

How to Maximize a Conference: 3 Lessons from #PRSAICON



Conferences, trade shows and industry events are a huge investment of time and resources. So how do you make the most of your experience?

Cision spent the last few days at PRSA International Conference 2016 (#PRSAICON) giving presentations, engaging on social media and even launching our [next-gen platform Cision Communication Cloud™](#). In that whirlwind of activity, I noticed a few tips and tricks that can help you get more out of every conference you attend.

1. Being yourself pays off.

A lot of the people you meet at an industry event are people you already have some connection to, although you may not have ever met in-person. Maybe a coworker from another office, an industry influencer you follow on Twitter or a client you exchange emails with. What is the point of coming all the way there to meet them face-to-face if you are not going to be yourself?

I'll give two shining examples of when being yourself paid off

for PRSA attendees.

To understand why the first example is such a huge win, you have to understand all conferences are a Twitter war. Companies want to engage new audiences, attendees want to capture the best soundbites and everyone want bragging rights for a clever, high-profile post.

During Theresa Payton's keynote on cybersecurity she covered how easy it was for hackers to get their hands on your password. After Theresa shared some stunning stats and a few poignant examples, Laurent Lawrence secured some major bragging rights with a well-timed, hilarious tweet.



The 65 retweets and 154 likes add up to more than half of

Laurent's followers – without taking into account the newcomers based on this clever gif. Gifs are a great way to engage on social media and this one summed up how everyone in the room was feeling at that moment.

The second example I want to share is about having an honest voice and not being afraid to use it. When an attendee made a comment via Twitter about one of the presenter's outfits during her session, several conference goers found it to be sexist and uncalled for. One of the first people to say something was Heather Whaling, founder of Geben Communication.

2. Go the extra step when you engage.

There was more than one lesson to be learned from Heather at PRSA International Conference. (If you went to her session like I did, you probably learned a lot!) The second lesson to learn from the above tweet is to go the extra step when you



engage. Heather's tweet struck a chord, starting one of the most active Twitter conversations of the entire conference. She followed it up with [a blog post](#) later that day to elaborate her thoughts on the topic when 140 characters were not enough.

She didn't scrap her tweet just because it was sure to be a sensitive subject, she didn't sugar coat how she felt and she didn't use this as an opportunity to simply vent or attack someone she disagreed with. She took a clear stance and the subsequent blog even offered next steps for PRSA to help address the industry wide issues with sexism in PR and set a call to action for others to get involved.

Because she went the extra step, next year's conference may have an entire track dedicated to sexism in PR.

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