

# Maximizing Your Conference Experience

## A Guide for University Students



Conferences are an incredible opportunity for students to gain exposure to the finance, business, and wealth management industries. They provide access to industry leaders, valuable learning sessions, and the chance to build lasting professional connections. To make the most of your conference experience, preparation is key.

### 1. Before the Conference: Laying the Groundwork

- Set Up the App: Upload a current, professional photo that reflects your present appearance. Update your profile and include your contact information, LinkedIn, and other social links.
- Research Attendees: Review the attendee list to identify firms and professionals aligned with your career goals.
- Research Keynote Speakers or Companies: Identify the speakers and companies you want to talk with and prepare a few thoughtful questions to make the most of your interaction.
- Create a Hit List: Prioritize who you want to meet and why. Draft short, personalized outreach messages.
- Send Advance Messages: Introduce yourself, share your interests, and suggest specific times to connect.
- Set Clear Goals: 3 people to meet, 2 sessions to attend, 1 idea to bring back.

### 2. Balancing Responsibilities & Opportunities

As a student attendee, you may have responsibilities such as helping at booths, distributing materials, or assisting with CE codes. Fulfill these duties with professionalism; they help demonstrate reliability. Use your free windows wisely: attend sessions, visit vendor tables, and connect with attendees. Once you know what your responsibilities are, schedule them into the conference agenda and plan where you'll be the rest of your time. It's okay to leave some open time for the unexpected but don't leave your whole schedule up to chance.

### 3. During the Conference

- Take notes during sessions to share later with classmates or colleagues.
- Use social media (LinkedIn, X, or Instagram) to post key takeaways and tag speakers.
- If there are free headshot opportunities to get a professional photo, take advantage of them.

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#### **4. Networking with Intention**

- Where to Network: Look for informal networking spots (coffee breaks, meals, hallways).
- Prepare Icebreakers: Ask engaging questions like:
  - What's an interesting problem you're working on right now?
  - What qualities do you look for when hiring new talent?
  - How did you get your start in the industry?
- Share Your Story: Be ready to talk about your education, career interests, and unique experiences.
- Ask Thoughtful Questions: Go beyond small talk and discuss hobbies, travel, or meaningful experiences. Remember the F.O.R.D. method for things people love to talk about with others: **F**amily, **O**ccupation, **R**ecreation, **D**reams

#### **5. Building Relationships (Not Just Résumés)**

Not every connection will lead to a job, and that's okay. Some professionals may share tools, assessments, or advice. Accept these opportunities, they strengthen your knowledge and self-awareness, making you more valuable to future employers.

#### **6. After the Conference: Following Through & Sharing Lessons**

Always follow up with connections within a few days. Send thank-you notes or LinkedIn requests with personalized messages. Reference specific conversations to reinforce your connection. Reflect on your experience and identify which relationships to nurture long-term.

Write a short reflection or blog post about your top 3 takeaways. Tag the people who shared those nuggets of wisdom (if applicable). Organize a debrief with peers or professors to share what you learned.

#### **Conclusion**

Conferences are more than one-time events; they are steppingstones toward building your professional foundation. With preparation, intentional networking, and thoughtful follow-up, you can stand out and make a lasting impact that just may jumpstart your career.

## Conference Success Checklist for Students

Use this quick checklist to prepare for and maximize your conference experience.

### Before the Conference

- Upload a current, professional photo to the conference app.
- Update your profile with contact info and LinkedIn.
- Review the attendee list and identify priority connections, keynote speakers, and companies.
- Send short, personalized messages to introduce yourself and suggest meeting times.
- Schedule your conference experience out so that you know where you should be and when.
- Set clear goals: 3 people to meet, 2 sessions to attend, 1 idea to bring back.

### During the Conference

- Complete your assigned responsibilities (booth, CE codes, materials).
- Attend learning sessions and networking events.
- Take notes during sessions to share later with classmates or colleagues.
- Use icebreaker questions to start conversations (e.g., 'What problem are you working on?').
- Use social media (LinkedIn, X, or Instagram) to post key takeaways and tag speakers.
- Share your story: your education, goals, and unique experiences.
- Get a new headshot, if the opportunity arises.

### After the Conference

- Send thank-you notes or LinkedIn requests within a few days.
- Personalize follow-ups by referencing your conversations.
- Reflect on your experience and identify relationships to nurture long-term.
- Write a short reflection or blog post about your top 3 takeaways.
- Organize a debrief with peers or professors to share what you learned.