Potential Alliance Partners." On the last day of conference, this could serve as your own personal yearbook for friends to sign, if you'd like.

- Get plenty of rest prior to the conference and pack your vitamins and other comfort items to make the conference as pleasant for you as possible.
- Consider having extra room in your travel bag or bring an extra bag for materials you will obtain at the conference. I suggest taking a small soft bag or briefcase to carry throughout the conference. Some conferences provide this, but you never know and want to be prepared.
- Remember your conference or profession-related pins/shirts/etc. that you'll want to wear. If you have a personalized name tag, bring it along.

#### At the Conference:

- Once you've registered, review the conference information to see if you need to make any changes to your schedule; add items to your daily index cards.
- Set up a place in your room as your conference command center – keep all the conference information in that place. Designate a spot for materials to take home with you. You may even want to organize items into daily sections with everything you want to take along gathered in that one spot.
- Prepare a note for the information kiosk to link up with friends, if you weren't able to do that prior to the conference.
- Pace yourself!



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- Keep your index card schedule with you at all times as well as business cards and a pen.
- Take advantage of all free times to meet friends and get to know your colleagues. This is the most precious time of the conference! Have fun. Be curious. Be open.
- Try to do a daily evening check to be sure you're getting the most from the conference for you.
- Make notes on the backs of all business cards you receive so that you know something more about each person.
- Put all receipts in one place, adding notes as appropriate.

After the Conference:

- Rest!
- Review your notes from all sessions and document what you got from the conference. You might even want to note what you'd like to experience differently next year so you can look back as you plan for the following conference.
- Give yourself contemplation time to really assimilate what you experienced at conference.
- In light of your conference experience, evaluate whether you need to rethink any aspect of your coaching practice.
- Develop an action list and work with your coach to plan how to prioritize and implement those items.
- Touch base with new friends.
- Listen to/Read any materials you obtained at conference.
- Enter information in your database and file conference materials.
- Share new information with your clients and with your network.

From my own previous experience, my biggest mistake was not allowing time to really think about and implement what I got from the conference. I hope these tips will help you have an optimal experience at the conference and long afterwards.



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