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We ALL are pressed for time. We want to maximize our time during meetings, working hours, and our free time. This month's articles can help you get the MOST out of attending a conference for personal development, and getting the MOST out of being a panelist by getting your message across. When we maximize our time at work, there is more time for martinis (or guilty pleasure of choice)!

Kristin

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#### HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR NEXT CONFERENCE

You've decided you are going to take your team to your industry convention or topical conference. So you all fly there together (unless you have a "keyman risk" so you fly separately), divvy up the sessions and call it a team-building event.

At least that's what I see typically happens. What if...you and your team took a more "intentional" approach to your meeting?

Start with sitting down with your team and determining the objectives. Ask each team member to identify their own individual as well as the team/organizational learning *and* networking objectives. Then share them with each other, noting the overlapping objectives.

Then take out the program and determine which of the offerings address your strategic initiatives and "overlapping" objectives. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to call the conference organizer or "team concierge" for advice (Yes, that is an actual term, according to meeting architect, [Sarah Michel](#)).

Map out who goes where:

- **Strategic initiatives** and overlapping objectives are best for all to attend. Sit as a group. Many conferences are creating room layouts to accommodate groups of four to six sitting together to exchange ideas in real time. Or, you can encourage your team members to split up and sit with people from other organizations to gain different perspectives. (Of course, that means that they will have to make an effort to engage others vs. hang out with the people they already know!)

- To accomplish **individual objectives**, encourage your teammates to be strategic. Don't go to a breakout session because you like the presenter. How is it going to help you achieve your goals or an organizational strategic objective? Make it clear that you expect them to share the key takeaways.
- The point is not to divvy up all the sessions and go to everything. Be **intentional and strategic**. Have your team know exactly why they need to be in that particular session. And if they like what they heard, encourage them to go to the session presenter, introduce themselves, and create a connection in case you want to pursue an idea further.

"Traditionally teams from organizations attend a conference with a divide-and-conquer game plan, as they split up and attend as many different sessions as they can. The challenge with that strategy is that it's very unlikely any real change will occur when the one team member who experienced the learning returns to work. Will they share what they've learned from a session? Or simply pass on a PowerPoint deck?" [Betsey Bair](#) (Velvet Chainsaw Consulting)

When you get to the venue, identify an area to randomly meet up, check in after a session or debrief at the end of the day. Michel calls these "activation areas and zones where teams can meet up onsite to debrief and process the learning and ideas they captured that day." I call it "home base." As an introvert after extensive extroverting, I like to quietly touch base with people I know – or chill in a quiet place to reflect on the day! ☺

At the end of each day, make sure you debrief key ideas that reinforced what you already know/do, interesting ideas, and potential action items. Extraordinary teams stay an extra half a day after the conference to extend the debrief even further – what are you going to agree to start doing, stop doing, or change what you are doing as a result of attending the conference?

In this way, you will maximize your conference investment *and* build the team!

## 7 WAYS YOU CAN GET YOUR MESSAGE OUT DURING A PANEL DISCUSSION

As a panelist who wants to be successful at an upcoming panel discussion, you'll put the work in, doing the work needed to look brilliant and offer tremendous value to the audience.

But what if you absolutely have to get your message across? What if it is vital to your success, the team or organization's success? Well then, you'll have to do a bit more prep work.

There are essentially 7 ways you can get your message out during a panel discussion:

1. During the opening statement
2. During moderator-curated questions
3. During audience Q&A
4. Jumping in to the conversation
5. During closing remarks
6. Offering a handout or takeaway
7. Reinforcing your message by posting or engaging on social media

As a savvy panelist, you'll want to think through the best ways to convey your message using ALL seven methods. Just brainstorm the possibilities. What would that look like? How could you authentically offer your valuable insights? You might not execute on them all, but a few of your ideas will resonate with you. Practice those specific areas. Hone your message so it is concisely stated and memorable.

With extensive preparation for your panel discussion, you're bound to get your

message across in one, two, or even three ways!

### **FROM THE BOOKSHELF: THE INEVITABLE: UNDERSTANDING THE 12 TECHNOLOGICAL FORCES THAT WILL SHAPE OUR FUTURE**

I was recently chatting with Adrian Segar, author of *Conferences That Work*, about the latest business book he was reading (I always want to know!). He mentioned the book, [\*The Inevitable: Understanding the 12 Technological Forces That Will Shape Our Future\*](#) by Kevin Kelly. So I immediately bought it so I could read it on my interminable flight from Phoenix to Prince Edward Island (It takes ALL DAY!).

Needless to say, I inhaled this book, thinking, "Oh, that was interesting....I need to ponder that...later," while making notes on the side.

The premise is this: there are twelve fundamental roots of digital change that he has observed over the past 30 years (much of it in the front row seat as the founder and executive director of *Wired Magazine*) and suggests that they are "inevitable" paths going forward. The path is outlined; the specifics are not. For example, "telephony - long-distance electrically transmitted voice messages - was inevitable, but the iPhone was not."

These twelve paths - becoming, cognifying, flowing, screening, accessing, sharing, filtering, remixing, interacting, tracking, questioning, and beginning are starting points for innovative thinking. For each of these paths, Kelly shares a rather optimistic presentation of the "motion," why it is inevitable (the history), and then some motivation for future possibilities.

His discourse is a bit polyanna-ish, but Kelly does admit, "there will be heartbreak, conflict and confusion, in addition to incredible benefits." Oh yes indeed! He continues, "First, we see push back. Key stakeholders want to stop it, prohibit it, deny it, or at least make it hard to use....Banning the inevitable usually backfires....We need to manage these emerging inventions to prevent actual (vs. hypothetical) harms, both by legal and technological means. We need to civilize and tame new inventions in particulars. But we can only do that with deep engagement, firsthand experience, and a vigilant acceptance....Once seen, we can work with their nature, rather than struggle against it." And knowing WHERE we are in that change cycle is also important.

Perfect to jump start your strategic planning, innovative thinking, or future forward thinking.

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