



Professional Development Resources

How to get the most out of conferences

Attending a conference is a great opportunity to position yourself within the professional community, meet others in and out of your field, and build your network. Whether you are attending a CIC event or any other conference, this guide will help you make the most of the event as a professional development opportunity.

Before the conference

Prepare a brief introduction or talking points about yourself

- Practice this out loud in front of a mirror, your peers, family, strangers, etc. until it flows naturally.
- Include any professional credentials and interests that are relevant *to you*.
 - Activities outside of your formal education and technical training (i.e. workshops, extracurriculars) are still professional experience that employers may want to hear about.

Other tips to prepare

- Look over the conference program in advance to start preparing your itinerary and think about which speakers, exhibitors, organizers, etc. you would like to prioritize connecting with.
- Consider bringing business cards and make sure your LinkedIn profile is up to date.

During the conference

Network!

- Networking does not have to be as intimidating as it sounds – it is just chatting with people, sharing your passions, and hopefully forming individual connections (even loose connections are valuable).
- Gather business cards from people that you meet, and keep notes on the back of the cards to write down anything to follow up with them about or other notes to remember.
- Keep in mind that peers and those outside your field can be useful contacts throughout your career.

After the conference

This is the critical time to grow and begin maintaining your network. Follow up with anyone you met that you would like to keep in touch with. It is recommended that you do this within a few days so that the event, and your conversation, is still fresh in their memory.

Connect over email and/or LinkedIn

- Use the notes from your collected business cards to help you remember who you wanted to reach out to and why you wanted to contact them.
- Keep your message *brief* and personalize it with anything memorable from your conversation that will help them place you in their memory, including specifically where you met them.
- LinkedIn is best used to keep track of your network – connect with people you meet and stay mutually updated on where your careers take you.

