

A post-conference checklist to lock in learning

So the professional conference you attended was great—but now you're back in the office, and the clock is ticking on the knowledge you were given.

Run down these steps to guarantee you get what you pay for at a training conference, and can share its highlights with your colleagues who weren't lucky enough to attend.

Get your notes straight—fast. Transfer your jottings to a format worthy of the event's weight instead of just creating a list of vague bullet points, and highlight the most important points with unique markers.

Create action steps. Build a short list of things to do with your new information. The very act of making this list will cause you to draw new connections between the sessions you attended and the business you face each day, guaranteed.

Ask questions. Conference presenters almost always remind you that the conversation can and should keep going; that's what their contact info is for. You should feel free to ask questions of the speakers after the conference is over.

Contact someone you networked with. Don't just toss off a request for a LinkedIn fix; that will usually lead you nowhere. And don't ask for something—or even offer it—in your first message. Instead, remind that person in a subtle way of how you met and make an observation or comment about the conference that will get their attention.

Check out social media to see what you missed. This can be a real eye-opener, and it provides the bonus effect of offering you some new connections if you choose to be so bold.

Build an archive and a database. If everyone at work who goes to the conference gets on the same page and uses the same structured format for their notes, lessons and ratings, you'll have quite the collection of wisdom to stage a one-off meeting at which everyone can exchange observations, lessons and ideas. A post-conference meeting can double as a general brainstorming session and give staff an outlet for their thoughts and inspirations.