

Returning to In-Person Events: Networking Tips and Tricks for Young Professionals

Learn how to make the most of trade shows, conferences, and more as a budding young professional in the floral industry. The following tips and tricks are presented by marketing and communications experts, Laura Shinall and Melanie Spilbeler, Managing Partners of [FreshPath Marketing](#). These insights were originally presented through a webinar sponsored by the American Floral Endowment's [Young Professionals Council](#). You can [access the full recording here](#).



1. Plan Before You Go!

- a. Determine what your primary goal is before you attend the in-person event
- b. Examples:
 - i. Promote either your company's or your own personal brand? Think about what you want people to know about your company or you.
 - ii. Get education.
 - iii. Network and develop career contacts.
 - iv. Inform prospective or existing customers about products, services, or research.
- c. Set a measurable goal around how many interactions, email sign-up's, leads gathered, customer meetings, educational sessions, etc. you would like to have at the event.



2. Use Technology

- a. Use the FREE app Hi Hello to create a digital business card. You can provide your contact info to anyone with a scan of a QR code. Then the person that scans the code can either email or text your contact info to them. They can also send back their contact info in the same app. This app is also a great conversation starter!
- b. More and more in-person events are being managed via apps. Use the event app to not only plan your daily agenda, but also communicate with other attendees before, during and after the event.

3. Research Attendees

- a. Some events will provide a list of attendees before you go.
- b. Research who will be there and be intentional about planning who you would like to connect with before you head to the event.
- c. Utilize LinkedIn prior to the event to research attendees.

4. COVID Considerations

- a. Research COVID protocols that will be at the event location.
- b. Be respectful of others' level of comfort with contact.
- c. If you are nervous, have a go-to comment that lets people know your level of comfort. If you are prepared, you can come off more naturally.

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5. Set Your Itinerary

- a. If the in-person event is educational, plan your daily agenda to maximize your time spent at the event.
- b. Write down at least 3 questions you would like to ask each speaker(s) as there are usually question and answer sessions at the end of the session.

6. Don't be a wallflower, but don't be a party animal!

- a. Take advantages of networking opportunities and cocktail hours.
- b. Always be professional, you are there to represent yourself. Do not do or say anything you wouldn't feel comfortable with posted on social media.
- c. Always try to sit with someone you don't know.
- d. If you see someone standing alone and not talking, introduce yourself! They are likely in a similar situation of not knowing someone as well.
- e. Before you go, plan a list of ice breaker questions for networking events:
 - i. Where are you from?
 - ii. What type of business do you work for?
 - iii. What school do you go to?
 - iv. What made you come to this event?
 - v. What has been your favorite part of the event so far?

7. A picture is worth a thousand words!

- a. Don't forget to snap pictures and videos at the event. These images and videos can be used in a couple of few different ways:
 - i. Post in real-time on social media using relevant tags and event hashtags.
 - ii. Use photos after the event to create a presentation for your colleagues or your peers who couldn't attend.

8. Sharing is Caring!

- a. Don't forget to share the information your learned with your co-workers, colleagues, peers and professors when you get back home.
- b. A great way to make sure you don't lose any of the info you learned along the way is write down notes at the end of each day and separate info into 2 categories:
 - i. Key Takeaways
 - ii. Action Items – Who to call, book to read, who to email, topics to research, connect with someone on social media, etc.

Remember: There are certain benefits that in-person events provide that simply cannot be replicated at a virtual event such as:

- Impromptu conversations
- In depth discussions and deeper Q&A sessions
- Meeting other attendees at random and sharing information
- ENERGY from being physically in person! In-person events typically find us reenergized and full of ideas that we can bring back to our businesses, schools, colleagues and peers!

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About the Young Professionals Council

These tips and the webinar that accompanies them are made possible through the American Floral Endowment's **Young Professionals Council (YPC)**.

Established in 2015, the YPC offers leadership and networking opportunities for young industry professionals while getting involved in volunteer opportunities within the floral/horticultural industries.

YPC members participate in online and in-person meetings, webinars, and other networking opportunities to share ideas, collaborate with influential industry members, and help promote careers in the floral industry to support AFE's mission.

YPC Benefits:

- Professional development through career tools and webinars
- Networking opportunities with industry experts and peers including a private Facebook discussion group for members
- Growth for the floral industry through sharing connections, events, and resources

Membership is FREE! To learn more and join, visit endowment.org/ypc.

