

Skills 360 – Getting the Most out of a Conference (Part 2)

Discussion Questions

1. When you go to a conference, do you usually focus more on the workshops or networking?
2. What do you think are good reasons to use your phone at a conference?
3. How do you usually follow up with people you meet at a conference?

Vocabulary

To step back: to stop and think about something; “Before we continue to the next agenda item, let’s step back and think about what we just decided.”

The daily grind: your daily work routine; “I don’t need a long vacation, just a few days away from the daily grind to relax.”

To reflect on: to think about something in the past; “It’s not good to be constantly busy; you need time to reflect on what you’re doing and what your goals are.”

Golden opportunity: an excellent chance to do something; “I really think this position at KPMG is a golden opportunity for me to advance my career.”

To linger: to stay somewhere longer than you have to; “Our store is supposed to close at 6:00, but we usually let customers linger until about 6:30.”

To tie in with: to fit or combine with; “Maybe we could tie this strategic planning session in with our regular executive management meeting.”

To dash off: to hurry away from something; “Okay, so I know many of you have to dash off at 3:00, so I think we should get started right away.”

To skip: to avoid, miss, or not do something; “Sounds like a lot of people will be skipping the staff Christmas party because they’ll be away on vacation.”

At hand: close to you; "Although it's best not to refer too much to your notes during a presentation, it's a good idea to have them at hand in case you need them."

Intimidating: making you feel scared or nervous; "Walking into the staff room on your first day at a new job is always intimidating, but just relax and you'll do fine."

To scan: to look carefully, especially to find something in particular; "I scanned your report Julia and found just a couple of spelling errors."

To glom on: to attach to or take hold of; "I don't mind mentoring new staff, but I find it difficult when they glom on to me and I can't get any work done."

To park yourself: to sit or stand in a place; "Thanks so much for coming Gregor. Just park yourself anywhere you like. The others should arrive for the meeting shortly."

Wallflower: a shy person at a social event who doesn't speak to anyone; "It's pretty amazing how Juanita has transformed from an awkward wallflower into a confident and capable salesperson."

Influential: having power, or able to affect people; "I'm honored to introduce our next speaker today, who's one of the most influential management consultants of our time... Tom Wallin."

So to speak: we say "so to speak" after we describe something in an unusual, funny, or inaccurate way; "No things are not so good. Financially, the company is experiencing some aches and pains, so to speak."

Tempting: attractive or appealing; "Well, that position in Rome is very tempting, but I think I'll stay on at the London office for another two years at least."

Spare / Spare time: extra, or free time; "Let's see... if you are okay to meet later this afternoon, it looks like I have some spare time between 4:00 and 4:30."

To judge: to make an opinion about or evaluate something; "Dave seems to be doing okay, but he's only been here three months so it's kind of hard to judge his performance accurately."

To plug into: to enter information into a computer or other device; "If you just plug your access code into the panel beside the door, you should be able to access the office after hours."

To come in handy: to be useful; "This mini-projector sure has come in handy when we're on the road doing sales presentations."

To follow up: to maintain contact with someone after an initial meeting; "Hi Roger, I just wanted to follow up on our little chat last week and see if you had any more questions about our services."

To type something up: to type something that was written down; "Norm, if you could type up the minutes from today's meeting and send them out by morning, that'd be great."

Swallowed up: completely surrounded by or controlled by something; "As a young stockbroker on Wall Street, I was completely swallowed up by my work, and my health suffered."

Overwhelmed: having to deal with too much of something; "A good manager will notice when an employee is feeling overwhelmed and provide appropriate support."

To absorb: to learn, understand, and keep new information or ideas; "My first day of training went well, but there was *a lot* of new information to absorb."

To pass on: to give someone something you have received; "If Veronica's not here today, then would you mind passing on a message from me when you see her next?"

Takeaways: an important idea or piece of information that you remember from a presentation or situation; "Well, one of my biggest takeaways from the workshop is the importance of building strong relationships."

Transcript

Hello and welcome back to the Skills 360 podcast. I'm your host Tim Simmons, and today I want to give you some more tips for getting the most out of a conference.

Some people see conferences as a way to get away from the office for a few days and take a break. And sure, it's helpful to [step back](#) from [the daily grind](#) and learn something, or [reflect on](#) your work and business. But if you really want to get the most out of a conference, you should look at it as more than just a learning opportunity. I mean, if you've got hundreds or even thousands of people in one place looking to connect with others, it's a [golden opportunity](#) for networking.

In our last lesson, I talked about conference preparation and gave you a list of things you should do during the conference. Today I want to give you some tips for *after* the conference, and share some "don'ts," or things to avoid, during the conference.

My first tip is to not attend every session. Don't feel like you're missing out if you [linger](#) in the lobby or the hallways while others are in a workshop. Some of the best conversations happen *outside* the meeting rooms, when you've got some space and quiet time for really good discussion.

And this [ties in with](#) another thing to avoid: rushing. Any time you're in a hurry, you're closed to networking. So if you're having a great conversation with a potential customer and you realize the presentation on "Soft Selling" is about to start, don't [dash off](#). [Skip](#) the presentation and focus on the opportunity [at hand](#).

Now, I realize that conferences can be [intimidating](#). We've all had that experience of walking into lunch on the first day and [scanning](#) the crowd for someone we know. Like a colleague or coworker. Someone safe and familiar. But safe and familiar is why we go home at night, not why we attend conferences. So don't [glom on](#) to one person or your colleagues. That's a waste. You need to spread yourself around. So at lunchtime, don't look for familiar people. And don't [park](#) yourself with a fellow [wallflower](#). Instead, look for interesting, outgoing, or [influential](#) people. Ask them if you can join them, and get involved in the conversation.

After all, getting involved is what it's all about. You need to appear "open for business," [so to speak](#). And to do that, there are a couple of other things you should avoid. For one, don't spend too much time on your phone checking email or calling the office to see if the photocopier has been fixed yet. That's not why you're there. I realize it's [tempting](#) to pull out your mobile any time you have a [spare](#) minute. But here's a challenge for you: every time you want to look at your phone, talk to someone new instead.

This is not to say that your phone is useless. In fact, I'm about to tell you how you *should* use it. But first, here's another don't: don't focus too much on business cards. I know that sometimes you [judge](#) your networking success by how many cards you got. But *quality* is more important than *quantity*. Besides, you can easily lose business cards. And then what do you have besides the memory of a face? So,

if you've made a good connection, ask instead for the person's mobile number or email and **plug** it directly **into** your phone. You might be thinking that you like to be able to write notes on the back of business cards. But did you realize that there's space for notes in your phone contacts?

Those notes will **come in handy** later, after the conference, right? There's no use getting someone's contact info if you never contact them. So, a few days after the event, you should **follow up** with those people you talked to. Some people like to email everyone the *first* day after the conference. But right after a conference there's usually a lot of different things competing for your time and attention. So, it's more effective to wait a few days before following up.

What else should you do once a conference has finished? Well, if you've taken lots of notes, it's a good idea to organize them. Or **type** them **up**. Reflect on what you learned, rather than getting **swallowed** back **up** by the daily grind right away. At a conference, you might be so **overwhelmed** by information that you can't **absorb** it all. So taking the time afterward to review and reflect is an important part of getting the most out of your conference. And don't think only of the benefits to yourself. It's a great idea to **pass on** your what you learned to your colleagues. Organize a little workshop or presentation on your key **takeaways**. Use the ideas you encountered to generate discussion at your office.

All right, we've covered some important conference tips today. I've advised you *against* a few things like attending every session, rushing between talks, sticking to familiar people, and spending too much time on your phone. These are all things that can get in the way of networking. And *after* the conference, be sure to follow up with people and organize, or share, everything you learned.

That's all for today. If you'd like to test yourself on what we've just covered, have a look at the **BusinessEnglishPod.com** website. There you'll find a quiz about today's show as well as a complete transcript.

So long. And see you again soon.

Review

1. What of the following are things you *should* do during a conference? [Choose 2]
 - A Be sure to attend as many workshops and sessions as possible.
 - B Find a colleague you're comfortable with and stick with him or her.
 - C Take advantage of good opportunities for conversation.
 - D Linger in the lobby or hallways.

2. What type of person should you look for when you walk into a busy lunch room?
 - A A coworker.
 - B A wallflower.
 - C An influential person.
 - D A presenter.

3. To get the most out of a conference, every time you feel like looking at your phone, you should _____ instead.
 - A Find an engaging workshop.
 - B Have a bite to eat.
 - C Talk to someone new.
 - D Use a laptop instead.

4. How should you judge your success at networking during a conference?
 - A By how many people refer to you on social media.
 - B By the quality of the contacts you make.
 - C By the number of business cards you get.
 - D By how often you are tempted to look at your phone.

5. What is one good reason to use your phone during a conference?
 - A To make sure you haven't received emails from your boss.
 - B To enter people's contact information.
 - C To text colleagues who are also attending the conference.
 - D To record how many new people you meet.

6. Which of the following are things you should do *after* a conference? [Select all that apply]
 - A Contact people you met as soon as possible.
 - B Get back to your daily routine and forget about the conference for a while.
 - C Think about what you learned at the conference.
 - D Share some of what you learned with your colleagues.
 - E Memorize the notes you took.
 - F Wait a few days before emailing people you met.
 - G Review and type up your notes from the conference.
 - H Take photos of all the business cards you collected.

Review Answers

1. What of the following are things you *should* do during a conference? [choose 2]
C Take advantage of good opportunities for conversation.
D Linger in the lobby or hallways.
2. What type of person should you look for when you walk into a busy lunch room?
C An influential person.
3. To get the most out of a conference, every time you feel like looking at your phone, you should _____ instead.
C Talk to someone new.
4. How should you judge your success at networking during a conference?
B By the quality of the contacts you make.
5. What is one good reason to use your phone during a conference?
B To enter people's contact information.
6. Which of the following are things you should do *after* a conference? [choose all that apply]
C Think about what you learned at the conference.
D Share some of what you learned with your colleagues.
F Wait a few days before emailing people you met.
G Review and type up your notes from the conference.