

How Do You Do...?

The Question -- How Do You Reap the Benefits of an STMA Conference?

Answered by Mike Hebrard, Athletic Field Design

Editors Note: This article was first printed in the July/August 1999 newsletter after Mike attended the Conference & Exhibition in Mesa, Arizona. SW

- 1) Be on time for meetings and tours. If you get there about 15 minutes early, this will allow you to hook up with friends and new acquaintances so that you can sit together.
- 2) Try and sit with someone new on each leg of a tour or meeting. You'll be surprised at how much you have in common and the information that you can share.
- 3) Try to thank each speaker, and congratulate each award winner. This will make both of you feel special.
- 4) Stop at every exhibitor's booth and at least say "hi." Sometimes their company sign doesn't really say what they do. Remember, they have a lot of money invested in being at the show and, if they feel they don't get enough traffic, they might not want to come back. They do talk to other exhibitors and have to report back to their parent company on whether or not it was a worthwhile show.
- 5) Try to bring a door prize, something from your school, business, parks department, etc, such as a hat or t-shirt. It's great fun to win a prize amongst your peers. Some of the professional stadium managers have been able to get some pretty neat items, such as autographed pictures and team related clothing.
- 6) Fill in all evaluation sheets and add comments if they apply. If you feel that the room conditions were poor, you'd like to hear a different slant on that topic, or even if your speaker was exceptional, write it down.
- 7) Don't be bashful - be social - join a group and get to know them. Some of the best things I have learned are after conference "formal" meeting times. When I brought my wife and son to Orlando a few years ago, they were amazed at how many people I knew throughout the country. It gave my son a chance to ask Dale Getz from Notre Dame if the Irish really do paint their helmets for every football game. Conferences are **always** a great networking tool.
- 8) Bring plenty of business cards, I don't care how many I bring, I always seem to run out. If your employer or facility doesn't provide you any, try making your own on the home computer. They have some pretty neat formats.
- 9) Get your Conference registration in early and avoid the rush. The more our organization grows, the more last minute paperwork Headquarters needs to process.
- 10) Tell others who didn't make it what they missed and why they should go next year. I always try to have extra membership forms with me to hand out to other sports turf managers.
- 11) Don't leave anyone sitting by themselves. If you see a table with one person sitting there, go up and introduce yourself and ask if they mind if you join them. Sometimes neither person knows anyone else, or isn't sure how to start a conversation. Not everyone is like me, where if you ask me what time it is, I'll tell you how to build a watch. Remember, that's why we are there, to learn from each other.

And the list could go on and on. These are just my suggestions, I'm sure you have some ideas of your own. The important thing to remember is that it's YOUR responsibility to get the most out of your Conference experience.

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