

Tips for Conference Attendance

1. Review the list of exhibitors in advance.
 - a. Use this list to develop a marketing plan of action for your best targeted companies/Government agencies and to be able to maximize your time at the event.
 - b. Research potential companies prior to event.
 - i. Do they require suppliers be registered in their specific portal prior to doing business?
 - ii. Do they currently buy what you sell and if so, do you meet any additional company requirements?
 - iii. Obtain a good overview of their business, including their mission and vision.
 - c. Research the Government agencies that are exhibiting and answer the same questions as with your targeted companies, specifically do they buy what you sell and do you understand their mission.
2. Review the list of registered attendees in advance.
 - a. Make the most of your time at the event and connect with appropriate businesses. Building your network with potential partners outside of just the businesses that are exhibiting is a great way to maximize your ROI at the trade show.
 - b. Don't let all the connections happen by chance, set up meetings with other attendees prior to the event.
3. Prepare customized marketing materials (i.e. capabilities statements) prior to event and if possible, individualize copies for specific targeted companies and/or Government agencies.
 - a. Bring LOTS of copies.
 - b. Do not simply hand out brochures; your targeted customers need something that will easily remind them of how you "fit" within their organization when they pick it up again.
4. Ensure that your registrations are up to date, including SAM and SBA Dynamic Small Business Search
 - a. Other companies may be researching attendees as well, and they may look at this information prior to attending.
 - b. Ensuring all is up to date, accurate and including relevant information on your company will give the impression and perception that you understand these requirements and their importance.
 - c. If the conference includes matchmaking, the Government agencies may check this as well before meetings, and if this is not complete it gives the perception that you may not be ready for Government contracting.
5. If you don't have marketing materials, ensure that you have business cards, and bring enough. Don't make your target customer write down your information on their cards or pieces of paper.
6. Prepare and practice your elevator speech.
 - a. Know who you are talking to, how you relate to their company/agency and ask to follow up with them. Leave your capabilities statement and/or business card.
 - b. This is not the venue for a full capability presentation, but rather to introduce your company, give bits of differentiating information on your company and to leave your materials for future follow-ups.
7. If possible, meet with your state Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) counselor prior to attending to go over your materials, registrations, approach and potential targets to get additional input and recommendations. This is a free resource for your company. Use your available resources to ensure your time spent at the conference yields the biggest return on your investment!
 - a. Find your state PTAC <http://www.aptac-us.org/new/>
8. More importantly AFTER the event...follow-up with contacts made, thank them for their time at the conference and plan for further business discussions/capabilities briefings.