Conference Networking: Taking Time to Make Connections | Poster Printing Blog | College of Engineering

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As a professional or student, you may have the opportunity to attend trade and/or research conferences. Attending or presenting at these conferences gives you the chance to speak with other professionals in your field and related areas.

Networking is a great way to make initial connections at conferences that can open doors for future creative and career opportunities. Joseph Banks, Assistant Director at Career Services, has some suggestions listed below that can improve networking skills for students and professionals alike.

Before the Conference

• Check the conference website to see who is attending. If you notice someone you’d like to meet up with, get in contact with them and arrange a meeting time.
• Write an Elevator Pitch, or 30-second introduction, that contains information about you, including specifics such as what areas you’re interested in and facts about your research.
• Plan a get-together and invite other attendees. This is an especially good idea if you are traveling with a large group or organization. You could plan a game night, karaoke night, or even an activity related to the research you’re doing. Be creative!
• Print business cards to bring to the conference. The PDP on USU’s campus offers 50 free business cards for juniors, seniors, and graduate students. (https://www.usu.edu/pdp/) You can also create your own business cards online, or make them in-person at office supply and print stores.
• Have a digital copy of your updated resume ready to send if the opportunity arises.
• Check the events and conference website for attire guidelines. Most conferences are business casual, but some have formal closing ceremonies.

During the Conference

• Use your elevator pitch. This will give you a smooth introduction when talking with other attendees or presenting your work.
• Hand out your business cards to interested parties.
• Approach people you are interested in meeting. Invite them to meet up with you another time during the conference if you can. If not, pass along your business card and get in contact with them afterwards.

After the Conference

• Write a thank-you email or note to the people you connected with. This will help you to stay in-contact with them and let them know you appreciated their help.
• Set-up another visit or phone call with someone you contacted at the conference. Plan to talk for no more than 20 minutes over the phone to avoid taking too much of their time. Prepare some questions to ask about their research or their company.
• Check-up with people you contacted every couple months. Keep updated on what they’re doing or what their company is doing to have topics to discuss.