Networking at Professional Meetings & Conferences

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Who is in the room...
COPH Career Services

http://www.unmc.edu/publichealth/CareerServices.htm

@COPHCareers

UNMC College of Public Health Students & Alumni Group
Today we will cover:

• Networking tips for Before, During and After a professional meeting or conference
Networking
Networking

Building relationships with others.
Networking…

• It is all around you, every day

• Conversations and interactions with people with whom you have something in common, in any setting
Networking Tips

1. Find areas of mutual interest—ask questions, use good listening skills and be genuinely curious
2. Relax, and be yourself
3. Follow up
4. Don’t forget about what you can give
Networking Give & Get

Give

– Time
– Expertise
– Recommendations
– Introductions
– Insight and advice
– Lessons learned
– Connections

Be a Connector!
Before the Conference
Getting to the Conference

- Submit abstracts for presentation
- Seek out scholarships from the organizers and related professional organizations
  - Student
  - Emerging Leaders
  - Young Professionals
- Student rates
- Volunteer/Work options
- Roommate finder
Do Your Homework

- Study the schedule, use personal scheduler if available
  - Download the conference app
  - Look for student sessions and first time attendee sessions
- Identify pre-conference workshops, meetings and outings
- Research presenters (and participants if possible) and engage on social media
- Look at the exhibitor list
Logistics

• Try to stay at the conference hotel
• Set up meetings ahead of time
  – Use social media to pre-connect
  – Reach out to your network
• Packing
  – Professional, yet comfortable
  – Think about each day’s events when planning outfits
  – One extra outfit
Prepare Yourself

• Think about
  – Your goals & priorities
  – How you will introduce yourself
• Update your LinkedIn Profile
• Copies of resume
Prepare Yourself

• Business cards
  – Vista Print, Zazzle, Moo (20% student discount)
    • Cannot use UNMC logo
  – UNMC Print Services
    • One color, 250 for $21.56
    • Title: MPH Student
    • Email, Phone, Department, but no mailing address
During the Conference
First Things First…

• En route
  – Strike up conversations and be polite
• Try to make at least one good, genuine connection early
  – En route, in hotel check in line, registration line, in lobby area, pre-conference activities
• Register as early as possible
  – Review conference materials
  – Note schedule changes
  – Review participant list
Conference Sessions

• Arrive early and talk to person next to you
• Turn off electronics*
  *Tweet highlights from plenary sessions
• Yes, you can introduce yourself to the speaker at the end of the session
• Pay attention to who hangs out together
• Consider ROI of a session vs. a meaningful conversation
• Take notes
Additional Events and Places to Connect

• Hit the exhibit hall
• Attend social/networking events
• Non-conference locations (airport, restaurant, elevator, etc.)
  – Be on the lookout for conference nametags, bags and other clues
This is all helpful, but what does ‘it’ really look like?
In all interactions, be...

- A good listener
- Yourself
- Positive
- A connector
Networking Conversation Tips

• Ask lots of open-ended questions and provide more than yes/no answers

• Potential Topics:
  – Highlights from sessions
  – Anything fun seeing/doing in the city
  – Restaurant suggestions for dinner/good coffee
  – Tips for the conference (especially if you are a first time attendee)
  – F.O.R.D.: Family, Occupation, Recreation, Dreams
Wrapping Up a Conversation

• Exchange business cards (make a note on the back)
• Compliment & thank them
• Exit Line (i.e. “I need to go touch base with my colleague about tomorrow’s schedule/a deadline”)
After the Conference
Following Up with New Connections

Within 48hrs!

• Depending upon the kind of connection you made and how in-depth your conversation was, any of the following will work:
  – Thank you email
  – Thank you note
  – LinkedIn Connect request (personalized!)
On-going Communication

• Let speakers and/or conference organizers know when you use information

• Be a connector
  – As you see relevant opportunities or new information, share with people you met

• Schedule a more formal conversation or meeting (informational interview)
If you do all of these things...
You will be the kind of person that people like and respect, and ultimately, want to help.
You don’t have to take my word for it...
“Ask all questions, even if they're not explicitly about/for networking. Some of my best networking experiences have come from simply asking good questions that were not meant to prompt networking.”

“Walk up to groups of three or more and say "I'm just trying to meet new people" with a big smile. Works every time!”
“My first APHA conference I attended--met a great woman, pioneer/professor in the field of community gardening and health promotion. After her talk I went up to her and chatted for a little while. Kept in touch over the next year and ended up writing my masters’ thesis with her (she was in Denver and I was in Chapel Hill). Goes to show that just a bit of networking can make you lasting connections. We're still in touch...10 years later!”
“After I present at a conference, I appreciate the people who approach me that are dressed professionally, not chewing gum, and remember my name---always remember the person’s name who you are speaking to!”

“When I go to conferences I bring copies of my resume (you never know when someone may ask for it)... at my first APHA conference I actually had an impromptu interview and was glad I had my resume.”
Questions?
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